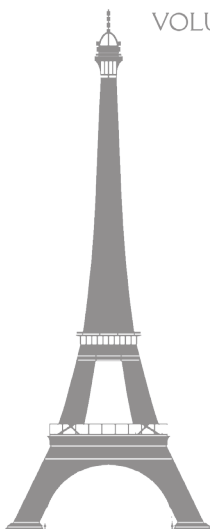


THE (STILL)
MAD ONE:
THE WIFE IN SPACE
VOLUME 5

THE (STILL)
MAD ONE:
THE WIFE IN SPACE

VOLUME 5



NEIL
& SUE **PERRYMAN**
FOREWORD BY ANDY MILLER

/400

SUE
ME
BOOKS

The (Still) Mad One
The Wife in Space Volume 5

Published November 2016

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FOREWORD

by ANDY MILLER

Like so many people nowadays, I am a huge fan of the long-running BBC children's programme *Dr Who and the Daleks*.

Ever since I was a small child and I watched “my Doctor Who” Tom Baker [NOTE TO GK-W: *please check*] from behind the sofa while he killed monsters with his sonic screwdriver, I have thrilled to the adventures of the Timelord from an alternative Earth where he worked for UNIQLO as a special adviser, even though I couldn't see the television because the sofa was in the way and we didn't even have a television [NOTE FROM GK-W: *suggest replacing with “idiot's lantern”, will play well with this lot*] because mother thought it was an “idiot's lantern”. I'm such a massive fan of the show that I usually remember to write TARDIS in capital letters and even know what those letters stand for: it's Time and Relative Dimensions in Space. Anyway the point is I still watch *Dr Who's Adventures in Space and Time* now, sitting upright on a sofa, eyes glued to the screen, and appreciate it every bit as much as I did as a youngster: for a children's programme, there is still loads for a 48-year-old man to enjoy without seeming slightly dodgy or like Tommy from *Dr Who and the Planet of the Spiders* before he gazes into the blue crystal from Metebelis Three [NOTE TO GK-W: *Thanks Graham!*].

Now I have reassured you of my credentials as a bona fide Whovian – see? – let me introduce myself. My name is Andy Miller and I am a reader, author and editor of books. I make several appearances in the course of these volumes, usually in the comment section, because it was me who suggested Neil turn the *Adventures with the Wife in Space* blog into an *Adventures with the Wife in Space* book. I subsequently had the great privilege of working with Neil (and Sue and Nicol and Gary and the cats) on the book *Adventures with the Wife in Space: Living with Doctor Who* which was published by Faber & Faber in November 2013 to wide acclaim from everyone except the man from *Doctor Who Monthly*, who didn't understand what was good about it and whose name I now

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forget – Graham something or other [NOTE TO GK-W: please check the so-called journalist's name, going to quote from this DWM 'review' later on.] I think *Adventures with the Wife in Space: Living with Doctor Who* is a really, really, *really* good book and working with Neil on it is one of the highlights of my career, for reasons I shall explain shortly.

But first, Tom Baker.

The stories Neil and Sue discuss in this volume of *The Wife in Space* cover the back half of Tom's tenure as the Fourth Doctor, from *The Ribos Operation* to *Logopolis*, a period that begins with Graham Williams trying to replace violence with comedy and ends with Christopher H Bidmead replacing comedy with entropy – and ultimately John Nathan-Turner replacing the Doctor with a professional actor. I really identify with Sue's comments on *Destiny of the Daleks* here ("The Daleks are a mess. They've been battered to bits") because they reflect the disenchantment that I, as an 11-year old, started to experience around this time. I was 10 when the era of *Doctor Who* covered in this book began and nearly 13 when it ended, an age when one starts to view TV, and everything else, with a degree of adolescent scepticism; plus there was a fair bit to be sceptical about in a story of the calibre of, say, *The Creature from the Pit*. But although my enjoyment of the programme faltered occasionally, my faith in Tom Baker never did. Both he and the show had had a profound effect on my burgeoning love of books.

As recalled in my memoir *The Year of Reading Dangerously*, I was a very bookish child who loved reading. However it was television which provided me with the biggest weekly thrill of my young life: *Doctor Who*. From the first episode I ever saw, aged five – Part Three of *Invasion of the Dinosaurs*, starring Jon Pertwee – I was completely hooked. Every Saturday, I would sit in front of the TV and be scared out of my developing wits by Daleks, Zygons, Wirrn or the Peking Homunculus, to name but four. (Even today, typing the words 'Peking Homunculus' gives me a shiver of pleasure.) Because there were no videos and DVDs, no internet and few repeats, the only way a fan could access the Doctor's earlier adventures was through the hugely successful range of novelisations published by Target Books. In due course, I would become hooked on these too.

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I mention this because in terms of my reading habits, *Doctor Who* represented an uncharacteristic reversal of polarity. Not only were the books adaptations of TV scripts, rather than the other way round, but they also offered a contrasting experience to anything else I was reading at the time: I liked the Moomin books of Tove Jansson, *Ludo and the Star Horse* by Mary Stewart, *The Eagle of the Ninth* by Rosemary Sutcliff. I liked humour in books but I also had a rather introspective, not to say maudlin, streak; I liked a bit of pathos to accompany the jokes. There was little that was maudlin or introspective about a *Doctor Who* book. Instead they were usually incomparably, straightforwardly exciting. There was humour in them, and a bit of pathos, but mostly it was adventure in time and space all the way. They were the first books I ever found to be authentically ‘unputdownable’ – I am certain *Doctor Who and the Brain of Morbius* by Terrance Dicks was the first novel I ever read from cover to cover in one go, sitting in the back seat of the car outside Coulsdon South station one evening, while Mum and I waited for Dad’s much delayed train.

For *Doctor Who* fans of a certain age, including those who now script and produce the programme, the charm of the Target books has never left them. Writer and actor Mark Gatiss recounts a similar story to mine and probably thousands of others:

I remember going into a shop in 1975 and seeing the novelisation of the series’ 10th anniversary story *The Three Doctors*, which had been on TV a couple of years before. The cover illustration showed the power-crazed Omega crackling cosmic energy over all three incarnations of the Doctor, and I just had to have it. I bought it for 35p, and while my parents went shopping at a garden centre in Darlington, I sat in the back seat of a Hillman Minx and read it straight through; my first Target book. I read it; I re-read it; I think I knew every word ... There are no novelisations of the new Doctors and their wonderful adventures, which is a terrible shame, because somewhere there will always be some child in the back of some car on some windswept pier, or whose parents are spending hours trundling round some garden centre who, if only they had their little copy of

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The Empty Child or *Tooth and Claw* or *Rise of the Cybermen* or *The Satan Pit* or *The Family of Blood*, with a lovely cover and a beautifully realized novelisation, would be as happy as – well, as I was.¹

Now we have *Doctor Who* back on British and American screens, being wildly popular and successful – and good – it is possible to look back at the Target books and acknowledge their importance to that generation of junior devotees. Firstly, they unquestionably bolstered the reputation of the TV series. Stories which might have appeared cheap and silly had one actually been able to re-watch them – I am looking at you, *Invasion of the Dinosaurs* – were, on the page, convincing in every respect. Young imaginations were able to produce a gargantuan T-Rex or an (apparently) orbiting space-liner on a far grander scale than anything the cash-strapped BBC props and make-up department could manage. This was only confirmed when BBC Enterprises began to issue old episodes on VCR in the 1980s; as Neil says, the *papier-mâché* reality rarely measured up to the version you had been carrying round in your mind's eye for years. And when the programme returned triumphantly in the '00s, it may be that it was this vision of *Doctor Who* – one viewed through the prism of these books and never forgotten – that writers like Russell T Davies and Steven Moffat were hoping to reproduce.

However, the uplifting effect of the Target series was not confined to journeys in the TARDIS. The broader achievement of these books was to show thousands of children, as Russell T Davies says, 'how vital a book can be, how powerful, how forever.'² They were neither hard work nor homework; they proved to the doubtful or reluctant reader that a book could be much bigger on the inside. For young *Doctor Who* fans, they were an introduction to the pleasure of reading for its own sake; in Mark Gatiss' words, "their introduction to literature." Terrance Dicks, the most prolific and dependable of the Target authors, says this:

1. *On The Outside, It Looked Like An Old-Fashioned Police Box*, BBC Radio 4, 2009

2. From his introduction to a reissue of *Doctor Who and the Auton Invasion* by Terrance Dicks, BBC Books, 2011

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I think if you can get a kid reading for pleasure, not because it's work, but actually reading for pleasure, it's a great step forward. It can start with me, you know, start with Dicks and work its way up to Dickens – as long as you get them reading.³

Reader, I was that reader.

However it was ITV, not the BBC, which brought it all together for me. As 1979 dawned, the role of the Doctor was being played, as it had been for just over four years, by the *bona fide* English bohemian and *bon viveur* Tom Baker: long scarf, curly hair, toothy grin, jelly babies, often looked like he had fallen down a lot.

January 1979 also saw the launch of *The Book Tower*, a new ITV series about books for children. It was the creation of Joy Whitby, head of children's television at Yorkshire Television, and the children's books expert Anne Wood. At the BBC, Whitby had devised *Jackanory*; Wood was a former teacher and founder of the quarterly magazine *Books for Your Children*.⁴ These women knew what they were talking about; moreover, they were in charge. *The Book Tower* was going to be a six-part celebration of reading, offering children a little of what they might expect from a book and a lot they might not. The Book Tower itself would be one wing of a gothic country pile, where the atmosphere was weird, unpredictable and magical – the qualities of the best children's literature. What *The Book Tower* required, Wood and Whitby realised, was a presenter who could be every bit as weird, unpredictable and magical as the phantasmagorical Tower itself. But where to find one?

Tom Baker was the ideal candidate. For a start, he was an extremely

3. *On The Outside, It Looked Like An Old-Fashioned Police Box*, BBC Radio 4, 2009

4. Anne Wood later helped adapt the Moomin books for television and, with collaborator Andrew Davenport, went on to create *Teletubbies* and *In the Night Garden*. In 2000, she was awarded the CBE for services to children's broadcasting. "I saw no reason why children's programming couldn't be of the same quality as a good book. What matters is the child's imaginative development. Stories connect. I think children find stories exciting, wherever and however they encounter them."

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popular Doctor Who. When he wasn't being Doctor Who, he was conducting whirlwind marriages and falling out of Soho pubs with Francis Bacon, which gave him an alluring *Weltschmerz*. What hinterland! If not actively weird, he was definitely an eccentric. Actually, no, he was downright, bug-eyed weird. And according to an interview in *Look-in*, at home he had a collection of 150 dictionaries ("Whether it's some kind of inadequacy, I don't know..."). The article concluded thus: 'So whether it's as Timelord (sic.) or bookworm, Tom Bakers (sic.) is certainly a hero to million (sic.)' Never mind a million, he was already a hero to one: me.⁵

Recently I watched an early episode of *The Book Tower*. As the dramatic opening titles fade away, there is Tom Baker in his pomp, sitting in a book-lined drawing room, all 'casual bohemian elegance', as they habitually described his Doctor in the Target books. With great deliberation, he appears to be spooning sugar into a mug of tea. One spoon, two spoons, three, four...

"HELLO!" booms Tom, glancing up at us in mock surprise. "No, it's not sugar! IT'S SAND!"

This episode remains captivating viewing all these years later. Six books, a few filmed inserts, some nifty rostrum camera work and lots and lots of Tom Baker, reading and chatting and larking about with a teapot or a sword or a box of hedgehogs.⁶ It was inspired casting. Although the show was unapologetically all about the six books, it is difficult to imagine

5. Twenty years later, I sat next to Tom Baker at a publication dinner for his autobiography, *Who On Earth Is Tom Baker?* The wine flowed freely, with the result that, by the next day, I had forgotten almost everything about the much-anticipated evening except the following exchange. Tom Baker: "You're a very good-looking boy." Me, taken aback: "Thank you, Mr Baker." Tom Baker, ominously: "But what will you do when your looks fade, mm?"

6. The box of hedgehogs is utilised for *Mattie: The Story of a Hedgehog* by GD Griffiths, though in the show Tom calls it *The Biography of a Hedgehog*, which I prefer. Here are the other books: *The Boy With the Bronze Axe* by Kathleen Fidler, *Introducing Archaeology* by Magnus Magnusson, *Klondike Arthur* by Alan Coren, *Making Horror Costumes and Disguises* by Malcolm Carrick and *The Adventures of Tommy* by HG Wells. In 1999 Baker published his own bestselling children's story entitled, with typically Bakerish aplomb, *The Boy Who Kicked Pigs*.

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it working without the teeth and curls.

The Book Tower ran for 10 years, with an ever-changing cast of frontmen, none of whom could hold a candle to Tom. The show was cancelled in 1989, with Timmy Mallett at the controls. In the same decade, *Doctor Who* was suffering a parallel decline. It too had continued with an ever-changing cast of frontmen, none of whom could hold a candle to Tom, and it too was cancelled in 1989, with Timmy Mallett at the controls.⁷ *The Book Tower* lives on in the fond recollection of bookish middle-aged TV-geeks and the private collections of nutty *Doctor Who* completists. It was only thanks to a man who knew a man who had traded a kidney or an eyeball for it, that I was able to secure this episode (thanks Simon!)

So working with Neil on the *Adventures with the Wife in Space* book brought together several things I love: the children's television series *Dr Who and Company*; books; the Target novelisations (such as my favourite, *The Silurians* by Larry Betts); the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies of fandom; and, most importantly, humour with an occasional dash of pathos mixed in.

I knew from the first time I read the blog, somewhere around the late Troughtons, that Neil Perryman was a very funny writer. What made it work – and what I think is often overlooked when people talk about *Wife in Space* or leave comments on the website disapproving of Sue's verdict on a particular story or Master or type of Land Rover – is that the blog was written to be amusing, rather than as a scientific survey of the history of *Doctor Who*, its characters or British all-terrain four-wheel drive vehicles; that the blog came to function as just such a survey, albeit an

7. It wasn't actually Timmy Mallett of course, that was an attempt at a *Doctor Who*-based joke. The seventh and, for some years, final incarnation of the Doctor was played by Sylvester McCoy, a nice man but an actor with all the natural gravitas and *Weltschmerz* of Timmy Mallett. In July 2014, at a public event in Charing Cross Road, London, with Neil and the author Jenny Colgan, I read this passage aloud to an audience which, far from laughing at what I had intended to be a bit of affectionate teasing, booed both it and me. These disgruntled Whovians had failed to comprehend that I was one of them, except with a sense of humour. Arguably. [NOTE: GK-W was there and will confirm all of the above.]

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unscientific one, is an unexpected bonus for us all.

In my professional and personal opinions, there are three elements that make these blogs funny. The first is that *Doctor Who* itself can often be very funny, intentionally or otherwise; furthermore, nobody takes the piss out of it better than its own fans, just as no one abuses a football team more enthusiastically than its own supporters. The second thing that makes *Wife in Space* so consistently droll is, of course, the wife. I have met Sue Perryman many times now. She is every bit as perceptive, hilarious and foul-mouthed as she comes across on the page; she never fails to gaze wonderingly at my soft, white hands and express incredulity that they have ever done an honest day's work or that they even belong to a man.

But finally what really makes *Wife in Space* funny is that Neil is a funny writer. He takes all of the above and makes it play. He knows his subjects. He is brilliant at conveying character via dialogue. He understands the part that rhythm plays in comic writing. He knows the value of a strategically-deployed obscenity, the twat. And he delivers proper, laugh-out-loud gags; I would cheerfully kill you all to have come up with a line as great as, '*Jaws 4* is so bad it makes *Jaws 3* look like *Jaws 2*'.

It's partly for this reason that I can state *Adventures with the Wife in Space: Living with Doctor Who* represents one of the highlights of my career: it's a great book written by a very funny writer about things I love. Also it was so much fun to put together. It would be both fair and factually accurate to say I have never laughed so much while working on a book. It wasn't always easy and on several occasions I wanted to replace comedy with violence.⁸ Neil particularly enjoyed pointing out the ways in which he was a much bigger *Doctor Who* fan than me – several of the mistakes in the opening paragraphs of this foreword are

8. For posterity, Neil's daily writing regime at this time was as follows: get up about 9am, smoke a cigarette, watch Jeremy Kyle, tell me how caring and compassionate Jeremy Kyle is really, smoke another cigarette, switch on the computer, swear at something on the internet, reluctantly open a Word document, stop for cigarette break, return to computer, stare blankly at the screen, express despair at ever being able to write anything funny ever again, describe the Myrka as a "floppy green waddlefuck", howl with laughter, celebrate with a cigarette, play *Grand Theft Auto* on the Playstation for two hours, and so on. But he got it done.

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slip-ups I made in conversation and which he never let me forget. But, as with the blog, Neil worked hard to make the book as good as it could be and on publication was rewarded with terrific feedback from readers and reviewers, with the single exception I mentioned earlier, a baffled ‘three-star’ write-up in DWM. ‘Is it laugh-out-loud hilarious?’ pondered someone with the obviously made-up name of Graham Kibble-White, ‘In truth, not often.’⁹

Anyway, here is *Volume 5* of *The Wife in Space*. I hope you enjoy reading this book more than Tom Baker enjoyed making most of the episodes discussed within it. I am honoured to have been involved, however peripherally, in the *Wife in Space* project, whether it’s some kind of inadequacy, I don’t know. But whether it’s as Timelord (sic.) or bookworm, Neil Perry (sic.) is certainly a hero to million (sic.) and to me. Thanks Neil and Sue, you were fantastic.

Or as Doctor Who himself would say, may you live long and prosper!

[NOTE TO GK-W: *Thanks for fixing that last one Graham, would have been really embarrassing to get it wrong.*]

Andy Miller

October 2016

9. EDITORIAL NOTE FROM GK-W: ‘Don’t see the point of this quote or yet another superfluous footnote. Moderately amusing at best. Can we lose it?’

INTRODUCTION

Unless you're the sort of person who begins a multi-volume series of books with the fifth instalment, you probably know what to expect by now. Having said that, something did happen between *The Invasion of Time* and *The Ribos Operation* which fundamentally changed the way I approached the blog (and consequently this book), and that was our publishing deal with Faber & Faber.¹

In short, because they understandably wanted to release *Adventures with the Wife in Space: Living With Doctor Who* in the run-up to the programme's 50th anniversary, our experiment suddenly had a deadline; for some reason or other, Faber weren't that keen on publishing a book about a blog that hadn't finished yet (and believe me, I did check), which meant I had to wrap everything up by February 2013 if I hoped to deliver the final manuscript by the end of March.²

So, because I was under pressure to a) finish the blog and b) transform my anecdote about missing the first 10 minutes of *The Ribos Operation* into something the people who published Philip Larkin would be vaguely happy with, I took the following short-cut: I stopped bridging the gaps between Sue's comments with original prose, and instead I began using dialogue I transcribed from the episodes themselves.

This must have saved me, oh, half an hour at least.

Unfortunately, many of these transcripts look ridiculous in retrospect, probably because while it's entirely reasonable to expect a *Doctor Who* fan to recall the precise moment where Tom says, "Do I have the right?" or,

1. I wasn't allowed to talk about the book deal until we reached *The Visitation*, just in case I bottled it halfway through the first chapter.

2. I failed to meet both deadlines and the book was delayed as a result. I still feel bad about this, although we did give it a bloody good shot, and the 74 episodes which make up seasons 16 to 18 (and this book) were watched over 54 days, which was insane, frankly. Oh, and I have to take issue with Andy Miller's description of my writing routine in his foreword: I did not claim that Jeremy Kyle was a caring and compassionate person, and if I did I was only pulling Andy's leg. Everything else was pretty much spot-on.

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“They’re indomitable!” who can honestly remember the time he said “a hamster with a blunt penknife could do it quicker”?³

And that’s why I’ve removed these transcripts from this book. Plus, I wasn’t entirely sure where I stood from a copyright point of view, so there was that to consider as well.

These minor edits aside, *Volume 5* includes exactly the same nonsense as before, only this time it’s the Black Guardian on Sue’s radar instead of the Master, and entropy is slowly increasingly.

Neil Perryman
September 2016

3. Yes, I know you’ve committed Part Four of *The Androids of Tara* to memory, but you get my point.

SEASON SIXTEEN

WASN'T THIS A ROUND ON
THE KRYPTON FACTOR?



This illustration funded by Pete White

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

THE RIBOS OPERATION

BLOGGED: 9 July 2012

Part One

Sue: How many episodes is this one?

Me: Twenty-six.

Sue: Are you taking the piss?! I haven't got that kind of attention span!

I press 'play'.

Sue: So, another season, then?

Me: Yes.

Sue: With the same producer?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Has he been told to pull his socks up? Have the BBC given him more money? And has Tom Baker been told to start taking his job more seriously? If the answer to any of the above is, "No", I'll have to resort to negative scores. I'm serious, Neil.

Inside the TARDIS...

Sue: Has Tom Baker got herpes?

Me: No, he was playing with an actor's dog and it bit his lip off. They had to put it down, the poor thing.

Sue: WHAT?!

I admit that I'm only joking (I don't want this episode to lose any unnecessary marks). And speaking of dogs...

Sue: K9 Mark II is a lot quieter than K9 Mark I, which is a relief. Has he got the same personality as K9 Mark I, because he wouldn't remember

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anything that happened to the other dog, would he? Do the two K9s ever meet? That would be good. Good, but noisy.

Unfortunately, the Doctor and K9's holiday plans are interrupted when the TARDIS is forced to land and the Doctor is blinded by a brilliant light.

Sue: Is it God? Please tell me it isn't God.

The Doctor enters a barren landscape where a man in a safari suit is calmly sipping crème de menthe.

Sue: Is it God's turn to read the book on *Jackanory* this week?

The White Guardian tells the Doctor everything he needs to know about the Key to Time.

Sue: Haven't we seen this before? Didn't William Hartnell sort this out?

Me: That was *The Keys of Marinus*. This is a bit more epic than that.

Sue: And a lot longer. Seriously, though, 26 parts? *Really?*

The White Guardian warns the Doctor to keep his wits about him because the Black Guardian wants to get his paws on the Key to Time as well.

Sue: It sounds like something out of a fairy tale. Why haven't we heard of these Guardians before now?

The White Guardian provides the Doctor with a new assistant to aid him in his mission to recover the Key's six segments, whether he likes it or not.

Sue: The Man from Del Monte says, "Do as you're fucking told!"

The Doctor returns to the TARDIS to find Romanadvoratnelundar already waiting for him.

Sue: Put your tongue back in, love.

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The Doctor wants to know if she can make a nice cup of tea.

Sue: The sexist bastard. That's outrageous!

When the initial sparring is over, I ask Sue for her first impressions of Romana.

Sue: It's nice to have somebody sensible for a change. But how did she get there? Was she hiding in the bathroom?

Me: I've always assumed that the White Guardian transported her into the TARDIS somehow.

Sue: So this White Guardian can do pretty much anything, then?

Me: Pretty much.

Sue: So why doesn't he get off his backside and find the Key to Time himself? It'll probably only take him a couple of minutes. It would save us a lot of time, that's for sure. Just think, this could be 26 minutes instead of 26 episodes.

On the planet Ribos, two conmen, Garron and Unstoffs, are about to break into a castle.

Sue: He's definitely famous.

Unfortunately, before I can congratulate my wife for recognising Iain Cuthbertson in a big hat, she has to go and ruin it.

Sue: He was in that advert that ran for ages. He always had a cold.

I'm not making this up.

Sue: Locketts. No, wait... Tunes! "I'd like a return ticket to Dottingham, please."

Me: You're so close, it's beginning to scare me. He actually played Malcolm in...

Sue: Malcolm! That's it! "Of course you can, Malcolm!". It's all coming

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back to me now.

Me: What about the guy on the left? Do you recognise him?

Sue: Not a clue.

Unstoffee is lowered into a room that's filled with important-looking relics.

Sue: It's *Medieval Impossible*.

Meanwhile, the Doctor and Romana are still bickering in the TARDIS.

Sue: This is very funny. I like Romana already. It looks like the Doctor has finally met his match.

The TARDIS arrives on Ribos.

Sue: The sets are excellent. They're doing a really good job given that this is filmed entirely in a TV studio. I actually prefer it when they stick to one thing or the other. It's much more consistent. The fake snow isn't that bad, either.

The Doctor lays down some ground rules for Romana. Rule one: do what he says. Rule two: stick close to him. And rule three: let him do all the talking.

Sue: And rule four: shut the fucking TARDIS door behind you! Argh, that makes me so angry!

Garron meets another set of new arrivals on Ribos, namely the Graff Vynda-K and his loyal aide, Sholakh. Garron explains to his guests that Ribos has an elliptic orbit which results in seasons that last for decades.

Sue: It's turned into *Game of Thrones* again.

Garron tells the Vynda-K that he should pretend to hail from the north in order to avoid suspicion.

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Sue: See! That can't be a coincidence, can it?

The Graff Vynda-K is a very angry man.

Sue: This guy thinks he's starring in *Hamlet*. He needs to throttle back a bit. Still, the cast is very good. I have a good feeling about this story.

Me: (*Pointing at Prentis Hancock*) Do you recognise him?

Sue: I recognise his voice.

Me: He's been in loads of *Doctor Who*. He's my favourite bad actor, remember?

Sue: Oh yeah. Me and my big mouth.

The episode climaxes with the Doctor and Romana coming face-to-face with a Shrivenzale.

Sue: That ain't too bad.

Did you hear that? The Shrivenzale ain't too bad!

Sue: Yeah, that was a good start. The script is very good. Does Robert Holmes write all 26 episodes? That would be cool.

Part Two

Sue: Aside from the guards' peripheral vision problems – as per bloody usual – I'm really enjoying this.

Huge swathes of this episode pass without comment, which is always a good sign. In fact, this episode and The Seeds of Doom Part Five are currently tied when it comes to Sue keeping her gob shut (unless you count all those times she fell asleep, of course).

Sue: So this is basically an intergalactic version of *The Real Hustle*?

She refuses to watch the fake one.

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Sue: I like it. I like it a lot.

And then, after an extended period of silence, Sue drops a bombshell.

Sue: I used to have a hairy muff.

Me: I'm not saying anything!

Sue: You know, the furry thing that he's using to keep his hands warm. I had one of those when I was a kid. What's so funny about that?

The Doctor and Romana can't agree on how to complete their mission.

Sue: I've just noticed that Romana is running around in kinky boots. Is that practical, especially in this weather?

Me: I'm not complaining.

Sue: The Doctor and Romana have great chemistry, though. Hang on, didn't Tom Baker marry Romana? I'm sure you told me that, once.

Me: That's a different Romana.

Sue: So there's more than one Romana?

Me: Shit. I've said too much already.

Sue: How can there be two companions with the same name? How does that work?

Me: How do you think it works?

Sue: I don't know. Is she her daughter?

Me: She's a Time Lord! Time Lady. Whatever.

Sue: Oh, I thought she was an air traffic controller or something like that. So she can regenerate, then? Oh, that makes sense, I suppose. So when does that happen?

And that's about it for Part Two of The Ribos Operation, and the episode concludes with the Graff Vynda-K threatening to execute the Doctor, Romana and Garron.

Sue: He's breaking the fourth wall! Everybody's at it in this programme. I blame Tom Baker for not setting a good example.

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As the credits roll, Sue makes a suggestion:

Sue: Let's watch one more.

Me: What about our two episodes a night rule?

Sue: Do you think anyone gives a shit about that stupid rule? No? Exactly. Stick it on.

Part Three

When the Graff Vynda-K slaps the Doctor across his face with a glove, the Doctor grabs it and slaps him right back again.

Sue: This is the best pantomime I think I've ever seen. It's very funny. You could imagine Matt Smith doing something like that.

Prentice Hancock discovers that the Graff's gold has been stolen.

Sue: This story is so good, even this guy hasn't ruined it yet.

Having said that, there is something odd about the Graff's soldiers.

Sue: Why are they walking around with wastepaper bins on their heads?

The Doctor blows into a whistle and K9 bolts for the TARDIS' exit.

Sue: Aw bless him, he's stuck.

A Seeker is employed to find the Graff's missing gold.

Sue: She looks very familiar. Have you shown me this before? This is ringing some very loud bells, Neil.

Me: You're probably confusing this with the David Tennant story where the Time Lords came back and he had to regenerate at the end. Remember?

Sue: I cried.

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Me: Yes, I know you did. Anyway, the Time Lords were hanging around with a woman who looked – and acted – a lot like her.

Sue: Yeah, that's probably it. I knew I'd seen her somewhere before.

Me: (*Pointing at Iain Cuthbertson*) So what about him?

Sue: No. Sorry.

When Garron admits he sells planets to unwitting fools, the Doctor is almost impressed.

Sue: Tom always brings his A-game if the guest stars are any good. And you can always tell if Tom likes the script because he looks like he actually gives a shit. It's when he gets a bad script he can't be bothered to try. He's really enjoying himself this week. I bet these two had a few drinks together after filming.

When Unstoffe is pursued by some guards, he accepts refuge from a man living rough on the outskirts of the city. His name is Binro.

Sue: It's Brian's mum from *Life of Brian*. "He's a very naughty boy!"

As Binro begins to tell Unstoffe about his heretical theories, you could have heard a pin drop...

Nicol: Mum, did you put that washing in I asked you to?

Me: Nicol! For fuck's sake!

Sue: Leave her alone. She just got back from her weekend away. Sit down, love, and tell us all about it.

I hit the 'pause' button so Nicol and her mother can engage in a lengthy catch-up. When she finally leaves us to it, I play the scene from the beginning again. It was worth it.

Sue: That was so sweet. I could feel myself welling up at the end. That was lovely. However, I'm not sure the kids would have enjoyed this. Did you enjoy it when you first saw it, Neil?

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Me: The only memory I have of this story is that I missed the first 10 minutes of Part One because my dad dragged me to a football match. It wasn't even a good football match. Hell, it wasn't even a mediocre one. It was a weird conference league pub team in the middle of nowhere and I hated every minute of it. Anyway, the match finished at 4.45pm and the first episode started at 5.45pm, so we had plenty of time to get home. But my dad didn't drive at the time, so we had to wait for his mate to give us a lift back. And this so-called mate wanted to have a drink in the bar first (which I wasn't allowed into), and I had to wait outside in this draughty corridor in the freezing cold (it was pissing down, by the way), eating pork scratchings and hoping they'd get a bloody move on. I sulked all the way home, knowing we'd never make it. So I didn't have a clue who Romana was, or what the Key to Time was *for ages*. I've never forgiven my dad for that.

Sue: I'm sorry I asked.

The episode concludes with the Graff's men closing in on Garron, the Doctor and Romana.

Sue: That wasn't the best cliffhanger in the world. It's almost exactly the same as the last one.

Me: That's the trouble when you watch these episodes back-to-back like this.

Sue: Speaking of which, shall we knock them all out tonight?

Me: All 26 episodes?

Sue: Very funny. I think I've worked out how this season works. I'm not completely stupid, you know.

Me: Okay, but only if you promise to cut back on your hairy muff references.

Sue: Shut up and put it on before I change my mind.

Part Four

It's the moment we've all been dreading. Yes, the Shrivenzale takes centre stage.

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Sue: It isn't *that* bad. My only problem with it is that it doesn't *need* to be there. They could have removed it completely and you wouldn't have missed it. It's okay, I guess. I've seen a lot worse.

We're on safer ground with Binro, whom Sue adores, especially when he asks Unstoffe to explain the wonders of space travel to him.

Sue: They'd better put him on a spaceship at the end of this story. Or else.

It turns out that Garron really hails from Hackney Wick.

Sue: They should have given these two their own spin-off series. It could have been like *Minder* in space. Or *Only Fools and Horses* in space.

Me: What about *Budgie* in space?

Sue: *Budgie*! That's where I know him from! I knew I recognised him from somewhere. He's a great actor. I loved *Budgie*.

Binro volunteers to search for Garron.

Sue: They'd better not kill Binro. There'll be hell on if they do.

Meanwhile, Romana and K9 are wandering through a maze.

Sue: Romana is a lot nicer to K9 than Leela was. Even when she's telling him off, she still gives him a little pat on the head.

Binro is tragically killed by the Graff's men when he's caught carrying a communicator given to him by Unstoffe.

Sue: You cunts!

The catacombs are blown up and Sholakh is killed by falling rocks. The Graff Vynda-K is devastated. Almost as devastated as Sue was when Binro was killed.

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Sue: I almost feel sorry for the bad guy, now. He really loved his best mate, didn't he?

The Graff is so upset, actor Paul Seed has no option left but to turn his performance up to 12 (he's been hovering around 11 since Part Two).

Sue: He thinks he's on a stage in Stratford. He just about gets away with it because this looks like a Shakespeare play. So it sort of fits, I guess.

After killing the Seeker, the Graff hands one of his guards (who is actually the Doctor in disguise) a bomb to hold.

Sue: Why don't they just walk out of there together? Why blow anything up at all? *What's the point?*

Me: He believes the Seeker's prophesy that only one person will survive.

Sue: Then he's even madder than he looks.

The Graff is consumed by rage and nostalgia as he imagines himself in the midst of some terrible battle.

Sue: It's quite deep, this. I bet the kids didn't get a lot out of it, though.

The Graff Vynda-K rounds a corner and explodes.

Sue: So the Doctor switched the bomb for the jethrik? I'm not sure how I feel about that... Actually, fuck him; he killed Binro.

Garron and Unstoffs bid the Doctor and Romana farewell.

Sue: I'm pleased the conmen didn't die. I wouldn't have forgiven Robert Holmes if he'd killed them. I'm still struggling to forgive him for Binro.

Back on the TARDIS, Romana transforms the jethrik into the first segment of the Key to Time.

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Sue: They should have waited until they had all the pieces in one place. It must be dangerous leaving that thing lying around, especially when they never remember to shut the TARDIS doors behind them.

The Score

Sue: What a great script (probably one of the best scripts we've ever had), great actors, great sets, great carpentry, a quieter K9, and a good start for the new companion. Even Tom Baker was back on form. There was something missing, though, but I can't put my finger on it. So yeah, it wasn't perfect but it's pretty close.

9/10

Me: I'll settle for 90 per cent.

COMMENT: "The only thing more joyous and heart-warming than watching *The Ribos Operation* is to read about how joyous and heart-warming someone else finds it." – Steven Schapansky

NOTES: My anecdote about missing the first 10 minutes of *The Ribos Operation* would eventually form the centrepiece of a horrendously misjudged after-dinner speech I gave at a literary festival in Guernsey whilst wearing a fez. One day, when the therapy's finally over, I hope I'll be able to talk about it. Incidentally, Sue thinks I'm over-reacting, and I wasn't that bad. In much the same way she thinks the Shrivenzale wasn't that bad, I suppose.

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BLOGGED: 11 July 2012

Part One

Nicol is a huge Douglas Adams fan (her nickname for me when she was growing up was Slartibartfast), so it was inevitable that she would join us for this one (although getting people to pester her on Twitter definitely helped).

Sue: So how did *Doctor Who* get their hands on Douglas Adams?

Me: He wasn't famous at the time. In fact, *Doctor Who* fans were dismayed when they heard that a comedian had been hired to write for the show.

Nicol: Idiots. He's a genius.

The story begins on the bridge of a spaceship, where a nervous Mr Fibuli is reporting to his very impatient captain.

Sue: Oh look, it's Leo Sayer's dad.

The Captain has a robotic parrot on his shoulder.

Sue: I bet Tom Baker was jealous of that.

Nicol: Why?

Sue: He wanted a parrot for a companion. Neil told me.

I sit back as Sue takes custody of Doctor Who's lore for a bit.

Sue: It was either that or a talking cabbage. Tom Baker is a bit mad, you see.

Nicol: You don't say.

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The Captain, on the other hand, is very, very angry.

Sue: Did he just shout, "Balls!"?

Me: No, he shouted, "Baubles!"

Sue: I can't understand a word he's saying.

The Captain is covered in cybernetic enhancements.

Nicol: No wonder you can't understand him, he's chewing on a slab of metal!

Sue: He looks like the Borg. I thought the Cybermen were a bit like the Borg, but this is taking the piss.

This captain seems to be obsessed with mining.

Sue: Oh, change the bloody record. Every other week, it's the same story: mine, mine, mine, mine, mine...

The Captain makes an important public service announcement to the citizens of Zanak.

Nicol: Worst crowd scene ever.

Me: It's supposed to be a random street corner, not a free concert in Hyde Park.

Nicol: Look, the last time I saw *Doctor Who* (Underworld Part Four) there were loads of extras standing around doing nothing, and yet here, when you need people to actually do something, they get this shambles instead.

Me: Hooray!

Sue: That woman with the red hair can't even shout hooray on cue. She's way out.

A group of hooded figures are monitoring the faces in this 'crowd'.

Sue: They should have got this lot to double up.

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Nicol: They probably did. That's why they're wearing hoodies – it's so you don't notice them standing in the street at the same time.

How did I raise someone to be so cynical?

Nicol: Whenever I watch an episode of *Doctor Who*, the Doctor seems to have a new companion. He's really getting through them.

The Doctor and Romana disagree on the best way to fly the TARDIS.

Sue: I love Romana. You show him, love.

Nicol: This is very similar to that bit in the new series. You know, when River Song demonstrates to the Doctor how to fly his TARDIS properly.

Sue: Are you saying the Moff has plagiarised Douglas Adams?

Me: Everybody plagiarises Douglas Adams.

Nicol: Well, if you are going to steal, steal from the best.

The TARDIS materialises on the planet Zanak, even though it should have materialised on the planet Calufrax.

Sue: Is K9 only allowed on planets with flat surfaces? I bet we never see him on location. He's an indoor dog, isn't he? Maybe they should have given the Doctor a robotic cat instead. That would have made more sense.

The Doctor tries to investigate the disappearance of an entire planet, but the locals decide to ignore him.

Sue: Is he invisible? Is this a parallel universe? Is he out of phase with time?

Me: No, this is supposed to be funny.

Sue: Oh.

Romana, on the other hand, has no trouble making contact with the natives. She even offers them jelly babies in exchange for information.

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Sue: I like the role reversal. It's very funny. Is the Doctor going to be the assistant in this one? I bet Tom Baker wasn't very happy about that.

Zanak's streets are littered with diamonds and rubies, but that's nothing compared to the chunk of discarded voolium the Doctor finds later – it's one of the most precious stones in the entire galaxy.

Sue: Really? It looks like a lump of snot to me.

And then we get our first good look at a Mentiad.

Sue: He's definitely been up all night. What are this lot called again?

Me: The Mentiads.

Sue: Oh. I thought they said, "the men in rags".

Meanwhile, a young man named Pralix is ranting and raving in his sleep, as his grandfather and sister look on helplessly.

Sue: It's like that scene in *Trainspotting* when Ewan McGregor's parents make him go cold turkey.

Nicol: He's staring at a baby crawling across the ceiling as we speak.

When we encounter Zanak's security forces for the first time, Nicol and Sue demonstrate they have a one-track mind.

Nicol: There's a very strong S&M vibe here.

Sue: The costume designer on this show was obsessed, Nicol. There's a lot of bondage gear in *Doctor Who*. You can't move for it.

The Mentiads and Zanak's security forces are engaged in a one-sided battle.

Sue: How can they miss their targets from that range? Even UNIT got closer than that and they were shit!

Nicol: This is rubbish. But you can't blame Douglas Adams. This isn't his fault. I bet it looked fine on paper.

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The Captain continues to berate Mr Fibuli.

Sue: They're a great double-act, these two. They spark off each other really well.

The Mentiads break into Pralix's house, and the episode concludes with the Doctor being assaulted by their combined psychic force.

Sue: That was a terrible cliffhanger. They had two goes at it and it still didn't work.

Me: How are you managing so far, Nicol?

Nicol: It's all right. It isn't Douglas' best work, that's for sure, but it has its moments.

Sue: I'm a bit confused. Actually, I haven't got the faintest idea what's going on.

Part Two

Romana is arrested and taken to a waiting air car.

Sue: It's Bully's star prize – a speedboat!

Nicol: A mid-life crisis speedboat by the look of it. Look at that red leather interior.

The air car takes off.

Sue: And now it's turned into *Grease*.

When Sue and Nicol start signing, "We go together like rama-lama-lama-ka-dinga-da-dinga-dong", I bury my head in my hands.

Sue: This reminds me of *Star Wars*. The architecture of the city looks like Tunisia, and they definitely had a car like this, it just didn't go that high.

When Romana is introduced to the Captain, she refers to herself as a Time

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Lord.

Sue: See, she's a Time Lord. None of that Time Lady rubbish you came out with the other day.

Romana immediately sticks her nose in the Captain's affairs.

Sue: This isn't as funny as the last story. And there's too much going on.

Nicol: I like the fact that it's busy. It doesn't stand still long enough for you to be bored by anything.

When the Doctor uses an inertia corridor to transport him to the Captain's bridge, he promises never to be cruel to an electron in a particle accelerator again.

Nicol: *Hitchhikers* rip-off!

Me: I think he's allowed to plagiarise himself, Nic.

The Doctor and Romana investigate a nearby mine shaft.

Sue: It's Horden colliery! They haven't made any effort to make this look futuristic or sci-fi – it's just a mine that was probably on strike the day they filmed this.

Our heroes enter the bowels of Zanak.

Me: Have you worked it out yet, Sue?

Sue: Is it something to do with parallel universes? Or do they keep travelling backwards in time so the empty mines fill up again, which then creates a time paradox? Am I close?

The Doctor reveals the awful truth: Zanak eats planets.

Sue: Ooh, I didn't see that coming. That's mental.

Nicol: That's Douglas Adams.

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The Doctor and Romana head back to the mine's entrance, but they are intercepted by Pralix, who is now a fully-fledged Mentiad.

Sue: I still haven't got a clue what this lot have to do with anything.

Cue credits.

Sue: Well, I could definitely watch another one.

Nicol: I couldn't. I love Douglas Adams but I've had enough for one night, thanks.

Part Three

If there's one problem I face watching Doctor Who with Sue and Nicol, it's the amount of singing that's involved. All it takes is a character to say something innocent like "good vibrations" and there's simply no stopping them.

Sue: Why do all the planets in this story sound like pharmaceutical products? Zanak sounds like something you'd take for heartburn, while Calufrax sounds like something you'd use to treat thrush.

Sue isn't impressed with Pralix's new Mentiad look.

Sue: If you took Dave Hill from Slade, and cut his fringe off after he'd taken loads of speed and hadn't slept for several days, that's what you'd be left with. It isn't a great look, to be honest.

The Doctor tells Romana that each time Zanak mines a planet, there's a fantastic blast of psychic energy. Nicol laughs.

Sue: Is that bad science, love?

Nicol: It isn't bad science, it's made-up science. There is a difference, you know.

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Sue and Nicol can't agree on who the Captain reminds them of the most.

Sue: He's half-man, half-Darth Vader.

Nicol: No, he's half-man, half-Kanye West.

Me: Eh?

Nicol: Sorry, *Doctor Who* fans won't know who Kanye West is, or what kind of glasses he wears. Look it up.

Thankfully, she draws another parallel to something Doctor Who fans will be familiar with.

Nicol: He's the archetypal Douglas Adams' villain. He reminds me of the Vogon captain from *Hitchhiker's*. He just needs to write some poetry.

An unconscious Doctor dreams of scolding former companions.

Sue: Hey, the Doctor is dreaming about Leela. I'm not sure if that's sad or pervy.

Romana and Mula (Pralix's sister) join forces with the Mentiads.

Nicol: They look like the women in Abba.

Sue: Benny and Bjorn have really left themselves go then.

The Captain gives the Doctor a guided tour of his mummified planet collection. The Doctor is appalled.

Sue: I've never seen the Doctor behave like this before. I can really believe that he's genuinely pissed off. Tom Baker must really love this script.

The Doctor is attacked by the Captain's Polyphase Avatron. But...

Sue: Yay!

Nicol: K9 to the rescue!

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The robotic pets fight it out.

Nicol: The parrot is spraying the place with electronic bird poo.

Sue: The parrot is the only thing I don't like about this story. It's taking the pirate theme a bit too far. I don't know. Maybe the kids liked it.

While K9 keeps the Captain's pet at bay, the Doctor learns that the evil Queen Xanxia has been suspended in time.

Me: They paid this actress extra cash to take her false teeth out.

Nicol: Why?

Me: Compensation for her not looking her best, I suppose.

Sue: Yeah, cos she's a stunner when she has her teeth in.

And then...

Sue and Nicol: Yay!

K9 returns with the Avatron stuck to his mouth.

Sue: Good boy, K9!

Nicol: Why can't our dog do that? Our lawn is littered with stupid birds and Buffy barely notices them.

The Doctor returns the inert pet to the Captain.

Sue: But if it's electronic, surely he could just fix it?

Me: It's an ex-parrot. That parrot is no more. It has ceased to be.

Nicol: It's joined the choir invisible!

Sue: I walked straight into that, didn't I?

The episode concludes with the Doctor forced to walk the plank.

Sue: This is getting a bit silly, now.

Nicol: Yep, that's Douglas Adams, too.

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The Doctor plunges a thousand feet to his death.

Sue: On second thoughts, that was a pretty good cliffhanger. How's he going to get out of that?

Nicol: Don't worry, Romana will catch him in her air car.

Part Four

The Doctor – who used a holographic projector to fake his own death (obviously) – reveals that the Captain's nurse isn't who she appears to be.

Sue: I knew there was something funny about her.

Me: Of course you did, dear.

The Mentiads get into a fight with some guards, and the Mentiads' leader throw rocks at them with his mental powers.

Nicol: He's well pleased with that. Hey, look at me, I can throw rocks with the power of my mind! How cool am I?

Romana grabs a gun and shoots a guard in the face.

Sue: *Doctor Who* shouldn't do gun-fights. They never work, and they don't suit the programme.

It becomes clear that the Captain is nothing more than a puppet dictator who's controlled by his nurse, who is actually a projection of Queen Xanxia. Please keep up at the back.

Me: You must admit that is a clever twist.

Nicol: Yeah, make the woman evil, why don't you?

Sue: I didn't see it coming. But then again, I couldn't see anything coming in this story.

The rest of the episode is punctuated with laughter – the scene where some

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guards are thrown out of an inertia corridor goes down particularly well, as does the Doctor's tale about dropping apples on Isaac Newton's head.

Nicol: I love how the apple in that story was totally insignificant when it came to the discovery of gravity. Thank God for that.

The Doctor spouts some serious technobabble, which Sue can't follow and Nicol can't take seriously, that results in the screen pulsating rapidly as the TARDIS and Zanak attempt to materialise around Earth at the same time.

Nicol: This is hurting my eyes. Tell me when it's over.

Don't worry, I made sure she didn't miss the psychic spanner.

Nicol: Oh dear. That is really bad.

Sue: It's shit!

Me: You think so? You should have seen the original!

Sue: Is this a new special effect? Was the original effect even worse? How could it have been worse? Show me the original.

Me: I can't. They didn't include it on the DVD.

Sue: WHAT? I bet the fans went mental!

The bridge explodes and Mr Fibuli is killed. The Captain is completely devastated by this development.

Sue: This happened in the last story. Do all the villains in this season have love affairs with their right-hand men?

Nicol: I thought homoeroticism only came into *Doctor Who* when Russell T Davies took over?

The Captain is killed by his nurse before he can turn on her.

Sue: I can't believe I actually feel sorry for the big oaf.

The Doctor comes up with a cunning plan which involves hyperspatial force

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

fields and inverted gravity fields.

Sue: Okay, I'm completely lost. Nicol, what does this mean?

Nicol: Don't look at me!

Sue: It *sounds* plausible.

Nicol: It sounds like Douglas is up against a deadline and he's making it up.

Whatever the Doctor's plan entails, it works perfectly, and the episode concludes with the Doctor rigging the ship with explosives.

Sue: That felt like a very gratuitous explosion to me. So is the queen dead, then?

The Doctor punches the air and the theme music kicks in.

Sue: Hey! I wanted to see them turn that planet into the Key to Time!

Nicol: What the hell is the Key to Time?

The Score

Sue: I'm very disappointed. It was too confusing. The ending felt like a massive cop-out – like they'd run out of time and had to make it up – and while some of the ideas were great, there were far too many of them. It was a bit of a mess, really. An imaginative mess, but a mess nevertheless. The acting was all over the place, too, although I did like the Captain and his mate. It was above average, I suppose. But only just.

6/10

Me: Nicol?

Nicol: Six sounds about right. It was more entertaining than the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* film, I'll give it that. Did Douglas Adams have anything else to do with *Doctor Who*?

Me: Meet us back here in a fortnight.

THE PIRATE PLANET

COMMENT: “I’m very disappointed with Nicol; Douglas had clearly heard of the equipartition theorem/Black Body and applied it (correctly) to the imaginary concept of psychic energy. If something releases a massive amount of energy, and if psychic energy exists, some of it is bound to be released in the psychic range.” – Bob Dillon

NOTES: Fans didn’t overreact when the original version of the psychic spanner was omitted from the official DVD release. Of course they didn’t. They took it in their stride.

Nicol has a Masters degree in Applied Mathematics.

The only time I’ve ever walked out of a cinema and asked for my money back was when I subjected myself to *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* movie in 2005.

One of these statements isn’t true. Can you guess which one?

 THE STONES
OF BLOOD

BLOGGED: 14 July 2012

Part One

Me: This is our 100th story! Can you believe it?

Sue: Is that all? How many stories are left?

Me: Fifty... ish. It's complicated.

Sue: What a surprise. So we're not even two-thirds of the way through this yet? Is that what you're saying?

Me: Don't say it like that. Nicol is baking a celebratory cake for us, so it's not all bad news.

The story begins with the Doctor assembling the first two segments of the Key to Time.

Sue: Good. It annoyed me when we didn't see him pick it up at the end of the last story. Wait a minute... Wasn't this a round on *The Krypton Factor*?

When the Doctor discovers where the next segment is located, he grins like a Cheshire cat.

Sue: It must be Earth, then.

Me: It's so sweet that you know that.

Sue: We're due for a good down-to-earth story after all the spacey stuff we've had to endure lately. Ooh, Stonehenge! The Box of Andromeda is buried under there.

Me: It isn't Stonehenge, and it isn't called the box of Andromeda. You're thinking of the Pandorica.

Sue: I didn't know there was going to be a test this week.

Me: Your memory is terrible.

Sue: No it isn't. I just don't file away unimportant information. Ask me

THE STONES OF BLOOD

who won the men's singles final at Wimbledon in 1982.

Me: Okay, who won the men's singles final at Wimbledon in 1982?

Sue: Jimmy Connors

Me: Okay, so who won it in 1990?

Sue: That's not the point. The point is, I remember the stuff I care about and I discard all the stuff I...

Me: Don't care about?

Sue: Don't give me those sad eyes. And it was Stefan Edberg.

In a stone circle (which definitely isn't Stonehenge), some druids are performing a complicated ritual.

Sue: Not another bloody cult. Cults and miners, that's all we ever get. I bet the perfect *Doctor Who* story would involve mind-controlled Masons mining for minerals.

Me: On Mars.

Sue: Maybe.

Romana swaps her Abba outfit for something more practical.

Me: This was back in the days when you could wear Burberry without looking like a guest on *The Jeremy Kyle Show*.

The Doctor is reminded to be on the look-out for the Black Guardian.

Sue: That means we must meet the Black Guardian this week. Why else would they mention him? I'll keep my eyes peeled for him.

The Doctor brings Romana up to speed on the Guardians and what they represent.

Sue: Is there a Grey Guardian?

Me: Yes, he's the Guardian of badly written slash fiction.

After some witty banter concerning tennis (which Sue adores), our heroes

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

leave the TARDIS so they can retrieve the third segment. The Doctor is immediately drawn to some holes in the grass, and Romana uses her high heels to examine the ground's density.

Sue: I love Romana. I hope she sticks around. These two have great chemistry. It's a fun relationship. It's River Song-esque.

The Time Lords encounter Professor Emilia Rumford in the middle of a stone circle. Sue immediately falls in love with her.

Sue: How is it that this story, and the story before last, are both a lot funnier than the one written by Douglas Adams?

And then, just when we think it can't get any funnier, Vivien Fay turns up.

Sue: She's definitely the Black Guardian. Her pink suit is a diversion.

The Doctor leaves Romana with the two women while he investigates DeVries, the local Druid leader. Romana passes the time helping Vivien and Emilia measure the stone circle.

Sue: Ooh, she's got a dumpy level.

Me: A dumpy what?

Sue: You wouldn't understand. It's like me and that box thing. See, I've forgotten what it's called already.

And then...

Sue: It's Bob the Bastard!

For several weeks now, we have been terrorised by a vicious crow which we've christened Bob. When he's not standing in front of the kitchen window eviscerating dead mice like he's posing for a Jeff Wayne album cover, he's scaring the cats. Sue isn't a big fan of crows.

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Sue: I bet the crow is the Key to Time. Or maybe Bob the Bastard is the Black Guardian?

The Doctor and De Vries discuss druidry over a glass of sherry.

Sue: He's smoking a tab. That's how you know he's the bad guy.

De Vries knocks the Doctor unconscious before he can meet someone who's come dressed in a feathered costume.

Sue: Is that the monster this week? Oh dear. It's a bit... homemade.

Left alone in the stone circle with night falling rapidly (so rapidly you can smell the director's fear), Romana throws off her shoes and follows the sound of the Doctor's voice.

Sue: (*Grimacing*) She'll sting her feet on those nettles if she's not careful. I can't bear to watch this.

The episode concludes with Romana walking backwards off the edge of a cliff.

Sue: That was a cliff-faller instead of a cliffhanger. I don't know what happened there but I think enjoyed the rest.

Part Two

Sue: The cliffhanger was so bad, they're too embarrassed to repeat it. At least they have the decency to admit that, I suppose.

The Doctor's unconscious body is placed on a stone altar surrounded by druids. Luckily for him, Emilia interrupts the sacrifice and the druids leg it.

Sue: I can hear their cars starting up in the background. That's very funny. I bet they drive Volvos. They should have stuck to dogging. It's less

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dangerous, allegedly.

Romana is clinging to the side of a cliff, but Sue isn't impressed.

Sue: Just drop onto that ledge you're standing on, love. It's massive.

Emilia decides to call it a night.

Sue: (As Emilia) I know, let's go for a quick pint at *The Slaughtered Lamb*!

Now she's just showing off.

Sue: Fuck me! K9 on grass! I never thought I'd live to see the day.

K9 struggles to negotiate the unfamiliar terrain at first, but when he gets going, he really gets going.

Sue: Freewheelin' K9! This reminds of the time we ran out of money in France and I had to freewheel all the way back to the ferry terminal.

The Doctor rescues Romana, but when he pulls his companion back to the grass verge, they are suddenly surrounded by CSO.

Sue: Why didn't they shoot this scene on location? I know it's dark out there, but so is this. I can hardly see a thing.

Romana returns to the TARDIS for some sensible shoes.

Sue: And a stupid dress. Yeah, that will be so much better if you fall off another cliff, pet. Nice, though.

The Doctor returns to De Vries' house with K9, who lags some way behind.

Sue: I have the same problem when I take Buffy for a walk now she's got arthritis, bless her. The Doctor should wait for K9 to catch up to him. Just think, if this drive was on a slope, K9 could probably overtake him. Poor

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K9.

As he investigates the house, the Doctor is attacked by standing stones, who are actually Ogri, alien beings from Tau Ceti.

Sue: What the fuck is that?

Me: What the fuck does it look like?

Sue: Giant popcorn?

Me: What has this story been about so far?

Sue: I don't know... Crows?

Me: It's the stones!

Sue: Walking stones? Eh? That's a bit daft!

Meanwhile, in the Professor's cottage, Emilia is making sausage sandwiches while Vivien flirts outrageously with Romana.

Sue: This reminds me of my nana's house, only nicer. I'd love a cottage like this in France.

Me: I'll love a sausage sandwich.

Vivien continues to arouse Sue's suspicions.

Sue: It's definitely her, you know. She's definitely the Black Guardian.

And then, a few minutes later...

Sue: They should have given Emilia and Vivien their own series where they solved crimes in their spare time.

Me: Even though you think she's the baddie?

Sue: It might work on ITV4.

After his battle with the Ogri, K9 is totally fucked. So the Doctor turns him upside down and pulls out a handful of artificial guts.

Sue: Poor K9. I didn't know he doubled as a paper shredder.

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The Doctor even considers putting his best friend down.

Sue: Don't worry, he's got loads of spares in the TARDIS, he grabbed a fantastic deal on *Amazon*. And the Mark III is even quieter!

Meanwhile, the Cailleach is pouring blood on a standing stone.

Sue: (*Under her breath*) It is so her...

The Doctor and the Professor search De Vries house for clues.

Sue: This place is beautiful. Where did they film this?

Me: Television Centre. Studio TC3, I believe. I've already told you this.

Sue: Why can't they set every *Doctor Who* story in a house like this? I really like the tone of this one. It's Hammer Horror meets Agatha Christie.

Romana tries to repair K9.

Sue: Why is she using a G-clamp as a screwdriver? She should be shot for that.

The Doctor and Emilia find a series of paintings hidden away in a cellar.

Sue: It's her.

The Doctor realises these paintings, which span several centuries, are portraits of the same woman: Miss Vivien Fay.

Sue: I said it was her.

Me: Congratulations on narrowing down the huge list of suspects, Sue.

When Romana returns to the stone circle, she is intercepted by Vivien, who leads her towards a glowing, red light.

Sue: And now it's turned into *The Wicker Man*. But with stones instead of

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wood.

Vivien points a staff at Romana and the Time Lord vanishes into thin air.

Sue: Okay. So far, so good.

Part Three

The Doctor and Emilia are chased out of the house by two Ogri.

Sue: I'm surprised they were allowed to broadcast this episode, it's so dark. The camera operator tripped over something and they just kept going. They're rushing this. Something must have gone terribly wrong on location that day. I mean, did they film *any* of this in daylight? It's the murkiest episode of *Doctor Who* I've ever seen. And I've seen all the recons.

The Ogri continue to advance.

Sue: It's better when you can't see them walking, and you just cut to them standing still. They remind me of the Weeping Angels a bit.

Emilia takes out her trusty truncheon.

Sue: Please let her be a companion. I'd love to see the Doctor travelling the universe with a dotty academic.

Me: Are you volunteering?

I expected a cushion in the face for that comment.

Sue: I don't do cushions any more. It makes me sound like a petulant child. I'll just spit in your tea instead.

The Ogri aren't really doing it for Sue.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: The director is shooting them as tight as he possibly can. It's all he can do, really. I mean, what were they thinking? Walking stones? Idiots! They love to make life difficult for themselves, don't they?

Doctor believes the Ogri could be related to Magog.

Sue: Genesis wrote a song about Magog, I definitely remember that. *Supper's Ready*. Great song. See, there's nothing wrong with my memory, Neil.

The Doctor and Emilia discuss Einstein's special theory of relativity.

Sue: Nicol would have enjoyed that. These two are wonderful together. Tom Baker's face when she starts going off on one is priceless. The Doctor had better take her for a spin in his TARDIS when this is over. Romana's fixed it now, so it should be fine.

Emilia asks the Doctor if he comes from outer space. He tells her he comes from inner time.

Sue: That's interesting.

Me: No it isn't. It's complete bollocks. Of course he comes from outer space. He's taking the piss.

The Doctor assembles a device that will send him into hyperspace. However, when she switches it on... nothing happens.

Sue: That was very funny. All that build-up for nothing.

When the machine finally works, the Doctor is transported to a ship hovering in hyperspace.

Sue: Oh no, it's gone a bit spacey now.

The Doctor finds Romana in a cell, and she's astonished when he tells her

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where they've ended up.

Sue: How can hyperspace be a theoretical absurdity when *Babylon 5* used it all the time? You told me *Babylon 5* was scientifically accurate, Neil.

With the Doctor gone, K9 tries to keep the Ogri at bay.

Sue: K9 is having a nightmare this week. And why does he have to be recharged so often? Does he run on Apple batteries?

Elsewhere, a man steps out of a tent and buttons up his trousers.

Sue: Not for kids.

His lover, Pat, follows him. The couple are surprised to discover that their camp site is surrounded by standing stones. Pat touches one and screams. Her hand turns to bone in front of her eyes, and then her lover's screams mingle with hers as the image fades to red.

Sue: DEFINITELY NOT FOR KIDS! Bloody hell!

Back on the hyperspatial spaceship, the Doctor encounters a familiar face. But I get nothing from Sue. Not a sausage (in a sandwich or otherwise). So I rewind the scene and pause it.

Me: What's that?

Sue: Why are there so many tests this week? I don't know. It looks like an insect to me. Is it a Zarbi?

Me: It's a Wirrn!

Sue: Pardon?

Me: A Wirrn! How can you not remember the Wirrn? *The Ark in Space*, woman! It was only three months ago!

Sue: It's probably the angle. I'm used to seeing them full-on. I do remember them now. Vaguely.

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The Doctor unleashes the Megara justice machines.

Sue: I like the Megara. Simple, effective and easy to understand. Much better than walking rocks who don't say anything.

When Sue sees Vivien under the studio lights, she starts singing Silver Lady by David Soul (just be grateful this isn't a podcast). Cue credits.

Sue: It's starting to go downhill. I hope it doesn't start freewheeling at the end.

Part Four

The Doctor is on trial for his life.

Sue: This is basically an episode of *The Jeremy Kyle Show*; all these truth tests and lie detectors. There are fewer chairs, though.

An Ogri tries to interrupt the proceedings, so the Megara vaporise it.

Sue: I wish Jeremy would do that when a cheating scumbag fails a lie detector test.

As the trial unfolds, Sue falls silent. Naturally, I begin to worry.

Me: You're not saying very much, love.

Sue: Shut up, I'm listening to this.

I expected Sue to dislike the Megara after a while, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

Sue: I really like the electronic lawyers. It's a nice idea which actually works for a change.

Back at Emilia's cottage, Romana tries to identify Vivien's origins.

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Sue: Romana's great, isn't she? You've basically got two Doctors when she's around, which really helps to move the plot forward.

An Ogri crashes through Emilia's front door.

Sue: What a waste of a good set.

The stones move in for the kill.

Sue: Just outrun them. That's the problem with these stupid things: even K9 could outrun them. Even if he was going uphill.

Although the Doctor has been sentenced to death, he manages to reach for Vivien's pendant. An explosive discharge knocks Vivien unconscious and the Doctor persuades the Megara to scan her memory cells for signs of brain damage. They agree, but the scan reveals the truth: Vivien is the notorious war criminal, Cessair of Diplos.

Sue: (Sighing) Why didn't they scan everyone at the beginning? That would have saved a lot of time.

Cessair gets her just deserts and Emilia accompanies the Doctor and Romana back to the TARDIS.

Sue: I can't believe they didn't invite her inside. She would have been brilliant. Imagine her against the Daleks! I'm gutted. Poor thing. Maybe it's because she wouldn't wear a bra?

The Doctor transforms Vivien's pendant into the third segment of the Key to Time.

Sue: I really like these scenes. I like the story arc. It's subtly done but it holds everything together. I'm actually looking forward to the next one.

Right on cue, Nicol enters the living room, carrying a cake.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Nicol: Hurry up and make a wish – the candles are melting.

Sue: I wish this was the 150th story!

Nicol: That won't come true now because you said it out loud.

Me: Just slice it open, I want to see if you made it with real blood.

The Score

Sue: I enjoyed that. I wasn't that keen on the stones – they were a stupid idea – but I can't complain about anything else. Although I will have to deduct some points because they left Emilia behind at the end.

8/10

COMMENT: “That cake looks delicious! But I don't know if I'd want to eat it after that dog has slobbered all over it.” – Richard Lyth

NOTES: Nicol's cake was a Victoria sponge covered in green icing (to represent grass), decorated with grey slabs of marzipan (to represent a stone circle), and topped off with an edible crow (to represent the Cailleach). Our dog, Buffy, thought it was delicious.

THE ANDROIDS OF TARA

BLOGGED: 19 July 2012

Part One

Sue: I used to think Tara Palmer-Tomkinson was an android if that's any help. Oh, David Fisher's name rings a bell.

Me: It should. He wrote the last one.

Sue: Excellent.

The Doctor and K9 are playing chess in the TARDIS.

Sue: I love the banter between these two. I could watch them do this all day. I also like the way the Doctor drapes his scarf over K9. It's very affectionate.

Romana lands the TARDIS perfectly.

Sue: If you want it done properly, let a woman do it.

They have arrived on the planet Tara, and the Doctor uses the TARDIS' scanner to have a good look around.

Sue: I don't remember the Doctor moving the camera like this before. I bet Romana installed that feature.

Romana decides to change into something more appropriate.

Sue: I think I preferred the Tahitian dress she was looking at earlier.

Me: I wouldn't have complained.

Sue: She suits that hat, though. She's turning into the Doctor.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The Doctor would rather go fishing than search for the Key to Time, so Romana sets off on her own adventure. And as she moves through a forest, we can hear strange birdsong, which sends our cat, Tegan, mental.

Sue: That bird doesn't sound right to me.

Me: We're on an alien planet, remember?

Sue: Yes, but it sounds artificial. Is everything on this planet an android? Is that it? We've seen this before, haven't we?

The tracer leads Romana to an ancient stone statue which she immediately transforms into the fourth segment of the Key to Time.

Sue: Job's a good 'un. Straight back to the TARDIS. The End. I mean, what could possibly go wrong?

Cue the Taran Wood Beast.

Sue: Oh my goodness. *What is that?* I have no words for that.

Romana is rescued by a knight in shining armour.

Sue: Is it the Master? Don't look at me like that, Neil. Look at his beard!

Me: No!

Sue: Well, if he isn't the Master, he's definitely famous.

Me: It's Peter Jeffrey. He's an excellent actor. You probably recognise his voice.

Sue: No, I recognise his nose. You don't forget a nose like that. He's very smooth for a man with such an enormous nose.

Me: You liked him in *The Macra Terror* as well.

Sue: "The Macra" what?

The man in question is Count Grendel. He offers to fix Romana's swollen ankle for her, promising it won't take up more than an hour of her time.

Me: That's what I tell you every time we sit down to watch *Doctor Who*

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together.

Sue: Yeah, but this guy is a lot more charming. Although, to be fair, you do have a big nose like him.

The Doctor is snoozing on a river bank when he's suddenly attacked by a man with an electric rapier.

Sue: That was a bit dangerous. He could have burnt his lip off. Well, what's left of it at any rate.

Sue doesn't recognise Paul Lavers at first.

Sue: He looks like a young Robert Redford.

Paul will be pleased.

Sue: So is this planet like *Westworld*? Is it a theme park for robots in medieval costume?

Grendel takes Romana to Castle Gracht on horseback.

Sue: The establishing shot of the castle is very impressive. It's a subtle but effective special effect. How can they do something as good as that and still have crappy monsters running around the place? Those monsters are going to ruin this story, aren't they? I can suspend my disbelief as much as the next person but that thing was pushing its luck.

I tell her we won't be seeing the Taran Wood Beast again any time soon. I even promise not to buy a Taran Wood Beast action figure, should they ever release one.

Sue: Not even if it's part of a set and it's the only way you'll get your hands on a Romana? It's just the sort of thing they would, you know.

Have I mentioned that I took Sue to a branch of Forbidden Planet recently?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: So why bother having a monster at all if it's only going to be in it for a couple of minutes?

Me: It's *Doctor Who*. You have to have a monster.

Sue: It never used to be like that. Who says *Doctor Who* always have to have a monster? Where is that written down? Why can't the villain just be some bloke?

Grendel gently places Romana on a bed in his castle.

Sue: He's dashing, isn't he? I wouldn't mind being rescued by him.

But Grendel is too good to be true, which Romana discovers to her cost when she's restrained to the bed with retractable straps.

Sue: Oh, come on! She could slide out of that! You could trap an obese person in that, but that's about it.

Grendel instructs Madame Lamia, his surgeon-engineer, to cut Romana's head off.

Sue: They must be having a laugh. With an electric bread knife? *Seriously?* They were all the rage in the 1970s, mind. They were always on the conveyor belt at the end of *The Generation Game*.

The Doctor is taken to a hunting lodge, and when he tries to leave, Paul Lavers takes a slice out of his scarf. Sue actually gasped in horror at this point, but Prince Reynart intervenes before any more damage can be done.

Sue: I like Errol Flynn over there. The acting is very good this week. That's why Tom is bringing his A-game again. I like it. Why can't David Fisher write the rest of the season?

When it becomes clear that Romana isn't an android after all, Grendel lets her keep her head, mainly because he believes he has a better use for it.

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Sue: Yeah, I bet he does, the dirty pervert.

Romana is drugged.

Sue: I bet that's Rohypnol.

Meanwhile, back at the lodge, Reynart employs the Doctor to fix his android double. He explains he plans to use it as a diversion when he ascends to the throne, at which point the Doctor immediately recognises the plot.

Sue: Have I missed something?

Me: The plot is loosely based on a famous story. It will come to you later. Probably.

The Doctor and Reynart drink a toast to their cunning plan. Paul Lavers pours the wine.

Sue: I know where I recognise him from now. (*As Paul*) This magnificent set of four golden goblets, available at a special QVC price of just £99.99, which you can pay in three easy instalments! Just look at the stem on that. Lovely.

Me: I'm impressed. Do you remember his name?

Sue: Paul somebody or other. He was one of QVC's first presenters, wasn't he? It can't have panned out for him as an actor, then. What a shame. He was a bit of a looker in his youth.

The wine has been drugged and the episode concludes with everyone slipping into unconsciousness. The Doctor makes it as far as the door, but finally collapses at the feet of Count Grendel.

Sue: I bet that isn't the first time Tom Baker has fallen down after a glass of wine. There was definitely some method acting going on there. Good cliffhanger, though. I like this one so far.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Part Two

Sue decides to rate the actors' ability to fall unconscious.

Sue: The guy with the beard was the best. He's an old pro. Paul shouldn't worry, though: there isn't much call for falling asleep on QVC, even when you're demonstrating a really comfortable bed.

I try to steer her back on track.

Me: I'm surprised you haven't mentioned the carpentry yet. What about that staircase over there?

Sue: Nah, it's a bit naff. I do like the costumes in this one, though. Even Romana's purple outfit is starting to grow on me. The production design is very good, but just because something is made from wood, it doesn't mean I instantly fall in love it. I do have some standards, believe it or not.

The Doctor summons K9 with a dog whistle.

Sue: I fucking love K9. I hate it when they lock him in the TARDIS. You should never leave your dog locked up in your vehicle. Especially on a sunny day like this.

The drugs wear off and Romana wakes up. She wants to know how long she's been unconscious for.

Sue: (As Grendel) Long enough, dear. Long enough.

Grendel takes Romana on a guided tour of the dungeons where he's holding Prince Reynart and Princess Stella captive. Stella is the spitting double of Romana, and Grendel boasts that he now has two beautiful women he can marry.

Sue: The dirty bastard.

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The Doctor fixes Prince Reynart's android double so it can attend his coronation at the allotted hour.

Sue: I like his gold lamé suit. That's very Elvis.

However, something is definitely bugging Sue.

Sue: How come they have all this technology and yet they act like they're in the Middle Ages? How can you have electronic weapons and life-like androids, but still ride around on horses? I don't get it. Why hasn't this society invented *Facebook* yet?

Lamia attempts to drill into the Key to Time, without much success.

Sue: Get Paul from QVC to do it. She's making a right pig's ear of *Diamonique Hour*.

Sue is curious about this story's location.

Sue: Which castle is this?

Me: Leeds.

Sue: Yes, you can tell. It looks like Yorkshire.

Me: Really? I didn't know you were an expert on castles, Sue.

Sue: I can just tell.

Me: Shall we get in the car and visit it then, since it's only down the road?

Sue: If you like.

Me: It's in Kent!

Sue: Is it really? that's a bit daft, isn't it? Call it Kent Castle, then, you morons!

It's almost time for the coronation.

Sue: There are plenty of extras milling around. I like it. There are some nice details in this, like the clock with the extra hours. A lot of thought has gone into this. It's a nice blend of sci-fi and history. It doesn't make

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

any sense, but it looks great.

The Prince is nowhere to be seen, which means Grendel will be crowned in his absence. However, when he enters the throne room, he is astonished to find Prince Reynart already seated there.

Sue: Brilliant.

Grendel is not amused.

Sue: I know which story this is based on, now.

Me: Good. It took you long enough.

Sue: It's *Weekend at Bernie's*.

The Doctor stops the android Reynart from breaking down mid-coronation, and as the Doctor switches on his speech circuits, Sue is as tense as I've ever seen her. And then, when another character played by Mary Tamm enters the throne room, the Doctor immediately attempts to smash her head in with a sceptre.

Sue: What a strange cliffhanger. If she turns out to be the real Princess, the Doctor is going to look very stupid (and a bit bloody). But we know that isn't going to happen – this story is full of androids. You'd have to be an idiot not to work it out.

Part Three

Sue: I don't know why the Count doesn't suggest that the Prince sitting on the throne right now is an android. He's got the real one locked up in a cell, so what else could it possibly be? What's he waiting for?

Lamia lets it slip that she has a sadomasochistic crush on Grendel.

Sue: So much for women's rights on this planet. I can't believe anyone would enjoy being abused by a power-mad sex pest.

THE ANDROIDS OF TARA

Me: Then I wouldn't bother with *Fifty Shades of Grey* if I were you, love.

The Doctor encounters Romana's android double, which has been designed to kill him as soon as he speaks.

Sue: This isn't suspicious, is it? Not a smile or a wave from his best friend. Really? She should appear as natural as possible for this to work.

The android fails to assassinate the Doctor, thanks to a shoddy design flaw, and Lamia runs outside, where she is accidentally gunned down by Grendel's men.

Sue: The idiots! I hope the Count really cared about her, after all.

He didn't.

Sue: It's turned into *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. I think I'd probably take my chances and make a run for it – this lot can't shoot straight to save their lives. They only shoot the things they're not supposed to shoot, probably because they can't see a thing with those helmets on.

When the Doctor pokes his head outside the pavilion, it's almost shot off.

Sue: How is it that the gunfire sounds louder inside the pavilion than it does outside? How is that even possible?

K9 cuts a hole in the rear of the tent with his laser.

Sue: Take your time, K9. There's no rush. Their weapons don't seem to have an effect on cloth. They might deafen you after a while, though.

The real Romana comes to the rescue on a horse, and no one can figure out a way to include K9 in their great escape.

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Sue: I can't believe they left K9 behind. Unbelievable...

K9 stands his ground and successfully neutralises Grendel's men.

Sue: So they needn't have run anyway after all. They should just let K9 off his leash. He doesn't muck about.

After this kerfuffle, Grendel arrives at Reynart's lodge under a white flag.

Sue: Shoot him in the head! What are you waiting for?

Me: This planet is steeped in tradition and ceremony.

Sue: Sod that. Shoot him in the head!

Grendel throws a spear at Reynart's artificial chest.

Sue: That was pretty good. That would have shocked the kids.

In the ensuing confusion, Grendel's men manage to kidnap Romana.

Sue: That was a weak cliffhanger, but another solid episode. I'm really enjoying this.

Part Four

Sue's silence speaks volumes once again, and it's only when the Doctor plans to enter the castle in a rowing boat that she has anything to say.

Sue: There's just one thing I don't understand: now that they can fly the TARDIS properly, and they can land it on a sixpence, why doesn't the Doctor use it in situations like this? He could just materialise inside the castle without all this carry on, surely?

Grendel moves to Plan B, which involves two weddings and two funerals.

Sue: He's a great villain. He's so blatant. He'd have been a brilliant Master.

THE ANDROIDS OF TARA

I'm sorry, but there's simply no getting away from it.

The Doctor arrives at the castle as night falls.

Sue: This looks great. Like a proper drama. Or a feature film.

The Doctor and K9 arrive at a hatchway beneath the castle. The Doctor instructs K9 to cut a hole in the wood with his laser.

Sue: I don't understand how anyone couldn't like K9. What's not to love?

Me: Some people think he's a bit childish.

Sue: What do they think they're watching? *I, Claudius*?

The Doctor interrupts the wedding between Reynart and Romana, so Grendel challenges him to a sword fight.

Sue: The Doctor doesn't know what he's doing. That's very funny. The lack of music and the hand-held direction is great, too.

The Doctor lulls the Count into a false sense of security before he strikes back with some ferocious swordplay.

Sue: This is great, but I think I preferred it when he was taking the piss.

Sue is annoyed as the Doctor allows Grendel to retrieve his fallen sword (she has no concept of honour), and when the king's men storm the gates, she's even less forgiving.

Sue: There's only six of them! Why didn't they just get a bigger boat and follow the Doctor that way?

The Doctor corners Grendel on the battlements and the Count dives into the moat below.

Sue: So he won't surrender, but he'll happily run away like a coward?

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Nice dive, though. I'm pleased he lived to fight another day. He should definitely come back.

Me: Maybe he could team up with the Daleks?

Sue: Yeah, that would be interesting.

The Doctor rushes off to rescue Romana and Princess Strella from the advances of Grendel's right-hand man, even though they both took care of themselves ages ago.

Sue: That was very funny. And the Doctor not knowing which one was the real Romana was a lovely touch, too.

Crisis averted, Princess and Reynart fall into each other's arms.

Sue: A full-on kiss on the lips. The kids wouldn't have liked that very much.

The story concludes with the Doctor laughing his head off as he realises that K9 has been left behind in his little boat.

Sue: That look of joy on the Doctor's face sums up this story nicely. It was amusing and loads of fun.

The Score

Sue: I really enjoyed that. It looked gorgeous, and the direction was very good, too. I don't think there was a bad performance, and the script was very witty and engaging. I can't really fault it. Okay, the monster at the beginning was completely pointless, and the society didn't make a lot of sense, but I can overlook that.

9/10

COMMENT: "The fact that Anglia TV's 'Mr Midnight' plays a swashbuckling hero sums it up." – Tim Cook

THE ANDROIDS OF TARA

NOTES: “There’s lots of fencing. And you need quality fencing, available from Paul Lavers on QVC.”

Back in the 1990s, when life was good and Oasis weren’t, there was one place you went to get your daily *Doctor Who* fix: UK Gold (the fact that Sue’s house had cable television when I moved in with her isn’t entirely coincidental). It became a ritual, staying up late to record those hazily-remembered Pertwee adventures, or getting up at the crack of dawn for the Sunday omnibus if you screwed up and missed an episode. And one of the people responsible for introducing these repeats to the general public was a young continuity announcer named Glen Allen.

So imagine my surprise when Glen decided, for a laugh, to record an audio trailer for *The Androids of Tara* especially for our blog. It went down so well, Glen went on to record trailers for every story from this point on, becoming the voice of *The Wife in Space* in the process, bless him. I bet he doesn’t put it on his CV, though.

THE POWER OF KROLL

BLOGGED: 21 July 2012

Part One

Sue: I don't think much of the title. It sounds like a B-movie to me. Oh, wait, Robert Holmes is back again. When Robert Holmes is good, he's *really* good.

Me: And you've got Philip Madoc as well.

Sue: That definitely helps, too.

The episode begins on a high-tech mining refinery where four men – Fenner, Thawn, Harg and Dugeen – bring us to speed with the sociopolitical situation on the third moon of Delta Magna.

Sue: I think I understood some of that, although the exposition was extremely clunky. It didn't sound like they were having a natural conversation. The actors are okay, though, so I'll have to blame the script.

The TARDIS materialises in the middle of a swamp. Unfortunately, because the place is waterlogged, the Doctor and Romana are forced to leave K9 behind.

Sue: Poor K9. I'm taking a mark off this story straight away. They should put him in a little boat. I like Romana's outfit, though. It's very Emma Peel.

Romana searches for the fifth segment while the Doctor plays JS Bach's Badinerie in B minor on a flute he's carved out of some reed.

Sue: He's so much better at this than Patrick Troughton. He could probably give James Galway a run for his money, too.

THE POWER OF KROLL

Romana is kidnapped by a gunrunner named Rohm-Dutt, who's wanted by Thawn and Fenner, who have just arrived to kill him.

Sue: How did the Doctor not hear their hovercraft coming? It makes one hell of a racket.

Fenner mistakes the Doctor for Rohm-Dutt and shoots him in the head.

Sue: Bloody hell, he can actually shoot straight! I'm a fan of this story already. One shot – bang – and he's down.

Me: He just shot the Doctor in the head *and you're congratulating him?*

Sue: Sorry, that is a good point. I'm just so excited to see someone who knows how to aim a gun for a change.

Romana is led to a Swampie settlement, where Rohm-Dutt sells a crate of weapons to their leader, Ranquin.

Sue: The green make-up is very good. Aliens will probably find it a bit racist, though.

Me: It was murder to get it off the actors' skin, by all accounts. The BBC forgot to buy any dye remover and the Swampies had to be driven to an RAF base so they could use their chemical showers. Interestingly, no one who worked as a Swampie ever went on to have children.

Sue: Really?

Rohm-Dutt interrogates Romana.

Sue: What's that accent supposed to be? American? Irish? Australian? All of the above?

It quickly becomes clear that the Swampies are being oppressed by the greedy bastards back at the refinery.

Sue: This is basically Greenpeace against BP, isn't it? Or Green hairpieces against BP. No? Oh, suit yourself. Anyway, it's very political. I like Robert

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Holmes when he's got an axe to grind.

The Doctor (who was shot in the hat, not the head, which makes Fenner a terrible shot after all) is taken to the refinery for questioning.

Sue: I like the little ducks on his jacket. He's obviously been inspired by Hilda Ogden.

Romana is led to a sacrificial altar as the Swampies chant the name of their god.

Sue: It's King Kong. No, wait... It's King Kroll.

Me: What makes you think its name is Kroll?

Sue: Just a wild guess.

The Swampies chant, and chant, and chant...

Sue: There are loads of extras playing the Swampies. I'm surprised they didn't rise up against the BBC when they couldn't get the paint off.
(Pointing) And that one can't dance.

Thawn tells the Doctor that the Swampies worship a giant squid.

Sue: A giant squid? Are you sure that's wise? They're not going to show us a giant squid, are they? Remember what happened with the giant prawn.

The Swampies are still chanting...

Sue: Is Kroll deaf?

The episode concludes with Romana threatened by a pair of claws.

Sue: Oh dear. That doesn't look like a giant squid to me.

She sighs.

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Sue: Apart from the terrible cliffhanger, that wasn't a bad start. Yeah, there was nowt wrong with that.

Part Two

We finally get a proper look at the monster that's attacking Romana.

Sue: They are having a laugh! It's ridiculous! What the hell is that supposed to be? Did a clam have sex with a mushroom? Oh, wait... Ooh... That's clever!

Yes, it's supposed to look rubbish on purpose: the monster is a Swampie in fancy dress.

Sue: Yes, yes, very good. Big round of applause. But you can't get away with making things look shit on purpose every week. There's only so many times you can do that.

Back at the refinery, Dugeen is tracking a mysterious shape on his scanner. Thawn tells him to keep an eye on it.

Sue: I bet he wishes he could say affirmative. I must say, I think I preferred him when he was a dog.

Yes, reader, I told her.

Sue: This is just like *Avatar*, this, but with a different colour scheme and no chance of a sex scene... I hope. You know, Rohm-Dutt reminds me of Quint from *Jaws*.

Me: If Quint was shit. Someone on *Twitter* said he reminded his wife of a fat Indiana Jones.

Sue: A fat Han Solo, surely? He's smuggling guns.

Me: Yeah, good point, but he was wearing a hat and...

Sue: I can't believe we're having this conversation, Neil.

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Romana wants to find the Key to Time as soon as possible so they can scarper.

Sue: I couldn't agree more. This situation is going to get very messy.

Me: Yeah, they might get green paint on their clothes.

Back at the refinery, Thawn, Dugeen and Fenner gather round a monitor.

Sue: It looks like they can't get their Binatone games system to work. And how are they getting any data from a picture like that? An *Etch a Sketch* has a higher resolution than that.

The Doctor finds the sacred book of Kroll. He opens it near the beginning and reads aloud, which leads Romana to declare that she loves a happy ending.

Sue: Ending? He's only a few pages into the book. You've got a long way to go before that story finishes, pet.

Me: I know the feeling.

Sue: What do you mean? This is pretty good. The script is more than okay – although it isn't as funny as the last two – and the plot is easy to follow. The acting is fine, the location is interesting, and the direction isn't bad, either. What's not to like?

And that's when the mighty Kroll appears.

Sue: Wow. That's big. Too big, probably. I don't know, though, it's a good attempt. They've given it everything they've got, I suppose.

Me: What about the shit split-screen effect?

Sue: Of course it's a split-screen effect. It's 1978 and they've got a shoestring budget. No, that wasn't bad at all. The kids would have loved that and the concept is pretty scary. It could come up and eat you at any moment. If you lived near Seal Sands, that would have given you nightmares.

THE POWER OF KROLL

Things are so bad, the refinery staff are forced to wake Dugeen from his nap.

Sue: Blimey, couldn't he have got dressed when he was still in his quarters? Thanks for that image, mate. I bet he was dreaming of dogs when they woke him up.

Despite this, the praise keeps coming.

Sue: It's very good, this. The script is typical Robert Holmes: clever and a bit cynical. It's a bit slow, though. That's the only problem I have with it. The last one galloped along nicely, but this one isn't in any hurry. Oh, hello...

A tentacle grabs Harg and the episode concludes with Kroll pulling him into a pipe.

Sue: That was a terrible cliffhanger.

Me: Was the rubber tentacle too much for you?

Sue: Not at all. The tentacle was fine. I just don't care about these guys. They're the bad guys. Imagine a cliffhanger where a Nazi is killed. Who gives a shit? It doesn't make any sense.

Part Three

Kroll hasn't just eaten Harg, he's caused a gas leak too.

Sue: Is that supposed to be methane?

Me: I think so.

Sue: Christ, it must stink of cow farts in there. No wonder they can't wait to get out.

The Swampies tie Romana, Rohm-Dutt and the Doctor to a rack.

Sue: That's handy, it's just the right size for them. It's as if they were expecting to kill three people today. Unless they have really skilled

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carpenters and they just knocked that up.

Ranquin explains how they will be torn apart by ivy.

Sue: They just have to get that ivy wet and they'll be fine. (*Yelling at the television*) Spit on your feet!

Back at the refinery, Dugeen is worried about what Kroll looks like out of the water.

Sue: It's basically a giant Brussels sprout with arms. Don't get your hopes up, K9. Sorry, I mean that guy.

They discuss the best way to deal with the threat.

Sue: *DeWalt.*

Me: What?

Sue: *DeWalt* ear protectors. You can tell they're *DeWalt* by their colour.

Me: Mind wandering much?

Sue: A bit.

And then the rain comes.

Sue: See! They just needed some water on that ivy and I knew they'd be sorted. I could have written this!

The Doctor uses his voice to smash the window.

Sue: They would have got away with that if they'd overdubbed it with a real soprano. But that was a bit silly.

As they make their escape from the Swampies, Rohm-Dutt is dragged away by a tentacle.

Sue: It's just like the end of *Jaws* when Quint gets dragged under the sea.

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Even the music reminds me of *Jaws*. Listen... “Der-der, der-der, der-der...”

Me: Everything by Dudley Simpson goes, “Der-der, der-der, der-der.”

Sue: Oh yeah.

The episode concludes with Kroll in a very bad mood.

Sue: You know, this isn’t bad at all.

Part Four

Sue has been very forgiving of the split-screen effect until now. But that’s all about to change.

Sue: Oh dear. Yes, that is quite bad. It’s so obvious. They should have stuck to the tentacles. The tentacles were great.

Thawn throws a hundred tons of hydrogen peroxide at the beast.

Sue: At the very least, it will bleach its hair.

Thawn is becoming more and more maniacal by the second.

Sue: I’ve definitely seen him in something else. Didn’t he play a bad guy in a Bond film?

Me: You’re thinking of *Jaws*.

Sue: No, James Bond, you idiot.

I only wish I were making this up.

Me: It’s Neil McCarthy, he’s been in loads of stuff, including *Doctor Who*.

Sue: I’ve seen him in something else. Something bigger.

I pause the DVD and pull up Neil McCarthy’s IMDB credits on my phone:

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Me: *Zulu?*

Not a glimmer.

Me: *The Hill?* Doubtful. *Where Eagles Dare?* No? *Steptoe and Son the Movie...*

Sue: Yeah, that's probably it. Anyway, it's a shame Philip Madoc is blowing him off the screen without even trying.

Me: Madoc was sulking at the time. When he agreed to work on this story, he thought he'd be playing the bad guy with the meaty lines, but when he turned up to the rehearsals, he discovered he was playing second fiddle instead. He wasn't very happy about it.

Sue: It could have been worse. He could have been covered in green paint.

Kroll rampages through the lagoon.

Sue: The split-screen is doing my head in now. If this was set on a beach, you could get away with it because the horizon is flat. But grass is never that flat. Not unless the Swampies spend their spare time trimming it with shears. But what else could the BBC do in this situation? They didn't have any portable green screens back then. Lots of green paint, but no portable green screens.

Thawn shoots Dugeen for sympathising with terrorists.

Sue: Poor bloke-who-plays-K9.

Me: You know, I don't think I've seen this episode since it was broadcast in January 1979. I never usually make it past Part Two when I try to watch it.

Sue: It isn't that bad.

Me: Actually, you're right, it isn't. I'm actually enjoying it this time, despite my low expectations. Tom Baker is very good.

Sue: He was probably worried Philip Madoc would think less of him if he fooled around too much. He's having some fun with it, but he's still taking it seriously enough for me to believe in him.

THE POWER OF KROLL

Fenner drags Dugeen's body away.

Sue: No blood on the floor. Were they told to tone down the gore?

Me: Yes.

The Swampies invade the refinery and Thawn is speared in the chest. As he falls down, blood gushes from his wound.

Sue: Somebody didn't get the memo.

The final five minutes, where Kroll attempts to eat the refinery, is accompanied by rapt silence. Thankfully, the Doctor is able to defeat the monster with a tiny stick.

Sue: The fifth segment! Not far now!

And then, just when we think it's all over, the Doctor has to stop the refinery from blowing up.

Sue: That was funny. Was the script under-running or something?

The Doctor and Romana leave Fenner to the Swampies' mercy.

Sue: He'll be dead by lunchtime.

Our heroes return to the TARDIS, and it's suggested K9 is waiting for them with a pair of slippers stuck to his nose.

Sue: Aww, K9 wants his din-dins.

The Score

Sue: That was pretty good. It was a bit slow, but the actors gave their all. And the idea behind it was okay, I suppose. The location was interesting, too. I believed they were on an alien planet...

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Me: Moon.

Sue: Whatever. Fuck off. Anyway, it was well above average. If K9 had been in it, I might have given it an eight.

7/10

Sue: What's the next one called?

Me: *The Armageddon Factor*. Why? Are you excited?

Sue: I am a bit. I like a good story arc. As long as they don't do a *Lost* and fuck it up at the end.

COMMENT: "Cows can't fart, Sue. They can belch but they can't fart. And methane is odourless – that's hydrogen sulphide you're thinking of there." – BWT

THE ARMAGEDDON FACTOR

BLOGGED: 25 July 2012

Part One

Sue: Six parts? Bloody hell. Oh well, it is the end of the Key to Time, I suppose, so it has to be epic.

Me: You'll be pleased to know that *The Armageddon Factor* is our last six-part story.

Sue: Honestly?

Me: Yes, I swear on our cats' lives, this is the last six-part *Doctor Who* story ever broadcast on television.

Sue: If you're lying to me, Neil, I will kill you and feed you to our cats.

The Armageddon Factor begins with two characters spouting cheesy dialogue at each other in front of a badly chromakeyed backdrop.

Sue: The fringing on this CSO is even worse than usual.

The male character declares that men young men are dying for it and I try not to laugh.

Sue: Grow up, Neil. Hey, haven't we seen these two before?

Me: No we haven't.

Sue: Yes we have. Rewind it. Look, she's wearing the same green PVC uniform we saw in that story where the giant prawn attacked that hospital. She's playing a nurse, which means George Osborne over there must be a doctor.

Me: How is it you remember that, but you never remember anything important?

Sue realises she's actually watching a cheap propaganda film.

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Sue: It's very postmodern. And they've played the "it's supposed to bad on purpose" card again, I see.

An explosion hits an already ramshackle hospital ward, which causes some masonry to fall on a patient, although a doctor tells them they'll be all right.

Sue: Yeah, it's fine. A huge slab of concrete just severed your spine but don't worry about it. It's all right.

In a large control room, the Marshal is monitoring his war.

Sue: Oh, it's him. Don't ask me what's he's been in before, but he's very good. Wait, wait! Don't tell me... He plays a copper. A hard-nosed copper.

Me: It's John Woodvine. You probably remember him from *Edge of Darkness*.

Sue: Yes, *Edge of Darkness*. That's definitely it. Good. Yes, he's very good.

We are also introduced to Princess Astra.

Sue: Oh, she's familiar... She's one of the Doctor's companions, isn't she? Does she come back later when he turns into Peter Davison? Or does she join him at the end of this story? Does the Doctor travel with two women? That won't work, will it?

Me: Stop trying to guess the ending!

Princess Astra visits a hospital in order to illicitly confer with a young doctor named Merak. They are both pacifists and strongly opposed to the war raging around them.

Sue: Is she the Princess Diana figure in this story?

Me: Visiting the hospital, you mean?

Sue: No, she's having an affair with a commoner.

The Marshal broadcasts a Churchillian speech to his people.

THE ARMAGEDDON FACTOR

Sue: I like this. It's very cynical. It's nicely directed, too, with its swooping camera moves and big close-ups. Yeah, I like this a lot.

The TARDIS materialises in a parking orbit above Atrios. However, the planet – and its twin, Zeos – are nowhere to be seen.

Sue: Since when has the Doctor ever bothered to park above a planet first? He must be getting cautious in his old age.

The Marshal rubs his neck as he stares into a distorted mirror.

Sue: This is what happened to Londo in *Babylon 5*. Is there an invisible alien living behind his ear?

A guard is escorting Princess Astra to a children's hospital when he receives orders to take her to K-Block instead.

Sue: The actor playing that guard is so bad, the director won't give him a close-up during this conversation. Jesus, did they go to the BBC canteen and grab the first person they could find?

The Doctor finally locates Atrios. Romana suspects they may have stumbled into a nuclear war, and the Doctor chides his companion for her glass-half-empty attitude. "Where's your optimism?" he asks.

Sue: Forget that, Doctor. Where's her bra?

They use the tracer to locate the sixth segment's coordinates.

Sue: How did the Doctor get his little stick out of the last segment? I remember worrying about that at the time.

The TARDIS materialises on Atrios and K9 goes for a walk.

Sue: I'm glad K9 is back in action. Dogs get depressed if you keep them

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locked up for long periods of time.

K9 discovers the body of Astra's personal escort (who was shot dead by the Marshal earlier) lying in a nearby corridor.

Sue: K9 has the best peripheral vision in the whole series. And he's only got one eye.

The Doctor and Romana are prosecuted as spies.

Sue: Everywhere they go, people want to execute them. That would get on your tits after a while. No wonder he invented the psychic paper, this would drive anybody up the wall.

The Doctor protests his innocence, but the Marshal isn't listening.

Sue: Tom Baker is very good again this week. He must be trying to impress John Woodvine.

Meanwhile a mysterious figure in black abducts Princess Astra.

Sue: Is that the Black Guardian? Sorry, silly question. Who else could it be?

The episode concludes with the Doctor and Romana discovering the TARDIS has been buried under several tons of rubble.

Sue: I liked that. So far, so good.

Part Two

Sue: Good game! Good game!

Me: I beg your pardon?

Sue: The Black Guardian looks like Bruce Forsyth. Look at the size of his chin!

THE ARMAGEDDON FACTOR

The Doctor is cut off from his TARDIS.

Sue: He really needs to invent a remote control. And psychic paper. He basically needs to sit down and make a list of the things he needs to speed up his adventures. Especially when he's on a mission like this.

The Doctor suspects the Marshal was responsible for the death of Astra's escort, thanks to an unlikely list of coincidences.

Sue: What coincidences? What is he talking about?

At this point, the Marshal is acting even stranger than the writers.

Sue: He loves that distorted mirror, doesn't he? He should go to a funfair; he'd be a pig in shit.

K9 is taken away to be recycled.

Sue: And on tonight's conveyor belt we have some Christmas tinsel and a robot dog. Seriously, though, why doesn't K9 put himself in reverse?

The Doctor and the Marshal discuss strategies for winning the war against Zeos.

Sue: John Woodvine is trying really hard not to laugh here. Oops! He almost went there. Tom Baker is a bad bugger.

The Doctor and the Marshal watch as a battle unfolds on a large computer screen.

Sue: Why didn't they use different coloured dots for the enemy ships? No wonder the Marshal can't follow what's going on.

The Doctor asks the Marshal to locate Princess Astra for him.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Fuck Princess Astra, rescue K9!

The Doctor rushes to the conveyor belt that leads to the furnace and saves K9 from being turned into slag and clinker.

Sue: (As Bruce) Didn't he do well?

Suddenly, Princess Astra appears on television, where she begs the people of Atrios to surrender to Zeos.

Sue: Does this episode end with the bad guys cutting her head off with a rusty penknife?

No, the episode concludes with the Doctor falling into a very obvious trap.

Sue: This is rattling along quite nicely. I've seen a lot worse.

Part Three

Romana and Merak join forces.

Sue: Romana should definitely have her own show. She doesn't actually need the Doctor. And I wouldn't have him as a companion, either; she could do a lot better than him.

The Shadow's minions place the Doctor in a special booth.

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

The Shadow wants to know where the Doctor has hidden the first five segments, but the Doctor won't play ball. So they torture him with bolts of electricity which flow through the cubicle's architecture.

Sue: Why doesn't he a) stop touching the bars and b) step through one of those large gaping holes?

THE ARMAGEDDON FACTOR

The Shadow knows all about the Doctor and his jackdaw meanderings.

Sue: It's not, is it?

Me: No.

Sue: Just checking. I didn't think it was. Please don't put that on the blog, Neil; it makes me look stupid.

The Shadow lets the Doctor go.

Sue: He's the first villain who can't be arsed to follow through on any of his threats. And he's got a wonky nose.

The Marshal's right-hand man, Shapp, finds a secret transmat chamber and accidentally transports himself to Zeos.

Sue: He reminds me of the bloke from *Terry and June*.

Me: Terry.

Sue: Yes, Terry. I wouldn't trust him to put up a sun lounger, let alone win a nuclear war. Even his gun looks like a joke. He's basically waving a cafetière around in the air.

The Doctor and Shapp traipse through the corridors of Zeos (thankfully, the walls are a different shade of brown to those seen on Atrios).

Sue: This place could do with a good Hoover. What's with all the sawdust? Are they expecting horses?

Everybody is awfully eager to catch up with Princess Astra.

Sue: I think Princess Astra could be the sixth segment. Am I right?

Me: Stop trying to guess the ending!

Meanwhile, K9 has been talking to his "own kind".

Sue: So K9's met another robot dog? Has he been sniffing its circuits?

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The Marshal records another emergency broadcast, only this time he substitutes defiance for megalomaniacal arrogance.

Sue: From Churchill to Hitler in two episodes. That's impressive.

The Marshal prepares his ship for one final assault.

Sue: This reminds me of *Star Wars*. All that's missing here is a Wookiee.

K9 seeks permission for the Doctor to meet with Zeon's commandant, and while they wait, Merak lets it slip he doesn't know what a bee is.

Sue: Why did the Doctor jump down his throat like that? He hasn't done that in ages. I know this Merak character is wet and irritating, but even so.

K9 introduces the Doctor to Mentalis, the automated computer that has been conducting the war against Atrios, even though there are no Zeons left on the planet to win it.

Sue: Is the computer the sixth segment? It's got a big crystal on top of it, so that would make sense. Although, having said that, that crystal is too big to fit with the other pieces, so maybe not.

Shapps tries to shoot Mentalis and fails miserably.

Sue: (As Shapp) JUNE!

So the Doctor questions the machine instead.

Sue: I hope they don't ask that computer another question, I think I'm losing the will to live. This story isn't in any hurry, is it?

The camera sweeps into the cockpit of the Marshal's ship.

Sue: The story is slow, but at least the direction is interesting. That

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tracking shot was great.

The episode concludes with the Marshal preparing to attack Zeos.

Sue: And another dull cliffhanger wraps up another dull episode. Classic Part Three, really.

Part Four

Sue: It's a bit like the *War Games*. Not the *Doctor Who* one, the one where Matthew Broderick plays noughts and crosses against a mad computer.

The Shadow hypnotises Princess Astra.

Sue: He sounds like Barry White after a night on the cigars.

And then Sue loses her patience with Merak.

Sue: He's a wet blanket. We've seen loads of people like him in *Doctor Who*: bland hangers-on who you forget 20 minutes after the episode has finished. Actually, this one is so forgettable, I keep forgetting who he is in the middle of the episode.

Shapp heads back to the transmat chamber, but he gets into a fight with one of the Shadow's minions on the way and he ends flat on his back with his feet sticking up in the air.

Sue: Someone took his sun lounger away at the last moment.

Meanwhile, the Marshal's ship continues to close in on Zeos.

Sue: It's a planet. How close do you need to be? How can you miss a fucking planet?

The Doctor desperately wants to save Zeos.

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Sue: There's nobody there, pet! It's empty! It's just one shitty room with a broken computer. Leave it!

The Doctor cobbles together a replacement for the missing sixth segment.

Sue: You can't fake the Key to Time! If it was that easy, everybody would be doing it.

The Doctor uses the Key to set up a time loop.

Sue: (Singing) Let's do the Time Warp again!

Me: Time Loop, Sue. *Loop.* And even if it was a time warp, please, just... don't.

The Doctor places the universe in a three-second loop.

Sue: Why doesn't this affect the Doctor and Romana?

When Romana asks the same question, the Doctor almost bites her head off.

Sue: Okay, steady on, I was only asking.

The Doctor places the Marshal's ship in a localised time loop.

Sue: So the Key to Time is basically a fucking genie? How many wishes do you get?

While all this is going on, Princess Astra finds Merak lying at the bottom of a very deep hole.

Sue: This is a bit weird. Has he been shrunk? She looks massive.

Me: Don't be silly. The plot is weird enough as it is without people shrinking!

K9 tries to identify the source of a distress call.

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Sue: My fucking ears are the source of the distress! Turn that bloody alarm off!

As K9 investigates the cause of the signal, he is transported to the Shadow's lair on the third planet (keep up at the back).

Sue: Ooh, K9 is getting his own little adventure. That's nice.

Unfortunately, it's anything but nice, and the episode concludes with K9 under the thrall of a new master.

Sue: Bad boy!

Part Five

The Doctor passes himself in a corridor.

Sue: Is he part of the time loop, now?

Me: No.

Sue: Well, this is fucking confusing, then.

The Doctor tells the Shadow he knew he was controlling Princess Astra from the very beginning.

Sue: And didn't it cross your mind to tell Romana this? You know, before you let her wander off with her?

The Shadow tells the Doctor he works for the Black Guardian.

Sue: So this bloke *isn't* the Black Guardian, then? This is *very* confusing...

The Doctor bumps into a figure from his past.

Sue: Who the hell is that?

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He's Drax, and he greets the Doctor like an old friend.

Sue: Eh? Have I missed something? Or have I forgotten something? Or am I just thick?

Drax says he studied with the Doctor at the academy on Gallifrey.

Sue: He calls it 'Gallifree' as well. Bloody hell!

Drax says he was good at the practical stuff, but he wasn't too hot on the theory.

Sue: I've taught hundreds of students like Drax.

Drax addresses the Doctor as Theta Sigma.

Sue: What? So is that his name? That's his *real* name? Oh. That's disappointing.

Me: It's a nickname. Probably. I don't fucking know.

Drax says he picked up his ridiculous cockney accent when he was stranded in Brixton for a while.

Sue: So what was he doing when all those alien invasions were taking place? Why didn't he ask UNIT for a job?

And then Drax suggests the Doctor's moniker is purely academic.

Sue: Is there a Time Lord who calls himself the Bachelor? That could work...

Drax removes the Shadow's control device from K9's collar.

Sue: Why does the bad guy stick that thing on people's necks where you can see it? Why doesn't he stick it where the sun don't shine? No one

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would find it there.

The Shadow revels in a good old, “HA! HA! HA!” at everybody’s expense.

Sue: It’s a bit panto, this.

Me: Oh no it isn’t.

The episode concludes with Drax pointing a rifle shaped device at the Doctor. He pulls the trigger and the Doctor begins to shrink.

Sue: So is Drax the bad guy, or is he just an idiot?

As the credits roll, Sue shrugs her shoulders. She’s got nothing left to say.

Me: I know a few people who hate that episode. Some of them think it’s the most boring episode of *Doctor Who* ever produced.

Sue: Then they’re mad. That episode was just as bad as the other four. No better, but certainly no worse. It’s slow and cheap. I like some of the ideas, but they’re dragging it out now. I’m bored.

Part Six

Me: Are you still excited to see how it ends?

Sue: A little. Not as much as I was when we first started this, but I’m still curious.

Me: How would you like it to end?

Sue: I want the Man from Delmonte to pat the Doctor on the head and say, “Well done, Doctor. You’re a very good Time Lord”. Something like that would be nice.

Drax turns the gun on himself and the Doctor and they both end up a few inches tall.

Sue: What? Why did he do that? Who thought that would be a good idea? The idiot!

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Back on Atrios, Shapp tries to work out what Astra's connection to the sixth segment might be.

Sue: "June!"

Me: Yes, you've already done that, Sue.

Sue: I can't help it. Look at him! They must have been separated at birth.

Princess Astra is the sixth princess of the sixth dynasty of the sixth Royal House of Atrios.

Sue: I knew she was the sixth segment. It was so obvious. Her bracelet would have been an anticlimax, so what was left? I feel sorry for her. She really drew a shit hand when she was born.

The Shadow tries to access the Doctor's TARDIS, but he's stopped in his tracks by a blinding light.

Sue: Okay, so what's causing that, then? Is that the Key to Time doing that, or is it the TARDIS? Hasn't the bad guy got some sunglasses he can place over his wonky mask?

Merak risks life and limb to infiltrate the Shadow's ranks.

Sue: He really loves Astra, and now she's going to turn into a Perspex puzzle piece. It's tragic, really.

K9 transports Drax and the Doctor to the Shadow's throne room.

Sue: Is that K9's theme tune? It's very jaunty.

Astra accepts her destiny with open arms.

Sue: So she can't wait to be turned into a lump of plastic? That's a bit weird.

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Princess Astra is transformed into the sixth segment and the Shadow is triumphant.

Sue: Oh dear, he's showing us his sex face.

Just when it looks as if the Shadow will break the time loop, dooming Atrios and Zeos to Armageddon, Drax returns the Doctor to his normal size.

Sue: Why didn't you shrink the bad guy first, you idiot!

The Doctor grabs the Key to Time and sprints back to the TARDIS with Romana.

Sue: They're leaving without K9!

The Doctor returns to Zeos where, with some help from Drax, he defuses Mentalis.

Sue: We saw this scene last week. That's sloppy script editing, that is.

The time loop is removed and the Marshal is reacquainted with reality again. So he launches his missiles and...

Sue: He's missed! He actually missed a whole planet! That has to be the worst miss in the entire history of *Doctor Who*. And that's saying something.

The missiles destroy the Shadow's planet of evil, but the Black Guardian isn't that bothered, really.

Sue: I bet the Black Guardian has a negative personality. Because...

Me: Yes, I get it, Sue.

Not only does the Doctor possess the Key to Time, he shows us what would happen if he turned out to be a raging psychopath.

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Sue: Mental. There's no other word for it.

A Guardian appears on the TARDIS scanner to claim the Key for himself.

Sue: We already know that he isn't the White Guardian, and it's pretty clear that the Doctor doesn't believe he's the White Guardian either, so where's the tension in this scene?

The Doctor scatters the Key's segments through time and space.

Sue: That's it?

Me: That's it.

Sue: Give me strength.

At least Princess Astra gets to live.

Sue: That's nice. She definitely comes back later. I'm sure of it.

Me: Did you like her?

Sue: She's a bit posh. Pretty, though.

The Doctor attaches a randomiser to his TARDIS to stop the Black Guardian from following them.

Sue: So he's putting his TARDIS on shuffle?

Me: Something like that.

Sue: And he's broken it again in the process. Brilliant.

Cue credits.

Sue: That was a massive anticlimax. I knew it would be. I don't even know what happened at the end. I mean, where was the White Guardian while all that was going on? I bet an eight-year-old would have been disappointed by that. What did you think of it when you saw it?

Me: I don't remember.

Sue: Exactly. I rest my case.

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The Score

Sue: That was a complete waste of time. And six parts, too. On the plus side, K9 had a big part, and some of the ideas were interesting, I suppose. The director did his best, but the acting was all over the place. The conclusion to the Key to Time story should have been epic and meaningful. They had months to get that right, but it still felt rushed.

Me: You could argue that the White Guardian fixed the universe while the Doctor was chatting with the Black Guardian.

Sue: Yeah, but would an eight-year-old get that when they saw it? I doubt it.

Me: Douglas Adams wrote the last five minutes.

Sue: So what? They were the worst five minutes. It's nothing to be proud of, Neil.

4/10

COMMENT: "Sadly, I can't really argue with that. Much as I might try." – Rob Shearman

NOTES: Mary Tamm passed away the day after we finished *The Armageddon Factor*, which is the worst kind of synchronicity imaginable.

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SEASON SEVENTEEN

LOOK AT US! WE WENT TO
PARIS! LOOK!



This illustration funded by Steven Shaw

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

DESTINY OF THE DALEKS

BLOGGED: 31 July 2012

Episode One

I hid the story's author and title credit from Sue, and I was pretty subtle about it too. If I'd told her to look away, she would have concluded it was called The Something of the Daleks, The Something of the Cybermen or The Something of the Master. So I chose my moment carefully, and just a few seconds before the title appeared on screen, I distracted her with a red velvet cupcake Nicol had baked earlier.

Sue: So, he never mentions Romana again? She simply returns to Gallifrey between stories? That's so sad.

That's right, I threw spoilers out of the window and Sue knows that she's seen Mary's last episode, which means she's really confused when the Doctor calls for his companion.

Sue: Eh?

The person who appears in the console room is the spitting double of Princess Astra from The Armageddon Factor.

Sue: What's she doing there?

Romana is regenerating.

Sue: But she's wearing the same clothes as Princess Astra. She's even wearing the same bracelet. If that's supposed to be Romana, where did she get them from? I don't get this at all.

Me: Patrick Troughton's trousers regenerated, remember?

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Sue: I'd managed to forget that, thanks.

The Doctor tells Romana to change into something else.

Sue: What? Another dress?

Romana returns a few seconds later, only this time she's a blue dwarf. Sue glances at me and furrows her brow. The Doctor isn't fussed, either, so Romana changes again.

Sue: It's Lady Diamond, the drag act from Sitges.

The Doctor sends her away, claiming it's what's on the inside that counts.

Sue: If that's true, why does he keep turning down selections based on her appearance? What a hypocrite!

When Romana reappears with Princess Astra's face and the Fourth Doctor's costume, Sue makes me pause the DVD.

Sue: Where do I begin? Okay, so this means Time Lords can regenerate whenever they feel like it, and they can look like any person or species they want, yes?

Me: Well, yes.

Sue: So why did Jon Pertwee look like Jon Pertwee all that time, when he could have turned himself into Peter Gorden or somebody like that? He could have done something about his nose at the very least.

Me: Well, he can only regenerate so many times, and that would be wasting a regeneration, I guess.

Sue: Like Romana is doing right now, you mean?

Me: Yeah, she's wasted four already.

Sue: Ah, yes, but she said she was "regenerating" not that she had "regenerated". So this may not be as bad as it seems.

No, that wasn't a typo. Sue actually said that. We even agree that Pertwee

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couldn't alter his nose because he'd already finished regenerating and he didn't have a mirror handy at the time. Ditto for Eccleston's ears.

Sue: So Mary never got a leaving scene. That's sad. Does this woman...

Me: Lalla Ward.

Sue: Does she play the part like Princess Astra? I hope she doesn't because I don't think I could stand it.

Me: Wait and see.

Sue: What did you make of this when you were nine, Neil?

Me: I was living in New Zealand when this was broadcast, and they were years behind the UK, so I missed this season when it originally went out.

Sue: So where are we now? 1979?

Me: September 1st, 1979.

Sue: That would have been three days before my 18th birthday. I can't remember what I did on my 18th birthday. Isn't that sad?

Me: No. It means it must have been a good one.

Romana emerges in a pink version of the Doctor's costume, which I love to bits but Sue doesn't. It then takes 30 seconds of banter between the Doctor and Romana for Sue to make up her mind about Lalla Ward.

Sue: It's going to be okay. She's still Romana.

The TARDIS materialises at their next destination, and the Doctor is overjoyed when the scanner shows him nothing but rocks.

Sue: Why are they going outside? It's a radioactive quarry. Why don't they ever land anywhere nice, like Monte Carlo or Barcelona? Why are they always attracted to shit holes like this?

Me: They can't control where they go. They're using a randomiser so they can avoid the Black Guardian, remember?

Sue: Yes, but who says they have to leave the TARDIS every time they land on a dump? They should keep going until they land somewhere half-decent. With a beach.

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The Doctor and Romana explore the planet's surface.

Sue: This feels like the start of a new season. Apart from the new Romana, there's something about this that seems very different to the last one, but I can't put my finger on it yet.

The Time Lords arrive at some ruins.

Sue: That's a nice doer-upper.

They spy a group of shambling humanoids who are busy burying a deceased comrade beneath a mound of rocks.

Sue: It's *Night of the Living Dead*. I love zombie films. They're the only horror films I can bear to watch.

Me: Don't get your hopes up, love. Zombies aren't exactly renowned for burying their dead.

The Doctor runs down a sand dune and intercepts Romana, who's already waiting for him at the bottom.

Sue: She isn't daft. She wasn't going to get her new coat dirty. And where's K9?

Me: He's stuck in the TARDIS with laryngitis.

Sue: Laryngitis?! What? How can a computer get laryngitis?

Me: They covered this at the beginning of the episode, Sue.

Sue: I wasn't concentrating. I was thinking about Mary Tamm and feeling sad.

The Doctor is trapped by some falling masonry, and while Romana heads off to retrieve K9, he amuses himself by reading Origins of the Universe by Oolon Colluphid. Which is when Nicol entered the room with more cakes.

Me: Does the name Oolon Colluphid mean anything to you, Nic?

Nicol: Of course it does. It's another *Hitchhikers* reference. Is this one by

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Douglas Adams? Why didn't you come and get me?

The Doctor is rescued by three Movellans.

Sue: It's Boney M.

Me: (*Singing, badly*) "Ma... Ma... Ma... Ma... Tom Baker."

When the Doctor is told he's on the planet Skaro, Sue actually gasped.

Sue: Daleks!

And then the episode concludes with Romana surrounded by the titular bastards.

Sue: If they hadn't told us we were on Skaro, that would have shocked me. But we knew they were coming, so that's a shame.

Me: Well, they do appear in the title.

Sue: So why did you hide it from me? Don't do that to me again, please. It's really annoying.

Episode Two

I don't distract Sue from the title this time.

Sue: Oh, so that's why the cliffhanger didn't make any sense. It was all Terry fucking Nation's fault.

Me: Incidentally, Terry insisted K9 shouldn't meet the Daleks in this story because he was worried the dog might show them up.

Sue: Terry fucking Nation.

Romana is interrogated by the Daleks.

Sue: That voice is very familiar. Who is it?

Even Nicol, who has stuck around for this episode, looked up from texting

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her boyfriend.

Nicol: Yeah, that voice is very familiar.

I put them out of their misery. We'll be here all night, otherwise.

Me: It's Zippy.

Nicol: Oh, yes, so it is!

Sue: We should definitely mention that on the blog. It's very funny.

Me: I don't think we're the first people to notice that, Sue.

The Daleks chant in unison: "Obey! Obey! Obey!"

Sue: They'd make an excellent barber's shop quartet.

Romana is sent to toil in a mine while the Doctor wonders what the Daleks could be searching for on Skaro.

Sue: I know!

Yeah, I bet she does.

Me: Go on then, love.

This will be good. I bet she'll say something really stupid, like Rod, Jane and Freddy.

Sue: Davros.

Me: Hey, I'm impressed.

Sue: What else could it be? An overdue library book?

A Dalek glides through a corridor.

Sue: Ooh, I like the white Daleks.

Me: That's just the lighting. It's still grey.

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Sue: Oh, for a minute there, I thought the BBC had splashed out on some new ones.

Romana fakes her own death so she can escape from the mine.

Sue: Time Lords can do that. She's perfectly fine. See, I do remember stuff, Neil.

The Doctor joins forces with an escaped convict named Tyssan, and together they investigate the Daleks headquarters.

Sue: There's definitely something different about this story. But what is it? It's bugging me.

She chews it over.

Sue: Are they using a Steadicam?

Me: Yes, they are. But the BBC spell it with a y.

Sue: Y?

Me: I don't know.

Sue: Well, whatever they called it, it looks great. It gives them so much more freedom. This is very well-directed, actually. The low angle shots of the Daleks are great, and the camera work makes this appear more claustrophobic and scary than it really is.

A Dalek pursues the Doctor to a ventilator shaft high up in the infrastructure. When it doesn't pursue him, the Doctor decides to take the piss.

Sue: But they can fly, so that doesn't make any sense.

Sadly, the Daleks aren't exactly wowing Sue.

Sue: The Daleks are a mess. They're battered to bits. I've seen ones in better condition on *eBay*.

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Me: Have you really been looking at Daleks on *eBay*?

Sue: I was just curious about how much they went for. And it's ridiculous, so don't expect one for your birthday. I tried to bid on a TARDIS wardrobe last week – the people who were selling it lived a few minutes down the road – but I was outbid. It was probably for the best.

Me: You can say that again. I'm beginning to worry about you.

The Doctor finds Davros in his bunker, covered in cobwebs.

Sue: So he's dead. I don't see how this helps the Daleks.

The episode concludes with Davros' third eye winking into life.

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

Episode Three

Davros is alive!

Sue: But he doesn't sound anything like him!

She isn't very happy about this development.

Sue: It sounds like he can't be arsed!

The Doctor takes Davros for a quick spin in his chair.

Sue: Scream if you want to go faster!

It doesn't take Davros very long to segue into a megalomaniacal rant.

Sue: That mask doesn't fit him properly. It's too slack. What went wrong?

Me: They couldn't get the same actor and they had to use the same mask. They're trying to make the best of a bad situation.

Sue: I don't see how it could be any worse. He's rubbish! I could play

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Davros better than him!

The Movellans do some basic research on Davros.

Sue: Their version of *Wikipedia* is a bit shit, isn't it?

The Doctor and Davros catch up on old times.

Sue: This is a good scene. I could watch these two chatting away all day. Tom Baker is very good in this. It's just a shame I can't take Davros seriously. He was great in *Genesis of the Daleks*, but he's crap here.

The Doctor threatens to blow Davros up if the Daleks don't stay back.

Sue: Spack off? Did he really just tell the Daleks to spack off?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Poor Tom. He must have confused "back off" with "stay back" and his brain couldn't decide on which one to go with. I bet he had a couple of drinks at lunchtime.

The Daleks begin executing the slaves in an attempt to force the Doctor's hand.

Sue: Look at this guy! He's trying not to laugh even though he's just about to be killed. He actually looked at the camera and smirked!

The Dalek shoots the extra, who slumps to the floor with the conviction of someone working for a minimum wage.

Sue: Put some effort into it, man!

Another slave is executed and, once again, there isn't a scintilla of emotion.

Sue: Were they specifically told not to act?

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When the slaves are eventually set free, thanks to the Doctor, they don't seem very pleased about it.

Sue: Look at them! They're acting as if they've been given an extra 15 minutes for their tea break. They should be overjoyed that they've survived certain death, but instead they look like they're having a fucking picnic. This story includes some of the worst background acting I've ever seen.

The Doctor attaches a bomb to Davros' chair and threatens to detonate it with his sonic screwdriver.

Sue: He's bluffing. The Doctor would never do that.

The Doctor legs it outside and whips out his sonic.

Sue: What's he doing?

The Doctor activates the sonic and the bomb explodes.

Sue: I'm really shocked by that. What happened to having the right, and all that crap? Christ!

However, the Daleks removed the bomb in the nick of time and Davros lives to fight another day, which he celebrates by hurtling down a corridor and slamming into a wall.

Sue: Oh dear, that was really shoddy. Why didn't they cut away a couple of frames before he hit the flat? It's lazy. Shoddy and lazy.

Meanwhile, on Skaro's unremittingly bleak surface, the Movellans are conducting tests on the Nova device.

Sue: That's a funny place to install a shower cubicle.

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Sue spends the rest of the episode slating the acting, whether it's Tim Barlow as Tyssan or, well, any Movellan, really. And then she learns the Movellans are actually robots.

Sue: I didn't see that coming at all. Their stilted delivery actually makes sense, now. Still crap, though.

The Movellans lock Romana in a perspex cubicle with the Nova device, which is slowly ticking down to zero.

Sue: This will be a good cliffhanger.

The Doctor struggles to free his companion and the episode concludes with the countdown reaching 33 seconds.

Sue: Rubbish. What a place to cut it. There was no attempt to generate any tension in that scene at all. I get the distinct feeling that no one can be bothered with this story.

Episode Four

Sue: There's still one thing I don't understand.

Me: Only one thing?

Sue: Yes. Why is Davros helping the Daleks? They shot him in the face and left him for dead. He's awfully eager to lend them a hand considering what they did to him last time.

Davros wants to give his creations the advantage.

Sue: I can't accept this actor as Davros. His voice is just wrong. I don't buy it. And what is that ball doing on top of his chair? Is his pet hamster in there?

The Doctor demonstrates how the Movellans are locked in a perpetual stalemate with the Daleks with a quick game of rock-paper-scissors.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Well, that's just bollocks, isn't it?

A Movellan, who has been left to guard the Nova device, passes the time crushing rocks.

Sue: What the hell was that?

Me: He crushed a rock with his bare hands. It's supposed to show that they have superhuman robotic strength.

Sue: Oh, I thought he was playing with some fossilised shit.

Tyssan disables a Movellan by removing a power pack from its belt.

Sue: That's a stupid design flaw. They may as well have a big off switch on their backs.

The Movellan expresses his untimely death through the medium of dance.

Sue: I've just remembered what these robots remind me of. Hot Gossip.

Davros assembles a squad of suicide Daleks. Sue can't stop laughing.

Sue: I know I shouldn't laugh, but this is very silly. It looks like a cartoon.

Davros gives the Daleks their final orders, which he has to repeat because they aren't in any hurry to blow themselves up.

Sue: That was very, very funny.

The slaves storm the Movellan ship.

Me: I can't believe you didn't recognise Big Ron from *EastEnders*!

Sue: He's definitely the best extra in this. You can see why he went on to better things.

The Dalek suicide squad approaches the Movellan ship.

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Sue: They may as well have little round bombs with TNT stamped on them. Hang on a minute, are the Dalek operators standing up and walking?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Jesus Christ.

Romana rushes to stop a Movellan from setting off the Nova device.

Sue: Things are so bad, she's decided to get her coat dirty.

Romana grapples with the Movellan on the sand.

Sue: It's just like *Get Carter*, this.

The Movellan's arm goes flying through the air and Sue collapses into a fit of hysterics.

Sue: This is a full-on pantomime. Is it supposed to be this stupid?

The Doctor blows up the Daleks, but even that makes Sue laugh.

Sue: Pathetic!

The episode concludes with Davros imprisoned in a block of ice, and when the credits roll, I prepare myself for the worst.

The Score

Sue: I hated that. The acting was abysmal, the plot was ridiculous, and it looked too bright and comedic. The direction was pretty good, but what a mess.

Me: What about the new Romana?

Sue: She's alright, I suppose. It's too early for me to compare them, and it wouldn't be fair anyway. I'll miss Mary Tamm's Romana for a long time to come.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Me: Well, you might be pleased to know that *Destiny of the Daleks* is Terry Nation's final contribution to *Doctor Who*.

Sue: Is it Douglas Adams' final contribution as well?

Me: No, he's the full-time script editor now.

Sue: Fuck.

2/10

COMMENT: "Sue's reaction to Davros reminds me of the first time I watched *Destiny*. I was incredibly excited by the end of Episode Two but crushingly disappointed the instant Davros started speaking in the following episode. It was all wrong." – John Williams

CITY OF DEATH

BLOGGED: 3 August 2012

Part One

Nicol: Who the hell is David Agnew?

Sue: Oh, no. That name rings a bell. And not in a good way.

Me: David Agnew doesn't exist. It's a pseudonym. Practically every line is written by Douglas Adams, although some of the ideas originate from David Fisher. He wrote *The Stones of Blood* and *The Androids of Tara*.

Sue: I liked them.

Me: Don't worry, Nic, this is *very* Douglas Adams.

Nicol: It had better be.

The story begins 400 million years ago...

Sue: This is very alien. You can tell straight away that this isn't going to be set anywhere near Earth.

She's wrong, of course. But she means well.

Sue: Nice matte painting at the back, there. The spaceship is very *War of the Worlds*, too. I like the model a lot.

We enter the ship's cockpit.

Sue: Waiter, there's an eyeball floating in my linguini!

Nicol: Is his spacesuit made from Lego?

Sue: I don't understand how this part of the ship fits with the exterior we saw a minute ago. They don't match up.

Scaroth the Jagaroth is worried that his spaceship's warp drive engines will explode if he revs them up.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I can't understand a single word he's saying.

Nicol: Even Bane made more sense than this guy.

Things aren't looking too good, folks. But at least a nice explosion takes their mind off things for a bit. And then we cut to the world's most iconic tower.

Sue: It's Blackpool.

Nicol: Mother! It's the Eiffel Tower!

Sue: Oh. Nice stock footage, then.

At the top of the tower, the Doctor and Romana are flirting outrageously with each other.

Sue: Are they really in Paris?

Me: Yes, Sue, they're really in Paris.

Sue: Wow. I love this already.

Nicol: Paris and Douglas Adams. What more could you want?

Nicol is half-French, so she actually turned her phone off at this point.

Sue: I bet you like Romana's outfit, don't you, Neil?

Nicol: Why is she dressed as an extra from *Grange Hill*?

Sue: Ann Summers, surely?

Nicol: Mother!

The Doctor and Romana skip through the streets of Paris.

Nicol: I like the music.

Sue: You actually like Dudley Simpson?

Nicol: I like show tunes. I keep expecting them to break into song.

Sue: They should do a *Doctor Who* musical. *Buffy* did it and it was brilliant. A planet where you have to sing or die. That could work.

Professor Kerenksy is beaver away in the cellar of a nearby château.

CITY OF DEATH

Nicol: Is he supposed to be Italian or Russian?

Sue: He sounds like Manuel from *Fawlty Towers*. And he looks like my old science teacher, Mr Windermere.

We also meet Kerensky's employer, the suave Count Scarlioni.

Sue: He's famous. And good, too.

Me: Right on both counts.

Nicol: I won't know who he is.

Me: Yes, you will. He's in one of your favourite TV shows.

Nicol: *Community*?

Me: *Game of Thrones*.

Nicol: Really? Who the hell is he?

Me: He plays Grand Maester Pycelle.

Nicol: I haven't got my *Game of Thrones* flow chart with me. Which one is he again?

Me: The randy priest with the tremendously long beard.

Sue: You get to see him naked in one episode.

Nicol: Mother!

The Doctor and Romana are enjoying some refreshments in a café when they experience an unexpected time jump.

Sue: It's *Le Groundhog Day*. Either that or there's a fault with the DVD. It wouldn't be the first time.

The Doctor thinks it could be a crack in time.

Sue: Like the crack in the new series. Spooky, eh? Oh, I used to have a Renault 5... I loved that car.

Yes, Romana and the Doctor are running through the streets of Paris again.

Sue: This is basically them screaming at the viewers: LOOK AT US! WE WENT TO PARIS! LOOK!

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Nicol: I'm not complaining.

Sue: Yeah, it makes a lovely change from what we usually have to put with. Why can't they all be like this?

The Doctor takes Romana to the Louvre.

Sue: They couldn't get permission to film there. The camera is miles away.

The Doctor and Romana are admiring the Mona Lisa when they experience another time jump. The Doctor faints spectacularly.

Nicol: Is he always like this?

Sue: Oh, this is his normal, Nicol. He's been much worse than this.

As the Doctor and Romana head back to the café, we all sing Dudley's City of Death theme. And when they reach the café, the Doctor and Romana decide to talk about art.

Nicol: They're sitting in front of a French police box. That's funny.

A British private detective named Duggan forces the Time Lords into the café at gunpoint, which means we leave the delights of Paris for the confines of BBC Television Centre, where some "French" extras leave a lot to be desired; one of them even attempted a Gallic shrug that 'Allo 'Allo would have baulked at.

Nicol: Why don't they give them some onions to wear around their necks while they're at it?

Back at the château, the Countess Scarlioni is disappointed when she learns her husband is in the cellar with the professor. Again.

Sue: Does she suspect he's having an affair with the kooky scientist?

Me: Hold that thought. It will come in handy later.

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The episode ends with Count Scarlioni ripping off his mask to reveal the Jagaroth beneath.

Nicol: You can see his nose.

Me: What?

Nicol: You can see the actor's nose under that spaghetti.

My God, she's right. I'd never noticed that before. Well, that's the last time I invite Nicol back to ruin things.

Nicol: It's either a chin or a nose.

Sue: Well, I liked the cliffhanger. That was a great start. Oh, look! Rosie Crowson is the PA for this story. That's brilliant! She taught me everything I know about production management. I loved Rosie. Rosie, if you're reading this, please get in touch.

Part Two

Me: This is our 500th episode of *Doctor Who*!

Sue: That definitely deserves a hug. I'd offer to dance with you but Nicol would die of embarrassment.

Nicol: If you'd warned me this was the 500th episode, I would have baked a cake. I could have made the *Arc de Triomphe* out of marzipan.

Me: This episode originally aired on my 10th birthday.

Sue: And you weren't even in the country. What a shame.

Me: I know. I didn't see this story for another 12 years, when it was released on video. How sad is that? I did spend my 10th birthday in a jet boat, though, so it wasn't all bad news.

The Louis Quinze chair routine gets a massive thumbs up.

Me: It doesn't get any better than that. It still makes me laugh every time I see it. And I must have seen this dozens of times. Hundreds, possibly. I used to play that scene in some of my lectures. Even the ones that weren't about science fiction.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I love it. I feel like I'm watching a play. A really good play where everyone's really comfortable because they've learnt all their lines and they know what they're doing. They're enjoying themselves and it's infectious.

Nicol: Shhh, I'm trying to listen to this.

The Doctor, Romana and Duggan are locked in the château's cellar.

Nicol: Why lock them up next to the top-secret lab? That's a bit daft, isn't it?

Sue: Don't think about it too much, Nicol. It's *Doctor Who*.

We can all agree on one thing, though. Everybody loves Duggan.

Sue: He should be a companion. He'd be perfect for the Doctor and Romana. They could take it in turns to play with him.

The Doctor escapes from his cell and spies on Kerensky as he experiments with time. It appears the professor has harnessed enough power to age chickens to death.

Sue: Just switch off the machine before the chicken dies. I don't see what the problem is.

The Doctor tries to explain the problem: the two time continuums are incompatible. But Kerensky doesn't understand.

Sue: I'm not a scientist, and even I understood what he meant!

The Doctor reverses the polarity ("Of course he does") and the chicken turns into an egg. What's less easy to explain is the face of a Jagaroth which suddenly appears in the time bubble.

Sue: Did the chicken just turn into an alien? Is that an important clue? What does that mean, Neil?

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I ignore her, hoping she'll forget all about it, because, just like the artist who paints a portrait of Romana with a fractured timepiece for a face, it makes no sense at all. Anyway, back at the château, a dress rehearsal for the crime of the century is already in progress.

Sue: They should have attached the suction pads to the glass before they cut it. Amateurs.

Scarlioni neutralises the laser beams which protect the Mona Lisa by altering the refractive index of the air.

Nicol: That's plausible.

Sue: Apart from the fact that they touched the beams when they were carrying the painting out. Amateurs!

Meanwhile, in the château's cellar, Romana discovers a room which has been bricked up for hundreds of years. So Duggan breaks the wall with his shoulder.

Sue: Wait! That could be a supporting wall!

They find six copies of the Mona Lisa, all painted by Leonardo da Vinci.

Sue: Clever.

Nicol: Very clever.

The Doctor wants to get to the bottom of this mystery, so he jumps into his TARDIS and travels to Italy in 1505.

Sue: I thought he couldn't steer his TARDIS properly?

Me: He must have turned the randomiser off.

Sue: But that means the Black Guardian might find him.

Nicol: Who?

The Doctor is exploring Da Vinci's study when he's interrupted by a soldier

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

working for Captain Tancredi. And then an imposing figure strides through the doorway.

Sue: Is it the Black Guardian?

Me: No.

Sue: Is it the Master?

Me: No!

Nicol: Mother!

No, it's Captain Tancredi aka Count Scarlioni!

Sue: Fabulous cliffhanger.

Me: You didn't say very much, Nicol. Are you bored?

Nicol: Not at all. Let's keep going.

500 episodes down. Well done us.

Part Three

Sue: I love the set design. It's gorgeous.

The soldier is instructed to torture the Doctor.

Me: "Paaaaaacker..."

Sue: Is it Packer? So it is. Even the small parts are big in this.

Duggan and Romana arrive at the Louvre but the Mona Lisa has already been stolen. When Duggan sets off the alarms, he escapes by throwing himself through a window.

Nicol: I'm pretty sure the Mona Lisa is kept on display in a room with no windows. Just saying.

Me: There are forums for people like you, Nicol.

And then we enter a period of protracted silence that I haven't experienced

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since The Seeds of Doom Part Five. Well, I say silence. Silence punctuated by loud, raucous laughter would be a more apt description.

Sue: I'm sorry, I didn't say very much, did I?

Me: Don't worry about it. I'm just happy you're enjoying it.

Sue: Did you ever think you'd see the day when all three of us sat down to watch old *Doctor Who* together? It's lovely, isn't it?

Me: Stop it, you'll make me cry.

Sue: I always find it difficult to say anything when a story is really good. What more can I say? It's brilliant.

Me: What about you, Nicol? You've been very quiet.

Nicol: I'm enjoying it. It reminds me of the new series, especially the humour and the timey-wimey twists. It feels very modern.

Me: If I had to choose a classic story to show to someone who'd never ever seen *Doctor Who* before, I'd probably pick this one.

Sue: I wouldn't. It's not your typical *Doctor Who* story at all.

Nicol: That's why you should choose it, mother. Doesn't that tell you something?

Part Four

Me: This episode was watched by 16.1 million people. It was a record for *Doctor Who* which still stands today.

Sue: Wow. Although I'm not surprised. I can see how word of mouth must have spread, and more and more people would have wanted to watch it.

Me: That's a lovely theory, Sue, but ITV were on strike so there wasn't much choice. It was either this or *Championship Lawn Green Bowls* on BBC2. Probably.

Sue: Even so, it's the perfect story to hold the record. Imagine if it was something really shit, like the last one?

After another extended silence, Sue asks me to pause the DVD.

Sue: So is the Countess an alien?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Me: No.

Sue: But she knows her husband is an alien, right?

Me: No.

Sue: Right... No, wait, that doesn't make any sense.

Me: In the first episode, you said she probably thought her husband was shagging the professor.

Nicol: I can't believe you two are having this conversation.

The Doctor, Romana and Duggan are reunited in the château's cellar.

Sue: I'll be really upset if Duggan isn't a companion for at least one more story.

Me: I loved Duggan so much, he featured in my one and only attempt at fan fiction.

Sue: When did you write that? When you were 12?

Me: No, when I was 24 and I was living with you. I toyed with the idea of sending a proposal to Virgin's New Adventures range. Their guidelines specifically stated that you couldn't use any established characters or monsters, so my story featured Duggan and the Zygons. Because I'm an idiot.

Scarlioni and the Doctor discuss the merits of meddling with time.

Sue: Best villain ever. How can you not love him?

Later, the Countess confronts Scarlioni. She tells him it wasn't difficult keeping secrets from him. A few fur coats, a few trinkets, a little nefarious excitement...

Sue: Nefarious? What the hell does that mean?

Me: Maybe he wore a gimp mask and an all-in-one...

Nicol: Can we please stop talking about this now?

Scarlioni tears off his mask and becomes Scaroth, last of the Jagaroth.

CITY OF DEATH

Me: I bet she's pleased they had separate bedrooms now.

Sue: They should have left his voice alone. It would have been funnier, not to mention easier for me to understand.

Scaroth throws himself back 400 million years as the Doctor, Romana and Duggan race through the streets of Paris.

Sue: Hang on a minute. Where's K9?

Me: I can't believe it's taken you three and a half episodes to notice he's missing.

Nicol: I didn't notice, either. I definitely miss him now, though.

The Doctor and Romana hurl themselves in front of the Paris traffic.

Sue: Aww, they're holding hands. That's sweet.

Me: You can actually see Tom Baker and Lalla Ward falling in love during this story.

Nicol: What?

Me: They fell in love. They marry each other eventually.

Sue: I'm sure you've told me this before. I wasn't that bothered the first time, but now I want to know *everything*.

Nicol: How long were they married for?

Me: They divorced a year later.

Sue: Still longer than my first marriage.

Me: She's married to Richard Dawkins now.

Nicol: Oh well, you can't have everything.

The Doctor, Romana and Duggan enter the art gallery where the Doctor has parked his TARDIS.

Sue and Nicol: Ahhhhhh!!!!

They've just spotted John Cleese.

Sue: Brilliant, just brilliant.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The TARDIS travels back 400 million years and we discover that life on Earth only exists thanks to the Jagaroth's misfortune.

Sue: Creationists wouldn't like that very much.

Nicol: It's very clever. The twists keep coming.

Scaroth arrives at the site of the Jagaroth's ship in order to stop himself from starting the engines that cause the explosion.

Sue: Just hit him!

Duggan obliges and Scaroth is thrown back to the château in 1979, where his manservant, Herman, kills him by accident.

Sue: That's very funny. I think Herman loved him as well.

The story is wrapped up at the top of the Eiffel Tower, but Duggan isn't invited to join the crew.

Sue: Take him with you!

When the Doctor reaches the ground, he turns back to wave farewell.

Me: Bye, bye, Duggan!

Sue: He can't hear you. He's too far away. Although it is a lovely touch. Bye, bye, Duggan!

The Score

Sue: That was faultless. It's as simple as that.

10/10

Nicol: Yeah, I'll give it 10 out of 10 as well.

Me: Me too.

CITY OF DEATH

Sue: Nobody cares what you think, Neil.

Me: You could stick that on BBC2 right now and no one would bat an eyelid.

Sue: Stick it on BBC1 during the 50th anniversary celebrations. That's what I would do.

Sue was very keen on watching some extra features (Nicol, not so much), so we started with the documentary, Paris in the Springtime.

Sue: That was excellent. You could tell that a lot of love went into that. But please tell Rob Shearman that you can't get red chardonnay. Duggan broke a bottle of red wine and he said it was the correct way for him to serve chardonnay. And I don't even drink that much wine. And finally, the Moff said the John Cleese cameo is the only bit of comedy that doesn't have anything to do with the plot. But it does. It shows us another way that people look at art – in this case, in a pretentious way – and that ties into the themes of the story. Apart from that, it was great. I can't believe Douglas knocked that out in a weekend. Imagine what it could have been like if he'd spent a whole week on it.

The next extra, Paris, W2, simply blew her away.

Sue: Oh. My. God. I can hear Rosie!

Me: No you can't. Rosie's the PA. That's the floor manager talking.

Sue: I'm telling you, Neil, that's Rosie. I'd know her voice anywhere.

I turned the production notes on and by God she was right.

Sue: I can't believe it. I feel quite emotional.

I decide to quit while we're ahead and we skip Eye on Blatchford and the chicken wrangling video. You can have too much of a good thing, you know.

COMMENT: "I didn't have one single moment's doubt that this would score 10/10. I mean, it's *City Of Death*." – Noodles

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

NOTES: Richard Dawkins and Lalla Ward separated after 24 years of marriage as I was editing this book. Which is odd because they both come across as being really easy people to live with.

My aborted Virgin New Adventure proposal was called *Parliament of the Zygons*. It featured Duggan, the Seventh Doctor and Ace battling against a heartless 1980s Tory government, who, it turns out, are actually aliens in disguise. It was bloody dreadful.

Rosie Crowson never did get in touch.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

BLOGGED: 6 August 2012

This was our fourth (and final) video commentary. You can subject yourself to the whole thing at: www.wifeinspace.com/the-creature-from-the-pit, or you can satisfy yourself with these barely compressible extracts instead:

Part One

Me: I'd like to apologise before we start to all those people who hate the video commentaries.

Sue: Why do people hate the video commentaries?

Me: Various reasons. People can't understand a word you're saying, some of them can't hear the audio when they're at work, and it takes 20 minutes to watch them, instead of a minute or two to read them, so...

Sue: So we have to give them their money back?

It doesn't take very long for confusion to set in...

Sue: Oh, has K9 got a different voice?

K9 is reading to Romana as the Doctor spring cleans his TARDIS.

Sue: Are they copulating at this point?

Me: At this precise point?

Sue: Well, no, not at this precise point.

Me: Are you talking about the fictional characters or the actors?

Sue: (*Annoyed*) Okay, fine, it doesn't matter.

The TARDIS suddenly lurches to the right...

Sue: Ooh, hatstand on his head!

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The Doctor blames a faulty transceiver, but K9 disagrees.

Sue: It's a very similar voice, isn't it?

Me: Well it isn't his brother, if that's what you're saying.

Sue: He doesn't sound as sarky. Oh, I don't know... I think I like the other one better.

Turbans are all the rage on the jungle planet Chloris. So much so, even a leather-clad Huntsman decides to get in on the act.

Sue: His turban is a bit over the top. That's a Gok Wan look, that.

Me: A Frank Bough look, surely?

Sue: And I haven't got a clue what those things are. The rolling stones with the moss on them...

She isn't crazy about the Wolfweeds, but at least the jungle set passes muster.

Sue: Looks pretty good for a studio, Neil.

When the Huntsman cracks his whip to get the Wolfweeds moving again, Sue sings a few bars from The Magnificent Seven. No, I have no idea either. Meanwhile, Romana has been kidnapped by a band of scavengers...

Sue: You know what this is, don't you? It's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*.

As Sue struggles to adapt to K9's new voice, I decide to bombard her with questions that some of our readers have sent in. This will turn out to be a mistake.

Me: I've got a question from Ben Gilbert: If you could get anyone to do K9's voice, who would it be?

Sue: Oh, I don't know... The guy who did it before this one!

Sue gives Lady Adrasta the once over.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

Sue: It's a good Lady Gaga look, that. Yeah, these costumes could easily be influencing Lady Gaga.

The episode concludes with the Doctor falling into the eponymous pit.

Sue: Are there any miners on this colony?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Well, if they chucked one down there with a piano, he'd be A-flat minor.

Part Two

Me: You'll be pleased to know that Sue read the episode synopsis to Part One on *Wikipedia* during the break. So you're okay now, aren't you, Sue?

Sue: Yeah, I'm fine now.

Unfortunately, her chances of following Part Two are immediately torn asunder when we are distracted by K9 covered in cobwebs.

Me: He looks like the K9 on the shelf behind me, because you haven't dusted for so long. Not that I'm saying it's your job to dust.

Sue: Hang on. Every time I dust those shelves, I knock them off.

Me: That's true.

She's referring to my collection of classic Doctor Who action figures.

Sue: So then I end up picking them all up off the floor and putting them back on the shelf...

Me: Yeah, but...

Sue: And then you complain that I don't put them back in the right order.

Me: Well you don't.

Sue: And then you'll say things like, "Where's the sonic screwdriver? It's missing out of his hand." Or, "Where's this Sontaran's... doo-dah?" Whatever. Do you know what I mean? I'm sorry but it's probably up the Hoover.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Me: At least you've started to put the Doctors back in the correct order. It's just the Cybermen you're struggling with now.

If this was a normal blog, I would have paused the DVD during an exchange like that, but because this was a video commentary, and it would be too time-consuming to stop and start the episode because I'd have to re-sync the tracks up later, entire swathes of the plot are lost to nonsense like that. And speaking of nonsense...

Me: (*Laughing and pointing at Erato*) What do you think of *THAT*?

Sue: Dear me, that's meat and two veg, isn't it? That looks like something you'd see in one of those books you get in hospital, where all the diseases are. It's terrible!

The Doctor joins forces with disgraced astrologer named Organon. And yes, I told her Kate Bush writes an episode of Doctor Who. And yes, of course she believed me.

Me: See if you can recognise the other guy. He's quite famous.

Sue: Yes, he's... erm... famous.

After an agonising wait...

Sue: Well, I know it isn't Catweazle...

Me: It is! It's Catweazle!

Sue: But it can't be Catweazle. Because Jon Pertwee's Catweazle.

Me: No, he's not! He's Worzel Gummidge!

Sue: Oh yeah...

To be fair to Sue, at least she tries to get us back on track.

Sue: The set looks okay, there are some elements of the story which are all right (apart from all the mining again), and I'm interested to know why she (Adrasta) wants all the metal. But there are no big scares yet. There's nothing to be fearful of.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

Me: Unless you're frightened of a big cock and balls.

Sue: I think I need some more booze to get through this. I think I'll have a glass of white chardonnay.

The episode climaxes with Erato sitting on the Doctor's face.

Sue: Is it tea-bagging him?

Me: Not for kids!

Part Three

Me: I've got a question from Paul Shields: Who would win in a fight between the Wolfweeds and the Stones of Blood?

Sue: Probably the Stones of Blood, because the Wolfweeds are rubbish. Although they did immobilise K9, which is pretty hard to do. I just can't see the point of them. I can't see what their role is.

Me: They haven't got a role. They just roll.

K9 demands to be lifted off a table.

Sue: He's such a diva.

Me: Would you like a full-size K9, if you could get one on eBay?

Sue: I'd like one if he did the hoovering. You know, like one of those hoovers you just set away.

Me: You could be onto something; you could have Daleks and K9s hoovering up.

Sue: Shall we apply for the rights?

Me: Well, Alan Partridge had the rights to K9 before he went mad.

Sue: Has he still got them?

Me: No. In fact, K9 has his own spin-off series that's currently running on some children's channel. It's Australian. Do you want to watch it?

Sue: Not really.

The Doctor decides to negotiate with Erato.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Me: One of *Doctor Who*'s most frightening moments is coming up now. This scared many children for many years.

Sue: Look at this! He's got his head on a cock and balls, and... And... OH NO! NOOOOO!

The Doctor fellates a bin bag.

Sue: NO! It's not right! He must know what this looks like! Oh my God. I'm shocked!

Me: I've got a question from Adam S Leslie: Because this is Tom's regeneration story, do you think there should have been more of a sense of occasion?

Sue: So he regenerates after this? Does he? He doesn't!

Me: This is why people wanted you to commentate on this.

Sue: Is this really his last story?

Me: Terrible way to go, isn't it?

Sue: Oh shit...

Me: Killed by a giant cock and balls.

Sue: So are we getting Peter Davison now?

Me: Yes, after this.

Sue: Shall we just knock this off tonight, then?

Me: Yeah, let's knock it out and get to Peter Davison.

Sue: Is it really his last story? *Really?*

Me: Yeah!

Sue: But you never told me this!

Me: I know! And Adam's spoilt it now.

Sue: Hang on... Shall we stop this and have a little chat?

I can't believe how gullible my wife is sometimes (although the lie being propagated by a third party definitely helped). In fact, I almost felt sorry for her.

Me: Okay, it's not really.

Sue: Oh, you bastard!

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

Before she can belt me with a cushion, I distract her with another question.

Me: I've got a question from Kieran Dunne: If you had to go to a Halloween party, who would you go as – the giant prawn from *The Invisible Enemy*, or Erato?

Sue: Neither of them are very flattering, I've got to say.

Me: That's true.

Sue: I'd choose whichever costume was in the shop, which would be neither of them.

And then we stopped commenting on the story for a while as Sue fielded some more questions. In other words, our video commentary descended into an undisciplined podcast. And there's nothing worse than that.

Me: Daniel Blythe asks: If you were trapped in a pit, how would you escape?

Sue: I'd probably take my trousers off...

Me: WHAT?

Sue: I'd take my trousers off and make a big rope.

Me: I don't think that would work.

Sue: Well, I certainly wouldn't want to talk down a giant knob and balls. It looks gangrenous to me.

Sue tries to put her finger on it (this story's shortcomings, not the giant cock and balls).

Sue: There's no pace to this story. There's no drama, and there's no suspense. There's nothing! Which is a shame.

Me: I've got a question from Sarah Hadley which ties into what you've just said: Do you think Tom's had enough?

Sue: It's minimal effort. He's going for a basic 40 per cent pass. Just enough to get by.

Me: Have you had enough of Tom? Are you ready for him to go?

Sue: Well, I don't think his heart's in it any more.

Me: Do you think he's done everything he can with the part?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Yeah, he probably has. I still think he could give more, though. I think the scripts aren't strong enough for him. I think he thinks they're beneath him. And he's an educated bloke.

The episode concludes with Adrasta freaking the fuck out.

Sue: I don't know what she's frightened of. Is it the shield or the balls?

Me: Do you care that the baddie is frightened during the cliffhanger?

Sue: Not really, no.

Me: Do you want to knock out the last one?

Sue: The thing is, I've completely lost the plot. Sorry.

Me: Read the synopsis on *Wikipedia*.

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

Part Four

Romana is given six seconds to hand K9 over to Adrasta, or the Doctor gets it.

Sue: Why six seconds? Why not five? Weird, isn't it?

There then follows even more digression, mainly involving Sue's dream to be an Olympic archer (which never amounted to anything). However, she does get to the point eventually.

Sue: This doesn't feel like Douglas Adams to me.

Me: I've already explained this...

Sue: Yeah, but compared to *City of Death*...

Me: Yes, because he's only editing this.

Sue: But the lines in *City of Death* were class; it was one long, beautiful ride. This is disjointed. It's a mess!

An alien shield reminds Sue of something.

Sue: I've got a Lazy Susan like that. You spin it round and put your pickles

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

in the middle.

Me: I've got a Lazy Susan as well. She's sitting right next to me.

And then things degenerate even further, which means alcohol was definitely involved.

Me: I don't think I've ever seen this episode before. I don't usually make it past the fellatio scene. Story of my life, really.

And when a spaceship takes off...

Me: Look at that. It's a butt-plug!

Sue: I wouldn't know, Neil. Obviously you do, though.

And that's when Sue gave up.

Sue: I haven't got a clue what's going on. Sorry.

Me: Do you want to watch it again?

Sue: No! ... Are there any more like this?

Me: Erm...

Sue: Please don't say yes. Is it Douglas Adams? Are all his stories shit?

Me: He didn't write this one. I keep telling you.

Sue: I know, but he script edited it... Steven Moffat wouldn't have allowed this to go out.

The Doctor saves the day (look it up on Wikipedia) and Sue sums up:

Sue: I just didn't care about any of the characters. Catweazle was all right, I suppose, but other than that, I just didn't care.

Cue credits.

The Score

Sue: I didn't like that at all. That was rubbish, wasn't it?

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Me: Nobody cares what I think. So what mark out of 10 are giving it?

2/10

COMMENT: “You’re horrible to Sue, you really are. Mind you, I would have told her that Tom Baker regenerates by falling off an exercise bike.” – Dave Sanders

NIGHTMARE OF EDEN

BLOGGED: 9 August 2012

Part One

Sue: Bob Baker. Why do I know that name?

Me: He's one of the Bristol Boys.

Sue: Oh, has he gone solo? Did they fall out?

A large space liner is hurtling through the cosmos when it suddenly shimmers and disappears.

Sue: Either that ship has gone into warp drive or they've really screwed up the chroma.

On the bridge of the Empress, Captain Rigg is in command.

Sue: He's famous.

The ship's passengers are dressed in sunglasses and silver hooded jumpsuits.

Sue: That's a lot of anoraks. *Doctor Who* fans must have loved this.

Me: They look like they're going to a *Rocky Horror* convention. It's the old women in the sunglasses that do it.

Sue: Why are they dressed like that, anyway? Do they turn the heating off in the spaceship to keep the costs down? Is this supposed to be *Ryanspace*?

Meanwhile, Rigg's first mate, Secker, is behaving very oddly indeed, and his complacency results in a mid-air collision with another spaceship.

Sue: That won't look good on his appraisal.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The TARDIS responds to Rigg's Mayday, and the Doctor, Romana and K9 arrive on the Empress.

Sue: Are they still shagging at this point?

Me: I wish I'd never mentioned that now.

Sue: At least K9 is allowed out this week. I worry about that dog, you know. And I don't like Romana's dress. It isn't very flattering. It makes her look frumpy. I bet the dads were pissed off.

The Doctor investigates the accident which has fused two ships together.

Sue: It's a bit low-key for a *Doctor Who* story, isn't it? From the destruction of a planet to a traffic accident. But I think I like it. It's a nice change of pace.

As the Doctor and Romana explore the Empress, Sue praises the set design.

Sue: I like the corridors. I'm a bit of a connoisseur when it comes to corridors in *Doctor Who*, now. I like the way they've used the colour yellow. Yes, very nice.

The Doctor follows Secker into a darkened area of the ship and he watches the crewman collect a hidden container before leaving.

Sue: Wouldn't it be funny if he was on drugs?

The Doctor learns that the substance is Vraxoin, the most lethal drug in the known universe.

Sue: He is on drugs! Well, I wasn't expecting that. I was only joking!

Romana meets the eminent zoologist, Tryst.

Sue: That isn't Peter Sellers, is it?

Me: I wish.

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Sue: Well, we had John Cleese the other day. Anything's possible.

Tryst shows off his Continuous Event Transmuter (CET) machine to Romana.

Sue: I like this version of Romana. She's playing it just right. She's cute and intelligent.

Meanwhile, Secker, who's completely off his tits, commits suicide by walking into the void between the two ships.

Sue: When your drug-taking interferes with your job, it's probably time to stop.

Romana is left to examine the CET machine more closely, and as she turns a dial, scenes from various planets appear on a large screen on the wall.

Sue: Haven't we seen something like this before? Monsters stuck in a TV?

Me: There are some similarities to *Carnival of Monsters*, I suppose.

Sue: So *Doctor Who* is ripping itself off, now? Has it run out of other people's ideas to steal?

Romana turns a dial on the machine and we are treated to a slice of Eden.

Sue: That doesn't look like Eden to me. Eden should be beautiful and inviting. This looks like a Vietnam flashback.

The Doctor sends K9 into a matter interface to investigate the sound of somebody screaming.

Sue: I can't believe the Doctor sent K9 in there like that. It's dangerous!

K9 reverses straight back out again.

Sue: He's not stupid, that dog.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Rigg wants to know if Tryst brought any live specimens on the ship with him.

Sue: Tryst looks like he's just walked out of a tanning booth. I really like him, though. He's very entertaining.

I definitely didn't expect that. She doesn't have a problem with Tryst's accent, either.

Sue: It's fine. It's the future and accents change. He's from the same place as the people with all the other funny accents we've heard on this programme. I'd be bored if he was playing it straight.

The episode concludes with a monster bursting through a hole in the wall.

Sue: Oh dear. This isn't the cliffhanger, is it? That's terrible!

Yeah, I definitely expected that.

Sue: It was doing okay up until that point. Oh dear.

Part Two

The Mandrel doesn't frighten Sue at all.

Sue: It looks like a puppet. One of the really big ones.

Me: This monster brings back so many memories for me.

Sue: Really? I thought you were in New Zealand. Didn't you miss this story?

Me: Yes, but Birmingham's Nostalgia and Comics had a full-size Mandrel in their shop window during the 1980s. I spent a great deal of time staring at it.

Sue: Why? It looks ridiculous.

The Doctor orders Tryst to turn his unstable CET machine off before

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storming out.

Sue: Don't leave the room until he switches it off! You can't trust Tryst as far as you can...

Tryst switches the machine off.

Sue: Oh. I definitely didn't expect that.

The Doctor finds himself chasing a Gary Glitter impersonator through the Empress' passenger sections, which, thanks to some very clever editing, seem to go on forever.

Sue: So *that's* why they're dressed like that: it cuts down on the number of extras they have to hire. Very clever.

The Doctor hands a jelly baby to one of the passengers and warns him not to forget to clean his teeth.

Sue: This is basically a public health and safety film about the dangers of drugs, tooth decay and driving spaceships under the influence.

Rigg has his drink spiked with Vrax and he ends up off his box.

Sue: I want what he's having. At least then I wouldn't care about the crappy model shots in this story.

A Mandrel appears in a corridor.

Sue: The Honey Monster is in a really bad mood. Or maybe it's a hairy ninja turtle...

Tryst accuses his assistant, Della, of conspiring with a dead expedition member in order to smuggle drugs onto the ship. She vehemently denies this, and when Tryst shares his suspicions with the Doctor and Romana, they are

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appalled he could even suggest such a thing.

Sue: Sing 'em a song, Della!

Me: That's obscure, Sue, even for you.

And then the police turn up.

Sue: How camp? I wish Gary was here, he would love this. Oh, it's Don from *Coronation Street* again. He's been in *Doctor Who* before, he can't keep away. Oh look, the end of his truncheon lights up. Seriously, how camp?

Me: He makes the cop from The Village People look like Columbo.

The Doctor escapes from the cops thanks to the oldest trick in the book. It's so corny, Sue provides her very own comedy parp-parp soundtrack. In the same key as Dudley, of course.

Sue: The blond guy in the spacesuit looks like he should be in *Starlight Express*. Does he become important later on, or does he just stand around bitching all the time?

The episode concludes with the Doctor and Romana jumping into the CET projection of Eden.

Sue: Quick! Into the Stargate!

Sue has never seen a single episode of Stargate, so that was a massive leap for her as well.

As the credits begin to roll, Sue sums up:

Sue: I like the plot. I like the plot a lot.

I think she just wants to prove that she can pay attention and follow the story after the last blog entry.

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Sue: It wasn't that bad at all. The monsters are a bit silly, but they don't turn up very much. It's definitely above average so far.

Part Three

The Doctor is attacked by a man-eating plant.

Sue: And today's monster based on a sexual organ is...

As the Doctor tries to free himself, Sue leans forward in her chair.

Sue: He's like Bear Grylls in this one. Very butch. I like it.

The Doctor and Romana hide in the undergrowth as a Mandrel passes by.

Sue: They're quite scary when you can't see their cute heads.

K9 breaks the news that alien creatures are now wandering around the ship.

Me: Are you used to K9's new voice, now?

Sue: I think I prefer the original. This one sounds like R2-D2 (*She means C-3P0, bless her*). The original sounded, I don't know... more human.

Rigg, who is as high as a kite on Vrax, entertains himself by watching his passengers being torn to pieces by the rampaging Mandrels.

Sue: If they made this story again, it could be really scary. Here, the monsters are more cute than scary. I want to give them a big hug, just like the Doctor is doing now.

Me: It's trying to kill him.

Sue: Don't be daft. It wants a cuddle.

K9 shoots the Mandrel.

Sue: I think I can see a zip. This costume is very tatty considering it must

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be brand new. I'm sure I caught a flash of an actor's white Y-fronts just then.

Aside from the substandard Mandrel costumes, this episode is definitely tickling Sue's fancy.

Sue: This isn't bad at all, Neil. Neil? ... NEIL?

Me: Sorry, I drifted off for a second there. What's wrong?

Sue: Nothing's wrong. I was just saying that this episode is pretty good. For a Part Three, there's a lot going on.

That isn't to say she's become immune to this story's clash of styles.

Sue: On the one hand, they've definitely toned down the horror. It's definitely more for the kids. But on the other, it's about drug addiction and suicide. The mix of slapstick comedy and dark humour is very strange.

Me: I know. It's terrible, isn't it?

Sue: I like it.

As the Mandrels continue to wreak havoc, Sue has a question.

Sue: What do the Mandrels want, exactly? I don't see the point of them.

As Romana skips between Eden and the Empress, Sue wishes she had a machine like that.

Me: So which locations would you store in it?

Sue: Hmm... The Dordogne, probably. Tuscany. That sort of thing. What about you? Wait, don't tell me... The Red Rhino?

Me: The red what?

Sue: You know, the strip club.

When a Mandrel is accidentally electrocuted, it transforms into a white powder – the drug Vraxoin.

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Sue: Ooh, that was very clever. I didn't see that coming.

Meanwhile, Rigg is coming down from his Vrax fix.

Sue: He's having a really bad whitey.

Me: He'll have a serious case of the munchies soon. Then death.

Rigg threatens to cave Romana's face in if she doesn't give him another fix.

Sue: It's suddenly turned into a *Play For Today*. But with cute monsters.

The episode concludes with the Doctor racing to escape the matter interface which exists between the two ships as they begin to separate.

Sue: That was a great cliffhanger. So did he get out or not? I can't wait to find out.

Part Four

Sue: How many Tom Baker episodes are left?

Me: That would be telling.

Sue: But he could regenerate at any moment?

Me: Yes. That's the general idea.

Sue: I'm definitely ready for some Peter Davison action right about now.

Romana tells Della her boyfriend, Stott, wasn't killed during their expedition to Eden after all.

Sue: It's quite sweet. This story has everything: love, violence, drugs, monsters, spaceships crashing into each other. I bet this one is highly regarded by the fans. Neil?... Neil?

Me: What? Sorry, I was thinking about something else.

Dymond, the pilot of the other ship, is a drug smuggler.

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Sue: So is he the bad guy, then?

Me: Yes.

Sue: I knew he was the bad guy! Didn't I say he was the bad guy?

Me: You've hardly mentioned him!

Sue: Really? Then it's very clever. He flew right under my radar, even though it was really obvious he was the baddie.

The Doctor sneaks on to Dymond's shuttle.

Me: Aren't you going to mention Dymond's terrible peripheral vision?

Sue: He's wearing a massive helmet. He wouldn't be able to see anything from the sides, silly.

Yes, it's true. Sue loves Nightmare of Eden so much, she will forgive it just about anything. Well, almost anything.

Sue: There's only one thing wrong with this, aside from the Mandrels, of course. And that's the names of the characters. I keep getting Tryst and Fisk mixed up in my head. That's shoddy script editing, that is. I blame Douglas Adams.

Dymond shoots Della in the head, but when she falls to the floor, she clutches her stomach instead.

Sue: Maybe she came down with a bad case of IBS at exactly the same moment?

Thankfully, K9 comes to the rescue.

Sue: Good old, K9. I don't care what he sounds like, he never lets me down.

The Mandrels are rounded up by the cops and herded down a corridor.

Sue: It's not the Mandrels' fault they're walking bags of cocaine. I feel

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sorry for them.

When the cops' weapons run out, the Mandrels turn around and run at them.

Sue: Excellent! Kill 'em all!

The Doctor leads the Mandrels away with his dog whistle, and it isn't long before they are mewling like contented pets.

Sue: That's so cute. This is a lovely moment.

Me: Are you on Vrax?

The Doctor leads the Mandrels back into the CET projection of Eden. However, things don't go according to plan and the Doctor is left screaming: "My fingers, my arms, my legs! Ah! My everything!"

Sue: Is the Doctor being gang raped by Mandrels?

The Doctor escapes from Eden, his coat in tatters, and Sue is still giggling when he hooks K9 up to the CET machine.

Sue: K9 is going to save the day! Aww, bless him.

Tryst tries to explain his reasons for smuggling the drugs, but the Doctor won't even look at him.

Sue: Does Tryst become his archenemy?

The episode concludes with the Doctor and Romana preparing to return the CET's specimens to their home planets, where they'll probably become extinct, just as nature intended.

Sue: That's nice.

Me: Yeah, just dump the walking bags of coke back on Eden for the next

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explorer to stumble across. I'm sure it'll be fine.

Sue: Ooh, is there a sequel? Good.

The Score

Sue: I enjoyed that. The premise was great and it kept me guessing.

There were some nice twists and turns in that one. The monsters were a bit rubbish, but they weren't really monsters, and the direction wasn't great either, but if you take it for what it was, it did the job. Bob should continue to work on his own.

7/10

COMMENT: "Well done, Sue. Excellent taste." – Nev Fountain



THE HORNS OF NIMON

BLOGGED: 11 August 2012

Part One

Me: Here, Sue, grab this firmly and pull.

Don't worry, it isn't what you think.

Sue: A Christmas cracker? What's this for?

Me: It's Christmas 1979!

We pull the cracker. It doesn't go bang.

Sue: Just so we're clear, I'm not putting this hat on.

The story begins with a large spaceship hurtling through the cosmos. Hang on a minute... Didn't I begin the last entry like this?

Sue: *Doctor Who* always starts with a wobbly model shot these days. It's a shame. It's just inviting viewers to switch over to ITV.

The ship is piloted by an old man.

Sue: William Hartnell's brother.

And an aggravated co-pilot.

Sue: A fat Kiefer Sutherland.

In the hold of this ship, a group of youngsters are cowering in fear.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Oh, it's whatshername from *Blue Peter*.

Me: Oh, come on, you can do better than that.

Sue: Jennifer Ennis? No, she won the pentathlon, didn't she? Janet Ennis? No, wait... Jennifer Ellis. Oh, I don't fucking know. I know you fancy her daughter, though.

Me: It's Janet Ellis. And if it's any consolation, I had a schoolboy crush on Janet as well.

Sue: Whatever.

Meanwhile, the Doctor is tinkering with his TARDIS and Romana is less than impressed with the results.

Sue: Is she going fox hunting?

Me: I think it's more likely Romana would sabotage a fox hunt.

Sue: Lalla suits that outfit a bit too much, if you ask me. She looks like she might have been on a few fox hunts in her time.

Me: Well, she is the daughter of a viscount.

Sue: I knew it! They're probably her own clothes.

The Doctor's tinkering results in a small explosion and K9 ends up with his head facing the wrong way. So the Doctor blows into K9's nozzle, effectively giving the dog CPR.

Me: I'm sorry but that was bloody ridiculous.

Sue: Have you never blown into the back of your computer when it stops working? You know, to blow out the fluff? It makes perfect sense to me. Poor K9.

Elsewhere, black-clad troops are making one hell of a racket on the steel floors of Skonnos.

Sue: That rattling is really going to get on my tits, isn't it?

We are introduced to Sorak, Captain of the Skonnos Military.

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Sue: Oh, it's him from *Howard's End*.

Me: You mean *Howards' Way*. And it isn't him. It just looks like him. But if you wish hard enough, you might get the real thing one day.

We also meet Soldeed.

Sue: Is it the Master?

Me: Do you really want to go down that road?

Sue: Look at him! They could be brothers. Oh dear. Is he drunk?

She couldn't place Graham Crowden at first, but when I mentioned A Very Peculiar Practice (which she adores), the penny dropped.

Sue: Hang on, wasn't he always drunk in *A Very Peculiar Practice*, as well?

The TARDIS slams into the ship from Skonnos.

Sue: That's two stories on the trot where we've seen spaceships crashing into each other. That's bad script editing, that is.

The co-pilot takes some time out from repairing his ship to shout at the children trapped in the hold.

Sue: Dial it back a bit, mate.

And then she begins to worry.

Sue: We had drugs last week, so I'm almost scared to ask this, but are they running an intergalactic paedophile ring?

When the Doctor and Romana enter the crippled ship, they are press-ganged into fixing its engines. We learn Romana has built her very own sonic screwdriver and Sue is amused when the Doctor tries to steal it from her.

Sue: I bet hers has more settings than his.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

K9 is hidden beneath a mountain of tape back on the TARDIS.

Sue: I see they had some bunting left over from the Silver Jubilee.

The cast's voices begin to distort as the gravity increases.

Sue: Is there something wrong with the DVD?

Me: No, that's supposed to happen.

Sue: Are you absolutely sure one of the cats hasn't sat on the remote control?

The Doctor is tinkering in his TARDIS and it's left to Romana to sort things out. Sue likes this a lot.

Sue: You go, girl.

The Skonnan co-pilot locks Romana in the hold with the Anethan children. "The Nimon waits for no man!" he cries.

Sue: Okay, they're just taking the piss now.

When Sue eventually meets the Nimon, it's a profoundly moving moment for everybody concerned.

Sue: No fucking way. What the fuck is *that* supposed to be?

The episode concludes with the Doctor cradling K9 in his arms as his broken TARDIS hurtles towards a planet.

Sue: That was a dreadful cliffhanger. Is Tom Baker working his notice? Does he regenerate at the end of this story? I really don't think he can be arsed any more.

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Part Two

Sue: What a load of bollocks.

The Doctor is preparing to face death.

Sue: The Doctor wouldn't give up like that. What's he playing at?

When the Doctor pins a rosette to K9, Sue turns to me and scowls.

Sue: This is fucking stupid.

Me: It isn't my fault!

The TARDIS spins off the planet like a cricket ball spinning off a cricket bat, which just isn't tennis as far as Sue is concerned.

Sue: If that planet was supposed to be nine kilometres wide, the TARDIS was at least two kilometres wide according to that model. Have they never heard of scale?

The Nimon and Soldeed discuss their nefarious plans.

Me: I like the way the bull has a crafty dance when Soldeed isn't looking. He can't stop grooving! Look at those rapper hand movements. He is so down with the kids.

Of course, Nicol had to choose that moment to walk in on us.

Nicol: Is he the Master?

Me: For fuck's sake!

Sue: At least Romana is taking this seriously. She's holding this together, just about.

Sorak informs Soldeed that the missing ship has reappeared on their scanners.

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Sue: His uniform would be a bastard to iron. I bet they have to use a lot of starch.

Me: You can get something very similar to what he's wearing from Ann Summer's *50 Shades* range. Allegedly.

Sue: You are obsessed with that bloody book, Neil.

One of the Aneth prisoners, a young boy named Seth, confides in Romana he isn't everything he's cracked up to be.

Sue: Aw, bless him. He's not even a real prince. I'm actually interested in this story now. It's only taken me 45 minutes to get into it.

Seth doesn't want his pushy girlfriend to find out that he's just an ordinary bloke.

Sue: Aw, bless him. Is he the new companion? I do hope so.

She doesn't like what Seth is wearing, though.

Sue: It looks like they've kidnapped a Judo team.

The Doctor attempts to fly his TARDIS without a gravitic anomoliser and it reacts by playing a BBC Sound Effects record at full blast.

Sue: What the hell was that supposed to be?

Me: Christmas.

Romana takes charge of the situation.

Sue: Are they edging Tom towards the exit? Are they trying to sideline him, like they did with William Hartnell? At least the Doctor is making a concerted effort to get his TARDIS fixed, I suppose. Is the Black Guardian still chasing him or has he given up by now?

Meanwhile, on Skonnos, a military escort brings Romana and the Anethan

THE HORNS OF NIMON

to Soldeed.

Sue: It's a planet where all the people evolved from the child catcher in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

The Doctor puts the TARDIS in a parking orbit above the power complex on Skonnos.

Sue: That's made from egg boxes. The old grey egg boxes you used to get in the 1970s.

Me: Stay tuned, because Janet will show us how to make our very own Skonnan power complex in the next edition of *Blue Peter*.

Sue: Ha bloody ha.

The Doctor arrives on Skonnos and is immediately surrounded by heavily-armed troops. He laments the fact that people always end up pointing guns at him.

Sue: And they're always dressed as sex pests, as well.

Romana and the Anethans are placed in a maze, where they find the mummified remains of a corpse that crumbles to dust as soon as Janet Ellis touches it.

Sue: Wow. That was an excellent special effect. This story is actually getting better as it goes along.

Soldeed and the Doctor finally come face to face.

Sue: This should be interesting.

She isn't disappointed.

Sue: Yeah, he's definitely drunk.

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The episode concludes with the Nimon threatening Romana and the kids.

Sue: That was a bit crap.

Me: Bullshit.

Part Three

Me: We've reached the 1980s!

We do our 1980s dance. It isn't pretty.

Sue: So, does everything change overnight, then?

Me: That would be silly.

Sue: This is a fucking long recap. That's never a good sign.

As the Nimon advances on Romana and the kids, Sue identifies the monster's Achilles' (high) heel.

Sue: (As the Nimon) These bloody shoes are killing me! I knew I should have put some trainers on this morning instead!

The Doctor distracts the Nimon with a red rag, while Romana starts shooting up the place.

Sue: Have they got a new pyrotechnic guy working on the programme? He's really keen, isn't he? And I bet it's a he. You know, I don't think I've seen this many explosions in a *Doctor Who* story before...

Romana escapes with Seth and Teka.

Sue: At least she managed to save two of them. And they're the best two. They can actually talk.

The Nimon roars in anger.

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Sue: He has to roar like that. No one takes him seriously otherwise.

I ask her if she remembers the Matt Smith story which features a minotaur in a maze (The God Complex), and I tell her the Nimon are distantly related to the monster in that story.

Sue: That's very nice, dear, but it doesn't make this one any better, does it?

The Nimon adjusts some knobs on his equipment racks.

Sue: He's the Nimon version of Orbital.

The Nimon powers up his machine.

Sue: Considering they have a monster who can't walk properly, they're going out of their way to show it walking around ALL THE BLOODY TIME! Just stand still! You are much scarier when you don't look like you are going to fall over onto your big, flat face. Actually, that probably explains why its face is flat in the first place.

When the Doctor starts poking around the Nimon's machinery, Sue has a confession to make.

Sue: I'll tell you what I really like about this story.

Me: Go on.

Sue: The sets. The Nimon's place of work looks great. All that chunky equipment that looks like it's been salvaged from a submarine. It looks like this stuff might actually work for a change.

It turns out the Nimon are double-crossing Soldeed.

Sue: Are you sure he isn't the Master? This happened to him all the time.

Soldeed tells the council leaders of Skonnos to prepare for war.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I wouldn't want that lot fighting for me. What a shambles.

As they leave the council chamber, Sorak questions Soldeed about the Nimon's motives for helping them.

Sue: Oh dear. The boom operator couldn't reach them in that corridor. I couldn't hear a bloody thing at the end of that scene.

The Nimon is rapidly approaching our heroes, so Seth sends Teka to warn the Doctor.

Sue: He doesn't want her around when he wets himself.

The Nimon enters the laboratory and everybody hides.

Sue: Hypnotise it. Or sing a lullaby to it. Or whistle at it. You've dealt with worse than this, Doctor.

The Nimon adjusts the settings on his equipment one more time.

Sue: Oh look – a squatting bull with flatulence. I've seen it all now.

As if by magic, a round capsule suddenly appears.

Sue: Wait! Is it the Sontarans? They love turning up at the end.

No, it's even more Nimons.

Sue: Yay! He finally got his band back together.

It's at this point Sue notices the Doctor has been carrying a teaspoon with him all this time.

Sue: Is that Tom Baker's coke spoon?

THE HORNS OF NIMON

Soldeed decides to have a chat with his Nimon overlord.

Sue: (As Soldeed) Cooeee! Nimon, I'm home!

The episode concludes with Romana trapped on the planet of the Nimons while Soldeed threatens to blow the Doctor's head off.

Sue: This is definitely starting to pick up now.

Part Four

Romana isn't pleased that she isn't on Skonnos anymore.

Sue: Just reverse the polarity, pet. It's dead easy.

Romana runs into an old man named Sezom. He tells her how the Nimon arrived on the planet Crinoth, promising peace before they cruelly sucked it dry.

Sue: This is very sad. It's quite tragic, really.

And, for a short while at least, Sue is utterly engrossed by The Horns of Nimon. And then Soldeed goes and spoils it.

Sue: He's got more ham than Ye Olde Oak!

As a Nimon shuffles down a corridor, Sue gets off the sofa so she can mimic its shambling gait.

Me: They hired ballet dancers to play the Nimon.

Sue: Ballet dancers? Are they joking? They have no finesse! They might as well have hired builders for all the good they're doing. Ballet dancers?! I've heard it all now!

The Nimon fails to spot Romana hiding a few yards away, and I'm surprised

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

when Sue doesn't bring it up.

Sue: For all we know, the Nimon are an alien race which don't have peripheral vision. That would explain why they always look like they're about to topple over.

Romana and Sezom try to escape the planet.

Sue: Just give Romana her own show and be done with it.

And she's gutted when Sezom is killed by a Nimon.

Me: Why are you bothered? He was only in this for five minutes!

Sue: He was the best thing in this.

The Doctor is trying to override the controls to the transporter when he's interrupted by a Nimon.

Sue: Does he actually do anything in this story besides fiddle with stuff?

At the final, crucial moment, Seth becomes the hero Teka always wanted him to be. So Soldeed shoots him.

Sue: But he can't die! He's the next companion!

Luckily, the shot isn't fatal, but Seth is gutted when he discovers Teka has been lined up as the Nimons' next ready-meal.

Sue: When fans go to conventions, do they go to Indian restaurants together and shout, "Teka! Teka!" like they're in *The Horns of Nimon*?

Me: How did you know?

Soldeed realises he's been betrayed by the Nimon.

Sue: He's progressed from alcohol to class A drugs, now. Vrax, probably.

THE HORNS OF NIMON

Soldeed's death scene definitely makes an impression on Sue.

Sue: Well, I won't forget that in a hurry. What was he thinking?

Me: Graham Crowden almost played the Doctor, you know.

Sue: Really? That was a lucky escape. Tom Baker is sane compared to him.

Teka continues to big up her beau.

Sue: She'd be very high maintenance. Just listen to her droning on. She'd be very difficult to please and very demanding in bed, I shouldn't wonder.

Me: I bet she'd be murder on the dance floor, as well.

The Nimon pursue our heroes.

Sue: Pursue? That's easier said than done when you're wearing high heels, love.

As the creatures pass through an archway, Sue has some advice for them:

Sue: Duck, or you'll chip your horns!

As the chase intensifies, I notice Sue is humming along to Dudley Simpson's score under her breath again.

Me: You really like Dudley, don't you?

Sue: I can't imagine *Doctor Who* without him. He has a lot of different styles but there is always an underlying Dudliness to everything he does. Dum-de-dum-de-dum-dum-dum.

The power complex explodes. A lot.

Sue: Look at all those poor egg boxes.

Me: There's one that Janet made earlier.

Sue: Stop it.

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And then it dawns on her that Seth and Teka didn't get a proper farewell scene.

Sue: They would have been brilliant companions. Janet could have put Seth in danger every week by bigging him up to the villains. It could have been very funny.

The Doctor makes a reference to the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur.

Me: See, it's all based on something kids might have studied at school. Isn't that nice?

Sue: You can call *The Horns of Nimon* many things, Neil, but educational definitely isn't one of them.

The episode concludes with the Doctor gently teasing Romana.

Sue: They're definitely shagging at this point. No question about it.

The Score

Sue: That was average. The plot was silly, the Nimon were silly, and some of the acting was very silly, too. But it had its moments, and it got better as it went along, which is strange because in my experience these things usually get worse. Lalla was great, too, which is a bloody good job because Tom couldn't be arsed. They are running out of money, as well, by the look of it. In fact, I think they all need a good lie down.

5/10

COMMENT: "(An) aspect of this story which I really like, but which has gone unnoticed, is the earnest acting by the background artistes. There are a couple of Anethans who are working very, very hard indeed – listening to everything that's being said in the foreground, sometimes nodding in fierce agreement and at other times looking very, very worried. They're

THE HORNS OF NIMON

the great unsung heroes of Episodes One and Two!” – Simon Harries

NOTES: It was probably a mistake to admit I had childhood crush on Janet Ellis (and a middle-aged one on her daughter, Sophie), especially since Glen Allen decided it would be a good idea to send Janet a link to the blog so she could read all about it herself. Thanks, Glen.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

SEASON EIGHTEEN

THE WATCHER? MAKES HIM SOUND LIKE A PERVERT



This illustration funded by Joe McIntyre

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

THE LEISURE HIVE

BLOGGED: 14 August 2012

Part One

Sue: Ooh, new title sequence.

She's quick, my wife.

Sue: The theme music is very techno.

Sue thinks any up-tempo electronic music is techno.

Sue: Why is Tom Baker snarling? Is he in pain?

I don't have an answer to that.

Sue: Is somebody torturing him? Hmm... I'm not sure about these new titles. It's very 1980s, isn't it? It doesn't get any more 1980s than chrome neon tubing. I'm sure it will grow on me, though. You have to move with the times.

Me: I love this version of the theme music.

Sue: You would. You listen to techno-bollocks all the time.

On Brighton beach, a camera is panning across some deck chairs. In fact, the camera is panning across some deck chairs A LOT.

Sue: For fuck's sake.

Halfway through the pan...

Sue: Are they taking the piss?

Three-quarters...

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I could have had a shower while this was going on.

Me: They're establishing the hell out of this beach.

Somebody's snoring. And it isn't one of us.

Sue: Has the director fallen asleep?

The camera finally settles on the TARDIS.

Sue: All that for *that*! Was it really worth it? WAS IT? REALLY?

As the Doctor slumbers, Romana takes K9 for a stroll on the beach.

Sue: K9 on pebbles. So how did they do that? Wait, don't tell me, I can see the wire. I'm surprised Romana hasn't tripped over it.

Romana throws a ball into the sea and K9 chases after it. Romana screams.

Sue: Is it the cliffhanger already? I know that pan was long, but was it really 20 minutes? It felt like it could have been 20 minutes...

K9 enters the sea and promptly blows up.

Sue: Noooo!

Me: That's it. K9's dead.

Sue: Romana's killed K9!

I get my kicks where I can find them.

Me: There's a new producer called John Nathan-Turner, also known as JN-T, and he wanted to change everything about the programme. New titles, new music...

Sue: So this isn't Dudley?

Me: No. One of the first things JN-T did when he took over was he took Dudley to a nice restaurant...

THE LEISURE HIVE

Sue: That's nice.

Me: And he sacked him over the starter.

Sue: I don't think I like this JN-T character very much. How long does he stay for? I can't believe he killed K9. What a cunt.

Me: At least K9 got his old voice back before he died.

Sue: Did he? I didn't notice. He wasn't around long enough for me to notice. The bastards.

The camera zooms out until the Doctor and Romana are framed by animated stars.

Sue: Well that was different.

Me: I bet you'll know what they used to create that special effect. It begins with the letter Q.

Sue: Quantel.

Me: That's the one.

Sue: Quantel was very expensive. It still is. It must have cost the BBC a fortune.

Me: This is the first time Quantel was used in a BBC drama, I think. *Top of the Pops* used it a lot as well, of course.

Sue: It hasn't stood the test of time, has it? It's dated badly. You'd even think twice about using that effect on *YouTube* nowadays.

When we arrive on the planet Argolis, the first thing Sue notices is Peter Howell's music.

Sue: I don't like the incidental music very much. It isn't incidental for a start. It sounds like the sort of crap you listen to. Tangerine fucking Dream. I still haven't forgiven you for taking me to see them in Manchester. Worst gig ever. Ooh, is that Oliver Reed?

She's referring to Brock, the human broker who's addressing an Argolin named Pangol via a video link.

Sue: I like the aliens' hair. Do they all go to the same hairdressers?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The Argolins have built a Leisure Hive, however, tourist numbers are down this year.

Sue: So it's a radioactive Center Parcs in the middle of a recession? Okay.

Argolis is about to go bankrupt, but thankfully a group of investors have offered to buy the entire planet.

Sue: It's *Dallas*. The young angry one is Bobby Ewing, and the old grumpy one is Jock Ewing. I can't wait to meet JR.

A shuttle craft from Earth arrives on Argolis.

Sue: The director isn't in a hurry, is he?

Me: I thought you'd like the direction in this one.

Sue: Well, it's certainly different, but it's completely inappropriate for *Doctor Who*. It's arty-farty when it should be fast-paced and exciting. (*Pointing at the docking ship*) I mean, what I am supposed to be looking at here? I've been staring at this for two minutes and I still don't know what it is.

A volunteer enters the recreation generator and Pangol prepares to manipulate the visitor's tachyonic image. Or something like that. Ask Christopher Hamilton Bidmead.

Sue: Why would anybody pay to go in that thing? And if they did, could you imagine the queues? They've only got one cabinet, which means they haven't thought this through. I bet they've only got the one squash court as well. No wonder they're going bankrupt.

When the demonstration goes horribly wrong, the Doctor enters the generator to investigate. "He's terribly hurt" proclaims the Time Lord.

Sue: Terribly hurt? It ripped his fucking head off!

THE LEISURE HIVE

Another Argolin named Mena takes charge of the situation. She believes the tachyonic experiments could rejuvenate a person.

Sue: Now that's something I'd pay for.

The Doctor and Romana explore the generator room, which is littered with plastic mannequins.

Sue: It's the Autons! Ooh, I'm actually excited, now.

The Doctor sneaks into the recreation generator when Romana isn't looking.

Sue: Is this how he regenerates?

Me: Wait and see.

The episode concludes with the Doctor suffering the same fate as the generator's previous occupant.

Sue: I knew it! Peter Davison, here we come!

Part Two

Sue is disappointed when it transpires that the Doctor wasn't in any real danger ("So why did he scream?"), but the director, Lovett Bickford, soon takes her mind off that.

Sue: Oh no, not this fucking shot again!

The latest ship to arrive on Argolis is carrying Hardin, a human scientist who has been employed by Mena to help her live longer.

Sue: This is very *Babylon 5*. The costumes, the hair, the sets, the endless triangles everywhere. The more I watch *Doctor Who*, the more convinced I am that *Babylon 5* was ripping it off half the time. It's been a real eye-opener for me, this.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The Doctor and Romana gaze upon the war-torn surface of Argolis. The Doctor calls it beautiful.

Sue: Beautiful? It's a radioactive dump!

The war that devastated Argolis only lasted 20 minutes.

Sue: The pan in Part One was longer than that.

Not only are the Argolins dying, they can't reproduce any more either.

Sue: Okay, so let me get this straight: this race is dying, and they're sterile, and they deal with this by building some squash courts? What use is that? What kind of legacy is a fucking squash court?

Not for the first time, we witness a claw interfering with the Hive's inner workings.

Sue: This monster had better be good. They are building it up to be something really special.

A man with a goatee beard (Sue manages to restrain herself) finds a human disguise in Brock's quarters.

Sue: Yes, it's *definitely* the Autons.

But before the man can warn anyone, he's killed by a clawed beast.

Sue: Seriously, this had better be good...

The Doctor is framed for the murder and placed on trial.

Sue: Arrest the scarf! That's the first decent joke in the whole story.

Meanwhile, Romana and Hardin are discussing tachyonics. At length.

THE LEISURE HIVE

Sue: I don't understand a word of this. I can't put my finger on it, but this story isn't working for me. Everything is far too serious.

Me: This is what happens when you replace your script editor with a scientist. Nicol would probably love it.

I ask Sue what she thinks of the Doctor's new costume.

Sue: It's okay, I suppose. I like the colour burgundy. It makes for a nice change. I'm not all that keen on the question marks on his lapels, though. It's the sort of thing the Joker might wear (*She means the Riddler, bless her*). Maybe it's the Gallifreyan version of a Lacoste or Ben Sherman logo. That would explain it.

Hardin and Romana conduct a tachyon experiment.

Sue: Those crystals are so *Babylon 5*, it's not even funny.

Me: LOOK! PEOPLE DOING SCIENCEY STUFF!

Romana and Hardin think they've cracked it, but as soon as they leave the lab, the experiment explodes.

Sue: First rule of science: wait until your experiment is over before you publish the results.

The Argolins test Romana's breakthrough on the Doctor.

Sue: So is this how he regenerates?

Me: Yes.

Sue: I knew it!

Sue: So Romana kills K9 *and* the Doctor? I'm not sure how I feel about that. I still like her, though. Isn't that weird?

Romana tries to halt the procedure, but it's too late. She opens the door and...

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Sue: That isn't Peter Davison! That's fucking Gandalf! And he's looking down the camera lens again. Dock his pay!

Part Three

Sue: The new music is growing on me.

Me: What took you so long?

Sue: It's very confident. The old version of the theme music was scary, this is more exciting. If only this story lived up to that.

The Doctor has aged hundreds of years.

Sue: The makeup is brilliant. The top of his head is particularly good. I bet Tom enjoyed this. It must have been a nice challenge for him. He must be bored by now. I know I am.

Incredibly, Sue believes this change could be permanent.

Sue: Does he stay like this until he becomes Peter Davison? It feels like we've got William Hartnell back again.

The Doctor isn't very happy about this, to put it mildly.

Sue: Regenerate then! You can do it any time you want. Romana will show you how. Just close your eyes, concentrate really hard, and look like Peter Davison!

Sue can't take her eyes off the plastic mannequins.

Sue: I don't understand what the plastic people have to do with anything.

Me: Let it go, Sue. They aren't Autons.

Sue: So what are they?

Me: I don't know. Modern art, probably.

Sue: No wonder this civilisation is fucked.

THE LEISURE HIVE

It's fair to say Lovett Bickford's direction continues to perplex Sue.

Sue: Some of the shots are quite nice, I suppose. It's nice to see some depth of field for a change. The lighting is very effective at times, too. But then, in the very next scene, everything is over-lit. I don't know what to make of it.

Brock tells the Argolins their arch-enemies, the Foamasi, are behind the hostile takeover of their planet.

Sue: This is so 1980 it hurts. Nuclear war, private enterprise, squash courts. The only thing missing here is a bloody Rubik's Cube.

When we discover that Pangol was artificially created, Sue finally begins to engage with the plot.

Sue: That was a very clever twist.

Pangol spies the Doctor skulking by his TARDIS.

Sue: He looks like a tramp pissing behind some bins.

So Pangol sets off the alarm.

Sue: They're playing 'On the Run' by Pink Floyd now. It's quite good, actually.

And then we witness our first full-frontal Foamasi.

Sue: Oh dear.

Me: Not impressed?

Sue: Aren't they supposed to be scary?

The Foamasi communicate by chirruping.

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Sue: It's cute. It sounds like a newt crossed with a canary. I hope they don't expect me to be scared of it, though.

Meanwhile, Mena is dying.

Sue: She's losing her marbles. Literally. It's a shame, really. I liked her. I wanted to see her on *10 Years Younger*.

The Foamasi attack Brock on sight.

Sue: Eh? What's going on? Is that alien sexually assaulting him?

I try to explain during the credits.

Sue: So, the broker was a big green alien in disguise? He would have needed one hell of a girdle to pull that off.

And then Sue sums up her feelings so far...

Sue: I'm intrigued by the plot. It's got its fair share of flaws but I'm curious to see how it ends. It's a lot different to what we're used to. Were you surprised when you saw this at – what age would you have been? Ten? Eleven?

Me: Ten. And I didn't see it.

Sue: Were you still living in New Zealand?

Me: Not quite.

Sue: What do you mean, not quite?

Me: I was watching something else instead.

Sue: You're joking.

Me: I still feel bad about this but I was watching ITV. They were showing *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* at the same time, and because we didn't have a video recorder... Well, let's just say it was a very big decision.

Sue: Buck Rogers? Are you taking the piss?

Me: The trailers made it look amazing! Big budget spaceships – just like *Star Wars* – and women in tight-fitting Lycra. What more could a boy ask

THE LEISURE HIVE

for?

Sue: But you missed Romana in a swim suit.

Me: I know. What was I thinking?

Sue: I didn't see either of them. I was too busy having a life.

Part Four

Sue: What are these things called again?

Me: The Foamasi.

Sue: How on earth do you remember all these silly names?

Me: This one is particularly easy. It's an anagram of something else. Can you work it out?

Sue: Give me a minute.

The Foamasi imprison Brock in a cocoon.

Sue: That's as good a use as any for loft insulation, I guess.

And Mira is still dying.

Sue: Is it something to do with a sofa?

Me: What?

Sue: My sofa? The anagram. I need to see it written down.

Me: It's Mafioso.

Me: Wait a minute... That doesn't even work!

Pangol hopes to raise an army with the re-creation generator, and the Doctor intends to stop him.

Sue: He'll fuck it up and turn into Peter Davison with any luck.

As an army of Pangols exit the generator, accompanied by bombastic militaristic music, Sue starts singing, "Quantel! Quantel!" at the top of her voice. And it doesn't take her very long to notice that the Pangols come in lots of different shapes and sizes.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Look! A fun-sized Pangol.

She loves their headgear, though.

Sue: The helmet design reminds me of the Cylons from *Battlestar Galactica*. Actually, some of the ideas in this – like the army of identical replicas – is very *Battlestar* as well. Everybody is ripping off *Doctor Who*!

It turns out that the clones are copies of the Doctor, not Pangol.

Sue: I bet Tom wasn't very happy when he saw the costume he'd have to wear in this scene.

Pangol tries again but the Doctor has...

Sue: Reversed the polarity, I bet. And I bet the baddie will turn into a baby as well. He's a big baby already.

She's right, of course, and Mena promises to bring Pangol up better this time.

Sue: Put him on the naughty step if he tries to take over the universe again.

The Doctor doesn't seem bothered that he doesn't have a randomiser any more.

Sue: I bet the Black Guardian turns up in the next one. I could write this, you know.

As our heroes return to the TARDIS, the Doctor admits he misses K9.

Sue: So do I. They didn't even bury him. They went on fucking holiday instead.

THE LEISURE HIVE

The TARDIS dematerialises.

Sue: Can he steer his TARDIS properly, now?

Me: Yes.

Sue: At least the story wasn't a complete waste of time, then.

The Score

Sue: I took a mark off as soon as they killed K9.

Me: K9 isn't dead.

Sue: Oh. Right. Good.

And then she punched me – very hard – on the arm.

Sue: That's for lying to me again.

Me: Sorry.

Sue: Okay, even though K9 isn't dead, it's still average. The monsters didn't do anything for me. What was the point of them? They were a stupid distraction. The sets looked cheap when they switched the lights on, and the direction was up its own arse at times. The best things about this story were the costumes, the hair and some of the ideas. It's probably Tom's best performance for a while, too. But, at the end of the day, it was too much style and not enough substance.

6/10

COMMENT: "It's possible to recite the titles of every story prior to *The Leisure Hive* in the time between the end of the opening titles and the first spoken word in Part One." – Jim Sangster

NOTES: Sue tackles *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* in the *Extras* section of this book.



Part One

The TARDIS is heading for Tigella, a planet the Doctor has visited previously.

Sue: It must have been uneventful or you would've made me sit through it, Neil.

On Tigella, three humanoids with fair hair are attempting to break into something.

Sue: Are they Thals? Are the Daleks in this one? Have they finally stopped putting their name in the title?

A blonde scientist named Deedrix is arguing with a priest named Zastor about something called the Dodecahedron.

Me: Are you following this, Sue?

Sue: Nope.

Meanwhile, in a nearby temple, a Priestess named Lexa is kneeling on a small dais.

Sue: She's famous.

Me: Is she?

Sue: Yes, she's very familiar. Don't worry, it'll come to me eventually.

The Doctor and Romana are trying to repair K9.

Sue: I haven't forgiven Romana for throwing his ball into the sea. I don't know who I blame more: Romana for throwing it or K9 for chasing after

MEGLOS

it (he's a computer and really should know better). Anyway, I prefer this voice. It's so much better.

In a debating chamber on Tigella, the scientists (the Savants) and the Deons (the religious nutters) are bickering over the Dodecahedron.

Sue: I'm not following this. I think I tuned out for a second and lost the thread.

Me: It's basically science versus religion, and a powerful artefact no one can explain.

Sue: Sorry, but I tuned out halfway through your explanation. Say that again, please.

We cut to the planet Zolfa-Thura. It's a shit hole. And then a spaceship touches down and a group of Gaztaks emerge from its hold.

Me: Do you notice anything interesting about this shot?

Sue: Yes, one of the actors just tripped over himself.

Me: Not that. Something else.

Sue: The Chromakey is really bad?

Me: Something else.

Sue: Oh, wait, yes, the camera is moving.

Me: It's called Scene Sync. The BBC tested out the technology on this story.

Sue: And what conclusion did they come to? That it was shit? The keying is terrible! Episodes from the 1970s had less fringing than this.

The Gaztaks are manhandling a man in a grey suit. He looks like he might work in a bank. So that's okay, then.

Sue: So who are this motley crew? Are they Russian?

The Gaztaks enter a laboratory.

Sue: Is there a reason for that cactus in the background? Or were cacti big

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in the 1980s? I forget.

Sue discovers the cactus is none other than the eponymous Meglos.

Sue: So the villain is a pot plant? Do me a favour!

Lexa, Zastor and Deedrix discuss the Doctor's imminent visit.

Sue: She's *very* familiar. It's doing my head in now.

Come on, Sue, you can do it...

Sue: If only I could see her hair. If she wasn't wearing that majorette's hat, I'm sure I'd recognise her.

Sue isn't a big fan of the haberdashery in this story; General Grugger's head-gear is especially galling.

Sue: Is he wearing a silver jelly mould on his head? With a Christmas tree ornament sticking out the top? That's just weird.

Meglos gives the Gaztaks their marching orders.

Sue: I like the way they've positioned the lights behind the cactus so they look like its eyes.

You know, I'd never noticed that before.

Sue: He's starting to get on my nerves, now.

Me: Who?

Sue: The one who can't act.

Me: You'll have to narrow that down a bit, love.

Sue: The one who looks like a tramp they've dragged off the street. Are they paying him in methylated spirits?

MEGLOS

Meglos instructs Grugger to initiate “the procedure”.

Sue: It's a shit villain who can't press their own buttons.

The human bank manager is placed into a chamber. He starts to jerk and shake as arcs of electricity surround him.

Me: (As David Byrne) You may find yourself in a strange alien spaceship. And you may ask yourself, how did I get here?

Sue: (As David Byrne) That is not my beautiful wife! That is a fucking cactus!

Back on the TARDIS, Romana is still trying to fix K9 as the Doctor trips over his apron.

Sue: He made a right meal of that.

Me: Shhh. This bit is important.

Sue: If they put K9 down, I'll stop watching this programme. I mean it, Neil.

Back on the TARDIS, Romana is still trying to fix K9 as the Doctor trips over his apron.

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Sue: He made a right meal of that.

Me: Shhh. This bit is important.

Sue: Okay. Bored, now.

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As far as Sue is concerned, there's only one being in the universe who could do this to the Doctor.

Sue: It's the Black Guardian. I told him not to fiddle with his randomiser, but he wouldn't listen.

The episode concludes with Meglos taking the Doctor's form.

Sue: Eh? This is bloody complicated all of a sudden.

Part Two

The Doctor and Romana are trapped in a chronic hysteresis.

Sue: I had that once but some antibiotics cleared it up.

Meglos has not only trapped our heroes in a fold in time, he's stolen the Doctor's identity as well.

Sue: He's quite powerful for a cactus who couldn't press any buttons a few minutes ago.

And Meglos has something nasty in store for Tigella.

Sue: Tom's eyes are completely different when he's playing Meglos. That's good acting, I guess. Either that or he had too many drinks at lunchtime.

Lexa and Zastor are still bickering. It's what they do.

Sue: It's really bugging me, now. *Who is she?*

Me: I'm really disappointed in you, Susan.

Sue: She looks like Barbara, but I know she can't be Barbara.

Me: Why not?

Sue: Because then she'd be Barbara, silly.

Me: The same actress could be playing a different role.

MEGLOS

Sue: Don't be stupid.

At the city's entrance, a female Savant named Caris meets Meglos, who's still pretending to be the Doctor.

Sue: Their hair is very Vidal Sassoon. I used to cut hair in that style when I started hairdressing. It would have been around the time of this story, funnily enough. Anyway, I was working at a place called Holga of Denmark in Newcastle, and there was this one week where Holga made me stand outside the shop in a wig just like that. I hated it so much, I resigned.

The Doctor and Romana break out of the hysteresis by repeating their own lines. Badly.

Sue: I bet this is what it was like in rehearsals.

Lexa meets Meglos/the Doctor.

Sue: Oh, just tell me, for fuck's sake.

Me: It's Barbara! Well, the woman who played Barbara – Jacqueline Hill.

Sue: I knew it! I bloody knew it!

She's pleased to see Jackie at first. However, this doesn't last very long.

Sue: Why not just bring Barbara back? She's wasted in this part. Because she's still got it, you know.

Romana decides to change into something more comfortable.

Sue: I like that look. It's palm-reader meets pirate. And at least K9 has been allowed out this week. Hey! Stop slapping him on the nose!

Meglos reaches the Tigellan's power room.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: There's a monster coming.

Me: Is there?

Sue: I can hear it.

Me: You can?

Sue: I think it might be a giant rattlesnake.

Me: That's the incidental music, love.

Meglos steals the Dodecahedron.

Sue: The Doctor will probably get the blame for that. Then again, the Doctor gets the blame for everything.

Romana is attacked by Tigella's indigenous plant life, but she still manages to escape.

Sue: Did she just happen to be carrying a space spanner around with her? Where was she hiding it?

Lexa learns that the Dodecahedron has gone missing.

Sue: Is that an alarm?

Me: No, it's the incidental music.

Sue: I miss Dudley. Hey, rewind that bit. Yes... there! Can you hear the *Doctor Who* theme music, Neil? Isn't that unusual? Have they ever done that before? I like it.

The real Doctor turns up and greets Zastor as if he were an old friend.

Sue: He should greet Barbara like she was an old friend. This isn't right.

Meanwhile, K9 is running out of juice.

Sue: K9 needs some decent batteries. I've owned iPods that lasted longer than him.

MEGLOS

Romana traipses through a jungle in search of a city.

Sue: They're attempting to make this place look bigger than it really is by having her walking around in circles. They're trying their best, I suppose, but it isn't the greatest jungle set we've seen on *Doctor Who*. It's too bright for a start.

Romana is caught by the Gaztaks and then the credits roll.

Sue: I can't believe two people wrote this rubbish. Maybe that's why it's so bloody confusing.

Part Three

Sue: How long is this recap? Jesus Christ! Can we fast-forward this? Or I can pop out and make some tea?

The missing Dodecahedron was keeping the Tigellans alive.

Sue: I'm sure you can buy dodecahedrons from garden centres these days. You can use them as mini-greenhouses. I don't see what all the fuss is about. Just nip out and buy a new one. And get some weed-killer while you're at it.

The Gaztaks accuse Romana of leading them up the garden path.

Sue: She has to. They keep running out of studio space. By the way, were you still watching *Buck Rogers* when this story was on?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Good call.

Meglos, who now looks like the Doctor crossed with a cactus, struggles to stop the human banker (who is trapped inside him) from breaking free.

Sue: This is confusing enough without it turning into a bloody threesome!

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Lexa argues with the Doctor. The real one, that is.

Sue: It isn't right seeing Barbara shout at the Doctor like that. She should be helping him.

Romana rescues K9.

Sue: Romana should have had her own show. She could have defeated aliens with her special space spanner. It would have been great. She isn't bad for a posh lass.

The Doctor is led to the power room.

Sue: (Singing) Oh Superman...

Me: Yes, now that you mention it, the incidental music does bear an uncanny resemblance to the Laurie Anderson song. Well done.

Sue: Even the plinth is the same shape as the Superman logo. It must be intentional.

Caris is trapped with Meglos.

Sue: Tom's a bit randy when he's playing Meglos. He keeps trying to paw her breasts. I bet he enjoyed this. He must have spent a long time in the makeup chair these last few weeks, what with this and the old-age look last week. It's great makeup, mind. It's just completely wasted on this story.

The Tigellan guards try to keep the Gaztaks out of the city.

Sue: And now it's turned into *Star Wars*.

The Gaztaks use a tree to batter down the door.

Sue: And the Russian pirates are playing the Ewoks.

Once inside the city, General Grugger gives K9 a good kicking.

MEGLOS

Sue: Hey! That cost 20 grand!

Yes, Sue watched the documentary on The Leisure Hive DVD where this fact was revealed to her. And yes, she really hates JN-T after some of the hurtful things he said about her favourite mechanical mutt. She isn't very happy with Tom, either. Anyway, Lexa prepares to sacrifice the Doctor...

Sue: It's *Eyes Wide Shut*. But less sexy. A lot less sexy. Like, this is the opposite end of the sexy spectrum. Just so we're clear.

Meglos returns to the Gaztaks' ship.

Sue: Office chairs and hoover attachments. I'm sorry, but it's crap.

The Doctor is tied to a plinth. A large rock hangs above him.

Sue: So that's why they wear red robes. They're going to get splattered in a minute, and blood stains are a nightmare to get out.

They burn the first rope that's keeping the Doctor alive.

Sue: This should be a good cliffhanger.

The final rope is lit.

Sue: Yep. Well done.

Part Four

Me: The good news is that this episode is only 19 minutes long.

Sue: So only 15 minutes, if you take out the recap. Marvellous.

Me: You aren't enjoying this very much, are you?

Sue: It's confusing, it's boring, and it's doing my head in.

Romana rushes off to rescue the Doctor.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: You're too late, pet. He's as flat as a pancake.

But the Doctor is very much alive and the rope is still burning.

Sue: Is this another chronic hysterics? Or is the editor just shit?

Meglos returns to Zolfa-Thura with the Dodecahedron.

Sue: The keying is horrendous! Where have his legs gone?

Meglos' complex rises from beneath the sand.

Sue: In your own time... And cut... Okay, and cut... All right, show the whole thing. Like I care.

Meanwhile, Buck Rogers is disco dancing with scantily clad women in the 25th century.

Twiki: Bidi-bidi-bidi.

Lexa is killed by a Gaztak who didn't even get any lines.

Sue: What a travesty, although I only care about this character because she used to be Barbara.

The Doctor and Romana take Deedrix and Caris to Zolfa-Thura.

Sue: Why take these two jokers with you? What kind of help are they going to be?

Back in the laboratory, Meglos prepares to unleash hell. He tells Brotadac that he is about to release a power many magnitudes greater than any intelligence has ever controlled.

Sue: What kind of name is Brotadac?

MEGLOS

Me: It's another anagram. For bad actor.

Sue: So the writers knew this guy was going to play him?

Me: No, they just assumed they'd hire a bad actor for the part.

Sue: Did the actor ever find out? He must have felt awful. I actually feel sorry for him now.

Me: Good.

Romana decides to follow the Doctor.

Sue: She's left the TARDIS door open again. For fuck's sake!

A Gaztak attacks Meglos by accident.

Sue: Right in the nuts!

While another Gaztak attacks the Doctor.

Sue: Right in the nuts again! What are this lot called?

Me: Gaztaks.

Sue: They should have called them the Nut Punchers. Are they available as dolls?

Me: Not yet, but give it time.

Sue: When they are, they should release a limited edition Nut Puncher set. Just stick a cactus in it. Job's a good 'un.

The Doctor confronts Meglos.

Sue: Tom is pulling out all the stops here. He must really respect himself as an actor because he's definitely bringing his A-game.

K9 zaps the Gaztak who's standing on the ramp leading to their spaceship.

Sue: Okay, so who's going to move that body so K9 can get up that ramp? And why do I keep fixating on stupid details like that?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Brotadac begins the countdown that will result in certain death for everyone.

Sue: He'd make a lousy bingo caller.

The human trapped inside Meglos manages to break free and the villain ends up as a puddle of green snot.

Sue: And I thought looking like a cactus was embarrassing.

Meglos returns to his laboratory and reverts to a cactus once again.

Sue: He's gone all stiff. That's one thing you can say about Meglos – he has staying power. Oh dear, they've blown him up...

And then the Doctor and Romana receive a summons from Gallifrey.

Sue: Oh, how exciting.

The Doctor promises to return the human to Earth before he left it.

Sue: I wish I could return to a time before I saw this.

Me: Don't be silly. Then you'd have to watch it.

Sue: Good point.

The Score

Sue: Well, that was shit. The cactus make-up was pretty good, and Tom Baker was above average, but that's about it. What more do you want me to say? Poor Barbara.

2/10

COMMENT: "My abiding memory of *Meglos* is not being allowed to watch Part Two after back-chatting my Mum. I'd have been 10 at the time,

MEGLOS

and forcing me to miss *Doctor Who* was the greatest punishment my dad could have bestowed on me. I was abject. Didn't get round to seeing it for about 20-odd years and it certainly wasn't worth the wait!" – Ian



Part One

The Doctor and Romana are en route to Gallifrey.

Sue: That must mean two K9s this week. How exciting is that? I bet they'll conduct an extensive analysis of each other's arses as soon as they meet.

However, Romana doesn't want to go home.

Sue: Poor Romana. As soon as she gets back, she should steal a TARDIS and bugger off again. I really like her outfit this week. It's very Romany, which is appropriate, I guess.

The TARDIS begins to shimmer and shake.

Sue: It's the Black Guardian. It must be.

But the anomaly soon passes and the TARDIS arrives at its destination. However, even though the scanner displays images of their home planet, the TARDIS has landed somewhere else entirely.

Sue: A gay nudist colony by the look of it.

She's referring to the people swimming in a nearby river in what looks suspiciously like their pyjamas.

Sue: Is this Gallifrey in the distant past? Do these people evolve into Time Lords?

Me: You know how the Doctor said we aren't on Gallifrey?

Sue: Yes.

Me: That's because WE AREN'T ON GALLIFREY!

FULL CIRCLE

Sue: Oh well, at least it's a nice location. Ooh, he's very easy on the eye...

Don't worry, she's referring to Varsh, although a boy named Adric does warrant her attention.

Sue: I've seen him somewhere before. I'm sure you've mentioned him. Adric... Adric... The name rings a bell.

On a crashed Starliner, a scientist named Dexter is examining a slide under a microscope. He's especially worried about Mistfall, and a spider-like infectious life form.

Sue: Are you scared, Neil? I know what you're like when it comes to spiders.

Suddenly, the river starts to bubble and boil.

Sue: It's like this all the time at Seal Sands. You know, next to the ICI plant.

Two swimmers get into trouble and have to be pulled out of the river.

Sue: Wait! They're stark naked! Not for kids!

Luckily, the boys are wearing pants. Very skimpy pants.

Sue: They may as well be naked. This doesn't exactly leave anything to the imagination. Not that I'm complaining, mind.

Adric steals some river fruit.

Sue: Where is he going to hide those watermelons, exactly? Is he going to pop them down his trousers?

Adric is pursued by a Decider, but the old man ends up flat on his back.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: He never touched him! He committed suicide by throwing himself into a backwards somersault. I've seen Jurgen Klinsmann fall over more realistically than that.

Me: Topical.

The Outlers (Varsh, Tylos and Keara) seek refuge in a cave.

Sue: Did they get this lot from the same stage school? Was it a special bulk deal?

As the mist begins to fall, the planet's inhabitants make a dash for the Starliner.

Sue: It's only a bit of fog. Can you imagine what this lot would be like if it snowed?

Not only is Adric back on his feet, a wound he sustained to his knee earlier has almost disappeared.

Sue: Is Adric Wolverine? Has he got healing powers?

Me: Yes, you've hit the nail on the head – Adric *is* Wolverine.

The episode concludes with an army of Marshmen emerging from the river.

Sue: Ooh, I really liked that. Things are starting to pick up.

Part Two

The Marshmens' entrance still looks good the second time around.

Sue: It's shot on film, the director is using some interesting angles, and the mist really helps to sell it. Yes, this isn't bad at all. The monster costumes look like they've been made from bath mats, and it seems as if they've got custard skin hanging off their heads, but it's still very good. There are lots of them too, which is nice.

FULL CIRCLE

Incredibly, it isn't until Part Two that Sue criticises Matthew Waterhouse's performance. Is that a new record, I wonder?

Sue: It's his eyes. They're darting everywhere. He's as stiff as a board, too. He looks very uncomfortable when he doesn't have any lines to say. Unfortunately, he looks even more uncomfortable when he *does* have lines to say.

The Doctor tells K9 to follow the Marshmen.

Sue: Is that K9's theme music, now? It's a bit funky.

Meanwhile, the so-called Outlers have infiltrated the TARDIS.

Sue: How did this lot get in?

Me: The TARDIS door must have been left open.

Sue: For fuck's sake! When will they ever learn? It'll be the Black Guardian who waltzes in one day, and then they'll be sorry. Where the hell is the Black Guardian, anyway?

K9 follows the Marshmen.

Sue: It's lovely seeing K9 out and about, even if he is accompanied by a silly theme tune.

The Outlers try to overpower Romana and fail miserably.

Sue: The director – who's very good by the way – isn't a fan of Adric.

Me: How can you tell?

Sue: He's framing all his shots so Adric is hidden behind the other actors. It cuts down on his blank stares, I suppose. How did he get this job anyway?

Me: Well...

Sue: Did he sleep with John Nathan-Turner? Is that it?

Me: I know he had a letter published in *Doctor Who Weekly* before he got

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

the part.

Sue: So he was a fan, then?

Me: Yes, him and the writer, Andrew Smith, were both fans.

Sue: Really? Could anybody work on the programme back then?

Decider Nefred seeks solace in the Starliner's Great Book Room.

Sue: He looks like he should be working at a bowling alley. The slots behind him are where you store your shoes.

And then Sue asks the question I've been waiting for:

Sue: Do they swap Romana for Adric? They don't do they? He's a companion, isn't he? He must be. I've heard you and your friends talking about him. A lot. In fact, you talk about Adric all the time.

Me: As long as I don't do it in my sleep.

Sue would rather watch Varsh instead.

Sue: Why didn't they keep this guy instead – he's a lot easier on the eye. Can't act for toffee, though.

And even more controversially:

Sue: Even the other one would be better than Adric, and he's the campest thing I've ever seen in *Doctor Who*.

But Sue's biggest problem with Matthew Waterhouse can be boiled down to this:

Sue: He can't say the word 'door' properly. He says 'deur'. What's that all about?

A Marshchild is captured by the Starliner's crew.

FULL CIRCLE

Sue: Aww, it's cute. I like the twist – we're supposed to think they're the monsters, but they aren't. Not really.

The Doctor is introduced to the Deciders.

Sue: Please tell me they have revolving chairs, like on *The Voice*.

And then...

Sue: Fuck!!!!

Yes, a Marshman just decapitated K9.

Me: That's it, love, he's...

Sue: I don't believe you. They can solder his head back on. Unless Adric replaces Romana *and* K9. Nooooooooooooo!

The Doctor learns that the Deciders pretend Mistfall is toxic.

Sue: Ooh, it's a big conspiracy. This is quite interesting all of a sudden.

Romana and Adric watch as spiders start bursting out of river fruit.

Sue: It's a good job you were watching Buck Rogers when this was on. I think you would have struggled, Neil.

Me: I was watching *Doctor Who* again at this point. The BBC changed the time slot to minimise the damage Buck was doing to the viewing figures. I think *Doctor Who* was up against *Metal Mickey* at this point, and I while I'm stupid, I'm not *that* stupid.

Adric manages to fly the TARDIS all by himself.

Sue: What? Can any fucker fly the TARDIS now?

Romana ends up with a spider on her face, and we both end up yelping in

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

surprise.

Sue: That was another good cliffhanger. The direction was excellent. They actually managed to make a crappy model look scary, and that's no mean feat.

Part Three

Adric apologises for pulling the wrong lever and accidentally moving the TARDIS.

Sue: You flicked a switch! How can you not know the difference between a lever and a switch? Are you sure the blue star doesn't mean he's the village idiot, Neil?

The Doctor and Login decide to help each other: Login will help the Doctor find his TARDIS if the Doctor helps him find his daughter, which is when the TARDIS materialises in their path, carrying just the person he's searching for.

Sue: What are the chances of *that*?

Meanwhile, Decider Nefred is engrossed in some light reading.

Sue: Is he reading the system files?

Me: Possibly.

Sue: Or is it the wine list?

The Outlers are brought before the Deciders to be judged.

Sue: Look at them – hands in their pockets, no respect whatsoever. Throw the book at them. You're surrounded by them, so just reach out and grab the first one you find. It doesn't even have to be a book. A ring binder will do.

FULL CIRCLE

Dexeter experiments on the Marshchild against the Doctor's wishes. The Marshchild escapes and wreaks havoc in the lab, killing Dexeter in the process. In fact, he only calms down when he notices the Doctor's face on a monitor screen.

Sue: Aww, he thinks the Doctor is his mum.

The Marshchild paws at the screen and electrocutes itself. The Doctor is furious. Almost as furious as Sue.

Sue: I like it when the Doctor is pissed off. He's really going for it. Tom Baker hasn't been this good in a long while.

And then the plot thickens – no one knows how to fly the Starliner!

Sue: Oh, come off it! There has to be a pilot's manual. That's absurd. And besides, Adric could fly it. If he can fly a TARDIS without any training, this should be a piece of piss.

Varsh and his mates are put to work replacing components on the Starliner.

Sue: What are this lot called again?

Me: The Outlers.

Sue: Okay, so how many Outlers does it take to change a lightbulb? I'll tell you. It's six. One to fit it and the other five to stand around gawping at him as he does it.

Me: I think they are doing community service. It's the Alzarian version of *Misfits*.

Sue: Well, Adric has superpowers – he has healing powers, he's good at maths and he can fly alien spaceships. What kind of superpowers do the rest of them have?

The Doctor and Adric can't find Romana, and her bedroom looks like a bomb has hit it.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: That's what Nicol's room looks like on a good day.

In fact, Romana is behaving very strangely indeed.

Sue: Does she turn into Spider-Woman? Does she start crawling up walls and swinging through the studio? I tell you what, though, if they kill her off, there'll be trouble. At least eight marks off. At least.

The episode concludes with Romana allowing the Marshmen to board the Starliner.

Sue: Okay, I think I know where they're going with this.

Me: Really? What do you think will happen?

Sue: Well, they aren't the bad guys, that much is clear, so I think they'll end up working together with Adric, and they'll fly off in the spaceship together at the end.

Part Four

Sue is losing her patience with Tylos.

Sue: Get your hands out of your bloody pockets, lad. And stop slouching!

As they congregate outside the TARDIS, Sue blows a fuse.

Sue: Shut the fucking doors! The most powerful machine in the known universe and they always leave the fucking doors open. You have no idea how much this winds me up, Neil.

Me: Oh, I think I have a fair idea.

The Doctor keeps the Marshmen at bay with K9's head.

Sue: Okay, this is not what I had in mind when I said I wanted K9 to have a more substantial role in the series.

FULL CIRCLE

Adric steals an image translator.

Sue: He isn't a very good role model, is he?

The only defence against the Marshmen is oxygen, which Varsh and Adric dispense from a pair of cylinders.

Sue: SodaStream was massive in the 1980s. Just saying.

As the Doctor continues to experiment with the Marshmens' DNA, Sue finally figures it out.

Sue: This is basically *Planet of the Apes*, isn't it? They've evolved from the Marshmen. I'm right, aren't I?

She did it. She finally did it! Anyway, aside from the odd surface detail ("His bath mat is coming loose at the seams") Sue enjoys the final act. In fact, when Varsh is killed, she even feels sorry for Adric.

Me: At least he got to keep his brother's belt.

Sue: If only he got to keep his brother's looks and talent as well.

Adric sneaks back to the TARDIS.

Me: And that's why you should always lock the bloody doors.

Sue: Oh, leave him alone. He's all right.

Me: What?

Sue: It's his dream job – he's 18 years old and he's working on *Doctor Who*. You fanboys are just jealous. I'm sure he'll settle down eventually.

The Starliner takes off.

Sue: I bet they can't decide where to go. And why go anywhere at all? I bet they get shot down by the Daleks.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

But that isn't possible because the Doctor and Romana are trapped in E-Space, thanks to a Charged Vacuum Embointment.

Sue: A charged what?

Otherwise known as a CVE.

Sue: A CV-what? Am I supposed to know what that means?

Me: They're trapped in another universe.

Sue: So they can't return Romana to Gallifrey?

Me: No.

Sue: Good.

Cue credits.

Sue: So what happened to Adric?

Me: He's gone.

Sue: He was only in this one story? Seriously?

Me: Yes.

Sue: I don't believe you. I don't believe for one second that [this section redacted on the advice of our lawyers]!

Me: You can't say stuff like that, Sue!

Sue: But you said...

Me: Okay, I admit it, Adric is back next week.

Sue: Good. I feel sorry for the actor who plays him. He's out of his depth, but he's keen. It's not his fault. They should have given him more help. Bless him.

A little later, we watched Matthew Waterhouse's appearance on Multi-Coloured Swap Shop.

Sue: He is so adorable.

Me: You're taking the piss.

Sue: I'm not! He's so into it. You can tell he's a fan. I bet he pinched himself every day when he turned up for work. Actually, now that I look

FULL CIRCLE

at him, he reminds me of Matt Smith.

She's deadly serious.

Sue: It's that wide grin of his. He's so cute.

The Score

Sue: I enjoyed that. The direction was excellent, some of the ideas were very interesting, and the acting was pretty good, too. And I liked Adric. So there.

7/10

COMMENT: "Glad to see Sue stand up for Adric. The fanboy bullies are going to have a fit." – Michael Russell

STATE OF DECAY

BLOGGED: 21 August 2012

Part One

This story begins in a castle overlooking a village.

Sue: Is this one going to be a period drama? We haven't had one of those for ages.

Sue is immediately drawn to Aukon.

Sue: It's Fish from Marillion.

Me: Are you insane?

Sue: If Fish had a beard and a wig, he would be the spitting double of this guy. It's uncanny. It's the eyeliner that does it.

A man named Ivo is preparing his villagers for an imminent inspection. He tries (and fails) to shield his own son from the selection process.

Sue: Is this *Schindler's List* meets *Thor*?

Me: A bit.

The Doctor decides to investigate a nearby planet so he can ask for directions. K9 informs him the atmosphere and gravity are close to Earth-normal.

Sue: How handy is that? I'm not complaining, though. It means we can go outside and won't be stuck in a studio for four episodes.

As the TARDIS travels through space, Sue has a question.

Sue: Why is E-Space green?

STATE OF DECAY

And later...

Sue: Did *Doctor Who* fans buy *Espace* people movers in the 1980s? I bet they bloody did.

At least Romana's latest outfit gets two thumbs-up.

Sue: I like it. She looks like she's on her way to a nice country lunch. Very smart. Why doesn't the Doctor change his coat any more? He's been wearing the burgundy one a lot lately. He must stink a bit.

When the TARDIS materialises on the planet, the Doctor tells K9 that it's awfully nice outside.

Sue: (As K9) I wouldn't know, master, you never let me out. You are a very bad master, Master, and I fucking hate you.

When the Doctor and Romana arrive at a tavern, the captain of the guards falls over himself to help.

Sue: This makes a nice change from being arrested for something they haven't done. I bet the Doctor won't know how to react to this.

When the Doctor and Romana leave the tavern, Ivo reaches for a walkie-talkie.

Sue: That's a nice twist. The plot thickens. Is this a medieval theme park where all the robots are out of control?

Adric is back.

Sue: Adric reminds me of Nicol's ex-boyfriend.

I spit hot tea everywhere.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Me: Nicol's going to love that!

Nicol's ex-boyfriend looks like Adric in much the same way Aukon looks like Fish. In other words, not at all.

Sue: Do you know what this story reminds me of?

Me: No. Go on.

I brace myself.

Sue: *Zelda.*

Me: What? Again?

Sue: It isn't just the music this time, it's the whole thing. We just had a little cut-scene where an old man gave them some information about their quest, and now they're walking down the lane towards their next mission. They should be picking up gold coins and little hearts as they go.

Me: Let me get this straight: of all the things this story could be referring to, you think it's *Zelda*, the video game series from Nintendo? Sir Christopher Frayling will have a fit!

Sue gives The Three Who Rule the once-over. First up, there's Camilla...

Sue: Siouxsie Sioux.

Zargo...

Sue: Russell Brand.

And finally Aukon...

Sue: Fish! From Marillion!

Me: He doesn't look like Fish.

The Doctor and Romana encounter a group of rebels led by an old man named Kalmar.

STATE OF DECAY

Sue: He's the first bald man I've seen with dreadlocks. That's a great look. Bobby Charlton should have tried that. I like his Fernando Torres headband, too.

The Three Who Rule are protecting the villagers from something called the Wasting.

Sue: This reminds me of *The Neverending Story*.

Me: Does it? I've never seen it.

Sue: You've never seen *The Neverending Story*?

Me: No.

Sue: You *have* to watch it, Neil. In fact, I insist on it. (*Singing*) The Neverending Story! Trust me, you'll love it. It's got something called the Nothing in it and it reminds me of this.

Me: I'll take your word for it. You think Aukon looks like Fish.

Adric arrives at the tavern looking for the Doctor and Romana.

Sue: Look at that huge grin on his little face. He can't believe his luck. This is his dream job.

Me: What? Working in a tavern?

Sue: No, working on *Doctor Who*. Look at him. He fucking loves it.

Adric helps himself to some food.

Sue: He's a growing lad. I just want to mother him.

Me: Oh dear God.

The rebels are surrounded by antiquated computer equipment, which Romana eventually gets working again.

Sue: Is that Ceefax?

The computer tells them a spaceship called Hydrax left Earth and presumably fell into a CVE before crashing onto the planet.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: This is heating up quite nicely now. I'm becoming more intrigued by the second.

The Doctor and Romana set off for the Tower as night falls. Unfortunately, a bat bites the Doctor on the neck.

Sue: Does he turn into a vampire? But how will he get the fangs in? His teeth are massive!

The episode concludes with the Doctor and Romana attacked by a colony of bats.

Sue: That wasn't the greatest cliffhanger in the world. We get bats up here all the time. I don't see what all the fuss is about. It doesn't help that they're throwing plastic bats at them either. They should have stuck with the stock footage and fudged it. Oh well, the rest of the episode was pretty good. I won't let this spoil it for me.

Part Two

When the bats return in the recap, Sue thinks she has the answer.

Sue: Use your catapult on them. You know, like in *Zelda*.

The bats bugger off.

Sue: I don't like it when the cliffhangers resolve themselves in that way. You know, without anyone doing anything clever. It feels a bit of a cheat.

Meanwhile, it appears Adric has settled into his new job at the tavern.

Sue: Why is he working at a medieval *Wagamamas*? Why doesn't he just fuck off back to the TARDIS? He could chill out with K9, watch a bit of telly, have a snooze. Why is he subjecting himself to this? The free bread can't be *that* good.

STATE OF DECAY

Aukon enters the tavern in search of fresh blood.

Sue: (*Singing*) Lavender's blue, dilly dilly...

Me: He doesn't look like Fish!

When Aukon inspects Adric, you can cut the sexual tension with a bread knife.

Sue: I bet this is what Matthew's audition was like.

The Doctor and Romana arrive at the Tower.

Sue: I must say, the sets are beautiful. The BBC are great at this sort of thing. Hey, I've just noticed Romana is wearing leg warmers this week. How 1980s can you get?

Me: Did you own a pair?

Sue: Of course I did. Didn't you?

Me: I still wear them from time to time, but they tend to sag at the knees these days.

Sue: Story of your life, Neil.

Fish brings Adric to the Tower so he can be admired by Siouxsie and Russell.

Sue: This is a bit... You know... *Isn't it?*

The rebels are too frightened to overthrow their oppressors.

Sue: There's a theme running through this season.

I will bet you any money she's not thinking about entropy.

Sue: It's all about people sitting on their arses all day doing nothing to help themselves. Same as last week.

Zargo is still a source of fascination for Sue.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: He looks like he should be the king in a pack of playing cards. Has anyone ever made a pack of cards based on this story?

Me: *State of Decay* playing cards? That's a bit niche.

Sue: A bit niche?! I've been to Forbidden Planet, remember. The Doctor could be the joker.

The Doctor and Romana explore the Tower/spaceship.

Sue: This is very clever. Only in *Doctor Who* would you find a castle disguised as a rocket.

The Time Lords discover a room full of dead bodies.

Sue: That's a bit grim.

They follow the pipes that connect the corpses to a huge vat of blood.

Sue: This is horrific. We haven't had a story like this for a while.

Me: They were supposed to make this story a few years back, but they had to put it on hold when the BBC made a prestigious version of *Dracula* and they didn't want *Doctor Who* to send it up.

Sue: I don't think they're sending it up at all.

The Doctor suddenly smacks himself in the head.

Sue: Did a blood-sucking mosquito just land on his face?

The episode concludes with Aukon introducing the Doctor and Romana to his domain.

Sue: That wasn't even a proper cliffhanger. That was just a close-up of Fish's eyes.

Me: I give up.

STATE OF DECAY

Part Three

Sue is really enjoying State of Decay.

Sue: The script is engaging, and the cast are giving their all.

Romana breaks off a stalagmite and throws at Aukon.

Sue: I thought she was going to stake him in the heart with it. How disappointing.

The Doctor and Romana have been chosen.

Sue: I bet the fans couldn't wait to see Camilla turn Romana. If you know what I mean.

The Doctor tells Romana about a time when vampires swarmed the universe, and how a single one could suck the life out of an entire planet.

Sue: That's just greedy.

In Gallifrey's distant past, the Time Lords hunted down and killed these vampires.

Sue: So the Time Lords were vampire slayers? Where the hell did that come from?

And then something delightful happens.

Sue: It's Stuart Fell! Wait for it... Wait for it... There he goes! And yes, he fell very well.

When Romana reminds the Doctor that his TARDIS comes pre-installed with a copy of the Record of Rassillon, he tells her she's wonderful.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Get a room.

Me: Funnily enough, they weren't getting on terribly well when they were making this story. In fact, there are whole scenes where they won't even look at each other.

Sue: Please don't spoil the illusion for me. I don't want to know.

The Doctor returns to his TARDIS, leaving Romana to deal with the problem called Adric.

Sue: They both look genuinely annoyed that they have to put up with him. I'm not sure if that's acting or not.

The Doctor has a task for K9.

Sue: I'm surprised K9 hasn't zapped the Doctor's slippers while he was out. That's what dogs do when they're bored, you know.

Meanwhile, back at the Tower, Romana finds Adric, who is still out for the count.

Sue: I hope that isn't Adric's new costume. He looks like a pageboy.

The Doctor discovers a decree from Rassillon, buried deep inside the TARDIS data banks: Kill All Vampires.

Sue: Right, pause this, please. I don't get this at all. If that is supposed to be the prime directive for all the Time Lords, why hide it like that? It took the Doctor 15 minutes to access this instruction, and that's only because he was looking for it in the first place. It doesn't make any sense!

The episode concludes with Camilla attempting to get her claws into Romana.

Sue: Finally, a decent cliffhanger. I'm enjoying this.

STATE OF DECAY

Part Four

Sue can't get over Zargo's resemblance to Russell Brand, and when Aukon stops him from having his wicked way with Romana, Sue can't help herself.

Sue: *(As Russell Brand)* It's made Mr Winky go right small it has. Oh yes!

Meanwhile, the Doctor is self-harming again.

Sue: Why does the Doctor keep hitting himself like that? He'll do himself a serious injury if he's not careful. Is this how he regenerates? Does he smack himself too hard on the side of the head?

Me: Don't be silly. What kind of stupid regeneration would that be?

Adric and Romana are held captive by the Three Who Rule, so they pass the time bickering.

Sue: She isn't acting here. Lalla Ward is genuinely pissed off with him. I wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of her.

The Doctor and the rebels plan their attack on the Tower.

Sue: Just send K9 in there. He'll sort it out.

The Doctor takes Sue's advice and K9 is permitted to leave the TARDIS.

Sue: Finally!

K9 leads the charge, but Sue isn't really feeling it.

Sue: I still miss Dudley. I don't like the incidental music very much, and the fights aren't as good as they were in the 1970s, either. They don't have the same amount of care and attention lavished on them.

Adric pretends to switch sides.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I know Adric isn't great. I do know that. But I can't help but like him. It's as if we're watching a boy who has been thrown into the deep end and he's drowning.

The Time of Arising draws near.

Sue: I wish the bad guy would hurry up and get out of bed. There can't be long left.

The rebels have taken the Tower and K9 sits on the throne.

Sue: I thought he wasn't allowed on the furniture?

The Great One's hand bursts through the floor.

Sue: The Great One doesn't look that great to me. What a pity.

The Doctor launches the rocket. It comes straight back down again and it stakes the vampire through its heart. We think.

Sue: Nice idea. Bad execution. That was an anticlimax.

The three who rule crumble to dust.

Sue: Now *that* was excellent.

The story concludes with the Doctor wishing Kalmar luck when it comes to finding a way out of E-Space.

Sue: The Doctor knows damn well they are completely fucked. Still, there's not much he can do about it, is there? Unless he wants to rent them some rooms in the TARDIS. What a downer.

STATE OF DECAY

The Score

Sue: The ending let it down. It was heading for an eight but the last part didn't deliver the goods. I know I shouldn't complain about crappy special effects, but that was an anticlimax. However, I loved the set design, the acting was pretty good, and the story was engaging. Yeah, it wasn't bad at all. And Fish was excellent.

7/10

COMMENT: "I agree with Sue. Aukon does look like Fish!" – Jazza1971

NOTES: We appeared on Bob Fischer's BBC Tees radio show with John Williams during *State of Decay* to talk about *Doctor Who*. You can listen to that online at www.wifeinspace.com/state-of-decay. Highlights include the revelation that Tom Baker had to re-perm his hair, Adric's influence on Matt Smith and Sue's brief encounter with Nicola Bryant.

WARRIORS' GATE

BLOGGED: 23 August 2012

Part One

Sue: Steve Gallagher. Why does that name ring a bell?

Me: You met him 15 years ago. He came to our university to talk about scriptwriting.

Sue: Did you ask him a question about *Doctor Who*?

Me: No, I was too embarrassed.

Sue: That's a shame. Oh well, I'm not worried about upsetting him. It's not as if I'll ever bump into him again if this turns out to be rubbish.

The episode begins with an impressive tracking shot which takes us into an elaborate spaceship set.

Sue: This is the beginning of *Alien*, isn't it?

And the shot just won't stop...

Sue: Fucking hell, this is impressive. I've never seen a camera move like this on *Doctor Who* before.

When we reach the ship's bridge, Sue is introduced to its human crew.

Sue: It's Randall and Hopkirk!

Me: Just Hopkirk, actually.

Two workers, Aldo and Royce, toss a coin which suddenly freezes in mid-air.

Sue: That coin has been pixellated to fuck. Quantel was a bit crap in the early 1980s, wasn't it?

When the coin eventually falls to the ground, the ship's consoles

WARRIORS' GATE

simultaneously explode.

Sue: That was an insane opening.

Me: Insane good or insane bad?

Sue: It's great!

A crew member named Sagan immediately catches Sue's eye. I can't imagine why.

Sue: It's Vince Vicious – the love child of Sid Vicious and Vince from *Queer As Folk*.

She even recognises the ship's captain, Rorvik. Well, sort of.

Sue: He's dead famous, him. They've got a good guest cast this week. So far so good.

The Doctor and Romana are still searching for a way out of E-Space.

Sue: They're bickering again. In real life, I mean. I can tell. I wish you hadn't told me they kept falling out. I can't stop noticing it and it's making me feel sad.

At least Adric seems happy.

Sue: Adric is lovely to K9. See, he just stroked his head. They've definitely bonded.

Back on the spaceship, a time-sensitive lion named Biroc is having a terrible time.

Sue: What's wrong with Lenny?

As Biroc escapes from his captors, Sue sighs.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I hate it when they do that on *Doctor Who*, and they do it an awful lot. Why not use a Spock-like neck pinch or something like that? When the monsters can knock people out without even trying, it looks pathetic.

Back on the TARDIS, the Doctor hopes to generate a non-determinate action.

Sue: I miss the Doctor's old scarf. I'm glad it's still there on the hat stand, though. It's reassuring.

Romana is worried about the consequences of taking Adric out of his own universe.

Sue: She's just looking for an excuse to get rid of him. I'm not too keen on this side to Romana. She can be quite catty when she wants.

The TARDIS console explodes violently as the doors open on a white void.

Sue: Is it the Black Guardian?

The time winds reach K9 and he catches fire.

Sue: This is definitely not good.

Biroc enters the TARDIS and fiddles with the controls. He tells Romana that he's the shadow of his past and her future.

Sue: It's turned into 3-2-1 again. Am I supposed to be following this?

Me: Not really.

Sue: Good. Cos I haven't got a fucking clue.

The Doctor wants to take K9 outside, but the poor thing is too damaged to move.

Sue: Typical. He only wants to take his dog for a walk when it's completely

WARRIORS' GATE

impossible to do so. He's a terrible owner.

Romana asks Adric how he'd feel if she and the Doctor went their separate ways.

Sue: I don't like the sound of that. Romana isn't going to leave, is she? I have a bad feeling about this.

Thankfully, the void's minimalistic design takes her mind off it.

Sue: Visually, it's very striking. It's just a shame you can see the edge of the cyc curtain. We've seen something like this before, haven't we?

Me: Yes, in *The Mind Robber*. And no, it isn't the Master.

Sue: I didn't say anything!

Rorvik's crew search for the TARDIS in the void.

Sue: Why's that man got a Calor gas heater strapped to his chest?

Meanwhile, the Doctor follows Biroc to a gothic stone doorway in the middle of nowhere.

Sue: Okay, I've decided to just go along with this. I haven't got a clue what's going on, but the atmosphere is definitely making up for it. It's so eerie.

The episode concludes with the Doctor facing decapitation by a robot.

Sue: Nice cliffhanger. I don't see how he can possibly get out of that.

Part Two

Of course the Doctor gets out of it. However, K9's memory wafers are totally screwed.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: So K9 needs more RAM? Is there a PC World in E-Space?

Romana has a quick chat with Rorvik's crew.

Sue: She's brilliant. This is what her own show would be like. I know I'd watch it.

Meanwhile, back at the gateway, the Doctor is attacked by two Gundan robots.

Sue: They're pretty scary, but they aren't half stupid.

Marty Hopkirk prepares to close the doors to the ship.

Sue: You can tell it's the future because their phones have been painted silver.

The crews' orange jumpsuits remind Sue of many things, from Misfits and Guantanamo Bay to Devo.

Sue: They could also be a Formula One pit crew – it's the chequered flag on their pockets that does it. Sorry.

Rorvik escorts Romana to the bridge.

Sue: I bet they're miners. It's always about mining in *Doctor Who*.

We discover the humans have enslaved the time-sensitive Tharils, which they use to navigate the time lines.

Sue: How did they stumble onto that? How did they know time-sensitive lions could be used that way? It's hard to get my head around this, if I'm honest.

Rorvik forces Romana to sit in the navigator's chair by yanking her hair.

WARRIORS' GATE

Sue: Hey! He's horrible! I'm definitely on the lions' side now.

Aldo and Royce are told to prepare a Tharil for revival, but they accidentally electrocute it instead.

Sue: I wonder what roast lion tastes like?

Me: Chicken, probably.

Rorvik's crew make their way to the stone doorway.

Sue: They look like a bunch of tourists walking around York Minster. I hope they've brought packed lunches with them in their backpacks.

Me: Funnily enough, they have!

Sue: Good. I like this. It's a lot more realistic than what we usually get. This has definitely been influenced by *Alien*.

The Doctor forces a Gundan robot to divulge the secret of the gateway.

Me: Did you follow that?

Sue: Not really. I think we'll have to have a chat about this later.

Meanwhile, back on the ship, the electrocuted Tharil isn't dead after all.

Sue: You don't get many hand-held POV shots in *Doctor Who*. This is way ahead of its time. The direction is superb.

The Gundan tells the Doctor there are three physical gateways, and the three are one.

Sue: I'm not following this at all. It's beginning to slip away from me.

The wounded Tharil heads for the bridge.

Sue: It's turned into a stalk and slash movie now.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Romana tries to break free of her bonds.

Sue: Even she's got a POV shot! If they're not careful, this could turn into *Peep Show*.

As the Tharil moves in on Romana...

Sue: (*Singing*) Smack my bitch up!

The lion's paw reaches for Romana's face.

Sue: That was a brilliant cliffhanger. I'm sorry I'm not saying very much but I'm trying to concentrate. Actually, can I ask you a few questions before we carry on?

Oh God.

Sue: So where do the humans come from? Do they come from our universe or do they come from E-Space? That's what I don't understand.

Me: I don't know.

Sue: What do you mean, you don't know? You're a *Doctor Who* fan. You're supposed to know these things! What bloody use are you?

Part Three

Sue: This is a long recap, but I forgive them because it was so good, I actually want to see it again.

As the Tharil advances on Romana once more...

Sue: I've just noticed something. They're dubbing extra moaning and groaning sounds over her.

Me: It looks like *Doctor Who* porn.

Sue: I wouldn't know, love.

WARRIORS' GATE

We glimpse the Tharil's burnt face as he looms over Romana.

Sue: That was horrible. They didn't show that last week, did they? Maybe they thought it was too scary? Or maybe they didn't finish the make-up on time? Either way, that gave me a shock.

Back at the gateway, Rorvik decides to take his frustration out on K9.

Sue: Another theme of this season is, 'let's kick the crap out of K9'. It's starting to annoy me. It's cruel.

Adric flips a coin to determine his next move.

Sue: Remind me why Adric wears a blue badge again.

Me: It's for his mathematical skills.

Sue: Oh. He looks like a sheriff. Or Terrance Trent D'Arby.

Me: You're beginning to make less sense than *Warriors' Gate*.

Biroc tells the Doctor that K9 can be fixed, but he will have to stay on the other side of the mirror.

Sue: I don't like the sound of that.

The Doctor finally works it out.

Sue: I wish I could! I'm still enjoying this, though. I just hope it makes sense at the end.

Aldo and Royce find Romana still attached to the navigator's chair.

Sue: Romana is the only person I know who can still take charge of a situation when she's the one who's tied up. She's brilliant.

The Doctor follows Biroc through a landscape comprised entirely of black and white photographs.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Okay, I'm lost. Where are they now? Which letter of the alphabet is this universe in? Oh, and they're having a nightmare lighting that chroma...

K9 enters Rorvik's ship but is immediately thrown back off again.

Sue: Hopkirk! No! That was 20 grand you just wrecked. K9 is having a terrible time this week.

The crew search the ship for Romana.

Sue: This lot are idiots. The first place I would look is under that gold blanket right in front of them. It's common sense, which this lot don't seem to have.

One of the crew decides to investigate the ship's power supply.

Sue: He's dead. Whenever people decided to investigate the main routeings in horror films, they are always the next to die.

The ship's hull is made from dwarf star alloy, which explains why it is so heavy.

Sue: That's one hell of a design flaw.

Lane not only survives, he leaves the ship and finds Romana hiding outside.

Sue: Fucking hell! Someone on *Doctor Who* with peripheral vision! I may faint.

The Doctor arrives in Biroc's past.

Sue: Meanwhile, on *Zelda*...

Back when the Tharil's ran a mighty empire...

WARRIORS' GATE

Sue: Ooh, a lioness. They're cute, but I keep expecting them to start singing something from *Cats*.

The wounded Tharil takes Romana's hand and they both disappear.

Sue: Oh, fuck it. I give up. I'm just going to go with it.

The Doctor sits down for lunch.

Sue: That's the same table from the other place. That's a bit cheap.

We suddenly jump forward in time, thanks to an impressive match-shot.

Sue: Oh, it is the same table. I don't understand this at all, but it's fucking clever.

Rorvik tries to motivate his men, who are much more interested in their packed lunches.

Sue: This is brilliantly done. It's believable. Real people. Real idiots.

The Doctor is appalled when he discovers the Tharil empire was built on slavery.

Sue: Fucking lions. You can't trust them, you know.

And then the episode concludes with... Erm... Er... Let's just say it's a very strange cliffhanger indeed.

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?

Part Four

Sue: It looks fantastic, the direction is stunning and the acting is great. I don't have a clue what is going on, but I don't care anymore. I'm just going

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

to go with it.

The Doctor butts heads with Rorvik.

Sue: Tom Baker is very good in this. He's so intense. I think he's actually trying to concentrate on the plot as well.

At one point, the Doctor becomes very agitated indeed.

Sue: And now Tom's gone completely over the top. He was walking a tightrope and he just fell off it.

Rorvik is rapidly losing the plot too.

Sue: This is what I meant when I said on the radio the other day that human villains are better than the alien monsters. This guy is much scarier than an Ice Warrior. And you could bump into him in the street.

Biroc urges the Doctor to do nothing.

Sue: I'm telling you, it's the theme of the season: sitting on your backside doing nowt.

Adric arrives at the gateway just in time to turn Rorvik's MZ weapon against him.

Sue: You go, girl! Sorry, I mean, you go, Adric!

Our heroes escape into the void as Rorvik fires the MZ directly at a mirror. This goes about as well as you'd expect.

Sue: They need some comedy parp-parp music. If only Dudley was still around.

Rorvik decides to use his ship's engines to blast his way through. "But

WARRIORS' GATE

the back blast backlash will bounce back and destroy everything!" cries Romana.

Sue: I wonder how many takes it took her to say that?

The Doctor tells Romana to wait in the TARDIS. She refuses, and Adric is forced to stay behind instead.

Sue: It's like they're his foster parents or something.

Romana tells Adric to dematerialise the TARDIS if they don't return in 13-and-a-half minutes.

Sue: Can you imagine Adric in his own series?

Me: I'm trying not to, thanks.

Two Tharils sneak up on the ship.

Sue: How did they get there?

Me: These are the lions who came through the mirror. I think.

Sue: All these lions look the same to me.

Me: Lionist.

Rorvik attacks the Doctor.

Sue: He's a nasty piece of work. He doesn't look like much, but he's a right git.

Romana hits back at Rorvik, with limited results.

Sue: Oh, Romana! I am so disappointed in you. Hitting him with a plastic clipboard? Pathetic! It wasn't even made of wood!

Romana redeems herself by shorting out the power. Then Biroc tells the Doctor and Romana to do the right kind of nothing and all three of them

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

disappear.

Me: Even I'm completely lost now. I've seen this story dozens of times, and I really hoped this would be the occasion it finally made sense.

Sue: Just go with it, love. It's the only way.

The Doctor and Romana race back to the TARDIS. But Romana doesn't want to leave.

Sue: Wait. What?

Romana wants to stay in E-Space with Biroc.

Sue: (*Under her breath*) No, no, no, no, no...

The Doctor is flabbergasted, but he doesn't put up much of a fight.

Sue: Oh no, I don't believe this...

He tells her that she was the noblest Romana of them all.

Sue: This can't be happening. *Is that it?*

The Doctor struggles to come to terms with what's just happened.

Sue: Tom Baker's bottom lip almost went then. Not that I blame him.

If that wasn't bad enough, she also has to deal with the departure of her favourite metal mutt.

Me: Don't worry, the Doctor can always get another K9 from the TARDIS stores.

Sue: Does he really?

Me: Don't be silly.

Sue: So do Romana and K9 have their own adventures in E-Space, then?

WARRIORS' GATE

Me: Yes.

Sue: I wish Ian Levine would reconstruct that.

The Score

Sue: Shit.

Me: It wasn't that bad!

Sue: No, I mean, shit, I don't know what to give it. I need to think about it.

Me: I *still* don't know what score to give it.

Sue: I definitely won't forget it in a hurry, that's for sure.

8/10

Sue: I'll be honest with you – I didn't understand it. But I don't really care that much. It was a breath of fresh air. It was different and interesting and very, very original. I'd probably give it a 10 if I could follow it.

COMMENT: "Neil – I can't believe you don't know what's going on. It's not that difficult to follow. I remember as a six-year-old explaining it to my dad, so maybe it's an age thing?" – Gavin Noble

 **THE KEEPER
OF TRAKEN**
BLOGGED: 30 August 2012

Part One

The Doctor and Adric are chilling out in N-Space.

Sue: Tom Baker is knackered. Is this the story where they had to perm his hair? He looks terrible.

The TARDIS is heading for an empire where everybody is terribly nice to one another.

Sue: Traken sounds lovely. Boring, but lovely.

Adric doesn't understand why the TARDIS has decided to orbit Traken in the first place.

Sue: I'm with Adric. He always asks the right questions.

A decrepit old man suddenly appears in the console room.

Sue: The Doctor needs to get his locks fixed. Anybody can waltz into the TARDIS these days. Even when it's flying! The TARDIS definitely needs a good service.

The old man is the eponymous Keeper of Traken.

Sue: He's got a hard-boiled egg for a head. Is Traken a planet populated by egg men? You know, like the Beatles song?

The Keeper has a task for the Doctor.

THE KEEPER OF TRAKEN

Sue: It's another wise old man in a stupid chair. Maybe he's the Beige Guardian?

The Keeper provides the Doctor and Adric with a potted history of Traken.

Sue: Is he showing them his home video collection? Is he trying to sell the Doctor a time-share apartment on Traken? It looks nice, mind. What's the weather like?

Evil shrivels up and dies whenever it reaches Traken – and that's exactly what happened to a naughty Melkur when it landed in a grove one day.

Sue: Poor Mr Wonky Face.

Meanwhile, on Traken itself, a wedding is taking place.

Sue: This is nice. There are plenty of extras, some interesting costumes, and the set design is very interesting. The budget for the plants alone must have run into thousands of pounds.

A middle-aged scientist named Tremas weds a young woman named Kassia.

Sue: He's definitely punching above his weight.

But Kassia is obsessed with the calcified Melkur in the grove.

Sue: Isn't there a chocolate bar named after this guy?

Me: That's Milka, love.

And that's when Nicol walked in.

Nicol: Why are you watching *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

Sue: We're watching *Doctor Who*.

Me: For a change.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Nicol: Are you sure this isn't *The Crystal Maze*? They're filming in the Aztec Zone again.

Me: Go away, Nicol. Don't you have a cake to bake? And this time, can you make sure there are no horrific side effects? Thanks.

Nicol: That wasn't my fault! It won't kill anybody, it'll just give them a bit of a shock, that's all. It's nothing to worry about. Honestly.

Meanwhile, on the TARDIS...

Nicol: And now we're in the Futuristic Zone. Even the background hum sounds the same. The producer of *The Crystal Maze* must have been a *Doctor Who* fan, it's the only explanation that makes any sense.

Sue: Don't you think Adric looks like your ex-boyfriend, Nicol?

Nicol: Mother!

And speaking of mothers...

Nicol: It's Mumsey!

Me: What?

Nicol: The woman with the white hair is Richard O'Brien's Mumsey from *The Crystal*...

Me: You're obsessed!

Nicol: Says the man who's been running a blog about *Doctor Who* for two years.

Sue has other things on her mind.

Sue: I like the fretwork on that gate. Yes, that's very nice indeed.

The Melkur begins to move...

Sue: The lighting is excellent. The design of Mr Wonky Face is distinctive and creepy, too.

The Keeper materialises in the sanctum.

THE KEEPER OF TRAKEN

Sue: All that power at his disposal and he can't even cut his own fingernails. That's shameful, that is.

The Doctor and Adric are brought before the Keeper, but just when he's about to speak, the Melkur pokes his head into the room.

Sue: That was very funny. He looks like a giant glove puppet.

The Keeper senses pure evil inside the sanctum, and the episode concludes with the Doctor and Adric condemned to death.

Sue: Clever monster.

Part Two

His job complete, Melkur returns to the grove.

Sue: It moves quite well, considering. Nice firm arse, too. And who would ever suspect that a statue could be a monster?

Me: Yeah, it'll never catch on.

Tremas and the Doctor decide to team up.

Sue: He wanted to execute the Doctor two seconds ago, and now he's his best mate. Bloody scientists.

The Doctor and Tremas eat breakfast together.

Sue: I feel like I'm watching a stage play. A lot of the old *Doctor Whos* feel like stage plays to me, but this one isn't even bothering to hide it. It's very unusual.

Interestingly, Sarah Sutton's Nyssa fails to make any impression on Sue. She may as well be a kitten fart in a dress. Anthony Ainley on the other hand...

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Sue: He reminds me of somebody.

Oh no, here we go...

Sue: Christopher Eccleston.

Me: What have you been smoking?!

Sue: I'm serious! It's his eyes and nose. If you took his beard off, you'd see it. I'm telling you!

Thankfully, she gets off this subject pretty sharpish.

Sue: Nice bit of crockery, there.

And then Nyssa finally warrants a response.

Sue: Is she Adric's love interest? He could do better.

The Consuls of Traken can't agree on the best course of action to take.

Sue: For a planet that's supposed to be harmonious, they don't half bicker a lot. It's never how they describe it in the brochure, is it?

Melkur gives Kassia a dog collar to wear.

Sue: Kinky.

And then the big twist is revealed.

Sue: So somebody is operating the Melkur by remote control. I see. That is interesting, I suppose.

It doesn't cross her mind that somebody could be inside the Melkur.

Sue: Hang on, is it...?

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I brace myself.

Sue: Is it a Sontaran? I'm sure I saw a Sontaran's hand pushing all those buttons earlier. It sounded like a Sontaran, too.

And then she changes her mind.

Sue: Is it the Ice Warriors? They have the same eyes.

And then she gives up.

Sue: I'm over-thinking this, aren't I? It's just the Melkur, isn't it? That's what the alien is called. I know you want me say it's the Master, but I won't do it. And it can't be him anyway: the Melkur has been there for a thousand years. I can't imagine the Master hanging around that long to do anything.

Mumsey warns Nyssa not to enter the grove.

Sue: I'm getting a very strong *Downton Abbey* vibe from this episode.

Adric listens in on the conversation.

Sue: If Adric had a cape and mask, he could be Robin.

And then the ennui sets in.

Sue: It looks good, the direction is good, the acting is okay. It's just... *boring*. There isn't enough action. I bet any kids watching this were bored shitless. I miss Romana, too. She would have sorted this out ages ago.

The Doctor, Adric and Tremas are rounded up by the Fosters.

Sue: For a planet that's supposed to be peaceful, this lot are very heavily armed.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The episode concludes with the Melkur promising more to come.

Sue: We're already halfway through this story, mate! Get a fucking move on!

Part Three

The Doctor and his companions are confined to a cell.

Sue: I hate it when the sonic screwdriver conveniently doesn't work like that. Why draw attention to the fact? Just say you've left it behind in the TARDIS. He's always doing that. This just makes his sonic look shit.

The Consuls of Traken gather to discuss the current state of play.

Sue: Oh great, another fucking meeting. That's just what this story needs.

Even though Nyssa rescues the Doctor and her father, she still fails to elicit a response from Sue.

Sue: This is a typical Part Three. Lots of running around and not much happening. I don't have anything else to say.

As the meeting draws to a close, Sue is clearly struggling to stay awake.

Sue: I've seen recons that move faster than this.

A few seconds later, and she's gone. It's the first time she's fallen asleep since The Evil of the Daleks, and because I don't fancy watching Part Three of The Keeper of Traken again any time soon, I nudge her ribs with my elbow.

Sue: What? Erm... Nice sets...

Me: Come on, love. We're almost there.

Sue: Did I miss anything important? I bet I didn't.

Me: They're going to choose a new Keeper.

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Sue: Will the new Keeper have to sit on a chair for a thousand years?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Are they given any magazines to read?

The old Keeper is dying.

Sue: Why doesn't he come back and tell them that he made a terrible mistake in Part One, and the Doctor is the good guy after all? It would save a lot of time and effort.

The Keeper dies and all hell breaks loose.

Sue: It's all kicking off now. And it's only taken them an hour.

The Doctor tries and fails to enter his TARDIS.

Sue: It's only a bit of wind. Get up, you wimp!

Kassia becomes the new Keeper of Traken.

Sue: Did she discuss this with her husband first? I bet he won't be thrilled when he discovers his new wife has to sit on a chair for the next thousand years.

And then – finally! – we get a good look at the decaying creature who's been controlling the Melkur's actions.

Sue: So *that's* what the Melkur looks like?

I put my head in my hands.

Sue: What's wrong?

Me: I do not believe you.

Sue: Is it the Master?

Me: Halle-fucking-lujah!

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Sue: Is it really? You're not winding me up? Honest?

When the Melkur materialises in the Keeper's chair, it is accompanied by a very familiar sound effect.

Sue: It's his fucking TARDIS!

The episode concludes with the Melkur in control.

Sue: Ooh, I'm all excited now! I'm glad I didn't sleep through that bit at the end. Thanks for waking me up.

Part Four

Sue: Okay, let me get this straight: there's a TARDIS sitting in a chair...

Me: That's right.

Sue: And the Master's TARDIS can walk, talk, and fire weapons from its eyes...

Me: Yes.

Sue: Fucking hell. The Master's TARDIS is much better than the Doctor's!

Tremas is taking things rather well, all things considered.

Sue: He's just lost his new, young wife and he's only mildly annoyed. They must have really excellent life insurance policies on Traken.

Adric and Nyssa head for the TARDIS.

Sue: Is Adric allowed to bring chicks back to the TARDIS with him? Doesn't the Doctor have rules about that sort of thing?

Back at the sanctum, the new Keeper lays down the law.

Sue: Why is everybody falling for this shit? I suppose it helps that only six people live on this planet, because it wouldn't take you very long to

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conquer it.

Nicol, who has been snoozing on the sofa through Part Four, wakes up as soon the Doctor starts talking about the second law of thermodynamics.

Nicol: Entropy increases.

Sue: Boredom increases.

Me: It's this season's theme.

Sue: What? Boredom?

Me: No, entropy.

Nicol: So this season has a concept, then?

Me: If you like. You should join us for tomorrow's episodes. It'll be right up your street, I swear.

The Doctor escapes from the Fosters by banging their heads together.

Sue: Oh my God, that was so naff. That was the worst example of pretend violence I've ever seen on this programme. They weren't even trying.

Adric cobbles together a servo shut-off.

Sue: Adric is so practical, he's basically the Doctor's apprentice, isn't he? His acting is getting better all the time as well. I still don't see why people have a problem with him.

The Doctor races back to the sanctum.

Sue: The Doctor's a bit gung-ho in this story.

Me: He's stunning the guards with an ion bonder. He's not committing genocide or anything like that.

Sue: So why doesn't he carry a stun-gun all the time, then? Fuck the sonic screwdriver – this is much more effective.

Melkur forces Tremas to kill Proctor Neman in cold blood.

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Sue: That was horrific. And the Doctor must be hypnotised here or he would have stepped in and stopped that. So that's a worry.

Melkur wants the Doctor to come closer.

Sue: How will he get in the Master's TARDIS? I hope the entrance isn't through his bum-hole.

The Doctor finally confronts the Master.

Sue: He doesn't look like the Master to me.

Me: This is what he looked like the last time we saw him on Gallifrey, remember?

Sue: He didn't look like that. It isn't even the same actor, is it?

But the Master's plans go tits up, thanks to a plucky Alzarian and his homemade servo shut-off.

Sue: So Adric killed the Master, then? I told you he was good!

The Doctor admits his TARDIS could do with some repairs, but that it's beyond his capabilities.

Sue: "This type's not really my forte." That's very funny.

Two years ago, Sue wouldn't have got that joke. That's how far we've come. And then we return to Traken.

Sue: It just won't end!

The Master emerges from a grandfather clock.

Sue: Eh? What the...?

And takes over Tremas' body.

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Sue: But that's impossible. He can't take over another person's body like that.

Me: He used the power of the source.

Sue: No he didn't. Adric shut it off. He didn't have that power any more. And how did his TARDIS escape at the end?

Me: The Master had two TARDISes.

Sue: *What?*

Me: Yes, if you look carefully, you can see the grandfather clock TARDIS inside his Melkur TARDIS.

Sue: So the Master had a TARDIS inside a TARDIS?

Me: Yes.

Sue: But that's fucking stupid. You can't do that! Can you?

The Score

Sue: That was tedious. The first three episodes were so boring, I almost lost the will to live. Things picked up when the Master arrived but it was too little too late. At least he looks like Roger Delgado again. I wonder how long I'll have to wait before he has another go? Maybe he should team up with the Black Guardian. Wherever the fuck he is.

3/10

COMMENT: "If Sue thinks this one is boring, I fear for her sanity." – John G

NOTES: Nicol baked another *Doctor Who*-themed cake for a party we threw to celebrate Sue's birthday. It was a sponge TARDIS, which looked fantastic, even if the windows were the wrong size. However, everyone who consumed a slice of this cake – and most of our guests did – were in for a nasty surprise the next time they went to the loo. A bright blue surprise, to be precise.



Part One

Tom Baker's final story begins in a motorway layby.

Sue: Whenever I look at the TARDIS, I notice different things about it. Today, I'm fixated on the pink and cream tinting in the glass.

Nicol: I'm starting to worry about you, mother.

Me: Don't worry, Nicol. It isn't even a real TARDIS.

The police box bends and wobbles as a familiar sound effect heralds the arrival of a space-time machine.

Sue: It is now.

Evil laughter rings out as a policeman is dragged into the box.

Sue: Okay, let's get this out of the way. Is it the Master?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Good.

Nicol: You mean she's actually right? And I was here to see it? Wow!

And then we are introduced to Tegan Jovanka.

Sue: She looks familiar. Where have I seen her before?

Tegan's Aunt Vanessa can't get her car to start and Tegan is running late.

Sue and Nicol: It's Tegan!

We have a cat named Tegan. My fault, of course.

LOGOPOLIS

Sue: It's the mouth on legs!

Nicol: It's little Teagie Weagie!

Me: No one ever calls her that, Sue.

Nicol: Is this why you call Tegan's name in a mock-Australian accent, Neil? Everything suddenly makes sense.

When the car finally pulls away, Sue doesn't fancy their chances of making it to the airport in one piece.

Sue: Blimey, she's had a few accidents in that. I wonder how many people she's killed...

The Doctor decides to fix his ship's chameleon circuit, but in order to do that he'll have to survey a real police box back on Earth. Thankfully, there are a few still in use in the North.

Sue: Are we going oop north? And by north, I don't mean the Watford Gap.

Nicol: They're going to Newcastle. That's why Adric is wearing the Newkie Brown star on his pyjamas.

Sue: So the Doctor is finally going to fix the TARDIS? After all this time, he's actually going to fix it?

Me: Yes.

Sue: I think I know why he's decided to do it now. He's jealous of the Master, isn't he? He wants a TARDIS that can sit in a chair and fire laser beams from its eyes. And who can blame him?

Tegan's car breaks down in the lay-by.

Sue: My mam had an Afghan coat like hers. It stank.

The Doctor looks in on Romana's bedroom.

Nicol: Has Romana left? When did that happen?

Sue: She left with K9 not so long ago. It was very sad. I'm still getting over

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it, Nic.

Nicol: Oh, I see. So Tegan's the replacement dolly bird, then?

Me: Dolly bird? What decade are you living in?

Nicol: It's hard to tell living with you two.

The Doctor shows Adric how the TARDIS' chameleon circuit is supposed to work.

Sue: So you play old video games on it?

As the TARDIS materialises next to a real police box, a mysterious figure in white watches from the other side of the road.

Sue: Is it an Auton?

The Doctor materialises his TARDIS around the police box.

Sue: I wouldn't do that if I were you. I'm sure that isn't a real police box anymore. In fact, I'm sure it's the Master's TARDIS.

Nicol: Are you telling me you're actually following this?

With the police box safely inside the console room, Adric and the Doctor begin taking measurements.

Nicol: I wish I had those measurements when I made my TARDIS cake.

The Doctor introduces Adric – and Sue – to the concept of block transfer computation.

Sue: This is very complicated. Did they really think that children would follow this? Did you follow it when you first saw it, Neil?

Me: Of course I did. Everything I know about science, I learnt from watching *Doctor Who*.

Nicol: You know about tachyons and the second law of thermodynamics and that's about it!

LOGOPOLIS

Me: Hey, you forgot bioelectronics.

The Doctor watches Tegan on the TARDIS scanner as she wrestles with her car's flat tyre.

Sue: She's making a right pig's ear out of that. I hope she never has to land a plane.

Nicol: You'd think Tom Baker would offer to help her. He isn't very heroic, is he?

And still the Watcher watches.

Sue: Am I supposed to know who that is?

Nicol: I think it might be Antony Gormley.

When the Doctor walks into the police box in the console room, he finds himself standing in a dimly lit copy of the room he just left.

Sue: I said he landed his TARDIS in a TARDIS! I'm chuffed I got that right.

Tegan walks into the police box on the bypass.

Sue: I had a suit the same colour as Tegan's uniform, and you know what? I fucking loved it.

Me: Are you sure you want me to include that on the blog? That's embarrassing, even for you.

The Doctor and Adric are trapped in a TARDIS within a TARDIS.

Sue: This is a brilliant concept. I love it. I wish the lighting was like this all the time.

The Doctor finds his way back to the layby, where he's immediately apprehended by the police.

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Sue: Oh, it's *him*.

Me: Yes.

Sue: It's the *Between the Lines* guy. I like him, he's good.

The detective (aka Tom Georgeson) leads the Doctor to Tegan's car, which is empty, aside from two dolls sitting on the front seat.

Sue: I told you it was the Master. It's good, this.

Nicol: Yeah, it's alright. I haven't got a clue what's going on, but it is interesting, I suppose.

Part Two

Sue watches the Watcher.

Sue: Why is the Master disguised as a clown?

Me: It isn't the Master.

Sue: So who is he?

Me: Wait and see.

The police decide to take the Doctor back to the station for questioning.

Sue: Why? What has he done that's so wrong? Is it a crime to leave some dolls on the front seat of a car? That's a bit weird.

Nicol: GET IN THE BACK OF THE VAN!

Adric causes a distraction and the Doctor races back to the TARDIS. However, he can't take off because he's trapped in a gravity bubble, and the only way he can escape is by jettisoning Romana's room.

Sue: Just think of the shoes he just chucked away. What a waste.

The Doctor receives an emergency transmission from Traken: Tremas has gone missing, which can only mean one thing – his body must have been stolen by the Master.

LOGOPOLIS

Sue: At least they're addressing last week's massive plot hole. I still don't buy it, though.

The Doctor decides to flush the Master out of his TARDIS.

Sue: What a stupid fucking idea. Is he joking? He must be joking. Please tell me he's joking, Neil.

The Doctor heads for the Thames.

Sue: (*Pointing at the map on the scanner*) That's definitely been in *EastEnders*.

Adric begins flipping switches on the TARDIS console like a pro.

Sue: Adric really knows his shit. He's the best co-pilot the Doctor's ever had. Unless you count Romana, of course, she could fly it on her own.

When the TARDIS lands with a bump, Tegan decides to blame the pilot.

Sue: She's accepted the fact she's walked into a huge spaceship disguised as a tiny police box quite quickly, hasn't she? I can't tell if it's because she's really clever or really stupid.

The Doctor and Adric prepare to open the TARDIS doors.

Sue: What the fuck?

But nothing happens. In fact, according to the Doctor, there's no pressure on the doors at all.

Sue: Thank God for that! You'd both be dead if there was!

The TARDIS has accidentally landed on a barge instead of the bottom of the Thames, which makes Sue laugh. Meanwhile, the Watcher stands on a

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bridge above them.

Sue: How can the Master appear over there just like that?

Me: He isn't the Master!

Nicol: Mother!

Sue: Then who is it? Is it another Time Lord? I'm confused!

Tegan bursts into tears.

Sue: Poor Tegan. Her mind has finally snapped.

But she soon pulls herself together again.

Sue: My first impression of Tegan is quite good. She's tenacious and up for anything. Is there any particular reason why she's Australian?

Me: The producer thought she might appeal to our Antipodean cousins.

Sue: That makes sense. JN-T was pretty canny.

When the TARDIS arrives on Logopolis, the crew are greeted by the Monitor.

Sue: That isn't the Master, is it?

Me: No!

Sue: Just checking. God, this is so confusing.

The Monitor leads the Doctor and his companions through the streets of Logopolis.

Nicol: So is this the planet of the mathematicians? It isn't very flattering. We don't all look like that, you know.

Sue: Even on your worst hair day, you don't look as bad as that, Nic.

Nicol: It's a bit insulting to imply that if you are good at maths, you must have a deformed head. I don't like it.

Sue: Logopolis is a shit hole. It isn't much of an existence, sitting in a poky hole playing with your abacus, is it? It looks like slave labour to me.

LOGOPOLIS

Nicol: It looks like my ideal job. I wish somebody would pay me to solve equations all day.

The Monitor tries to explain block transfer computation again.

Sue: That's impossible! Isn't it? Nicol?

Nicol: You can model any space-time event with mathematics, but I'm sure you can't do it by mumbling the numbers out loud. Actually, I'm fairly certain about that.

And then Nyssa turns up.

Sue: Oh no, not her again! What's she doing here?

The Master interferes with the Logopolitans' computations, so when the Doctor inputs the equation into his chameleon circuit, the TARDIS begins to shrink.

Nicol: That is what happens when you don't show your workings in the margin.

Sue: I'm really enjoying this. Let's watch another one.

Nicol: I'll try to stay awake, but I can't promise anything. It's getting late and this kind of so-called maths doesn't really do anything for me.

Part Three

Sue finally gets a good look at Anthony Ainley's Master.

Sue: This is more like it. They're definitely trying to mimic Roger Delgado, but it's better than him wandering around like a burns victim in a bin bag.

Adric and the Monitor check their equations one more time.

Me: There you go, Nicol. Some hexadecimal for you.

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Sue: Too late. She's fast asleep.

Nyssa's presence on Logopolis continues to baffle Sue.

Sue: Is she working for the Master? Or did she stowaway on his TARDIS without his consent? Time Lords really need better locks on their TARDISes.

Me: The bloke in white brought her here. Look, there he is now.

Sue: Okay, this guy is starting to freak me out. Who is he?

The Doctor blames himself for ending up with a tiny TARDIS.

Sue: He's getting old. He needs to give it up. It's written all over his face.

Nyssa believes that the Master is her father.

Sue: He doesn't look anything like her dad! Unless her dad had loads of botox and bathed in *Grecian 2000*. Is she mad?

The Doctor looks very grave indeed.

Sue: He looks depressed to me. He probably misses all those rows he used to have with Lalla Ward.

The Master can't help but laugh.

Sue: Roger Delgado never laughed this much, did he? He's a pantomime version of the Master if you ask me.

At least Peter Grimwade receives some well-deserved praise.

Sue: I'm not following this at all, but it looks good. It's beautifully shot and some of the camera angles are very interesting for *Doctor Who*.

And still the Watcher watches.

LOGOPOLIS

Sue: Is it the Black Guardian in a cunning disguise?

Me: No!

The Master's interference on Logopolis is catastrophic.

Sue: So if you get your maths wrong, the universe collapses?

Me: That's pretty much it, yes.

Sue: It's an interesting idea, I suppose. Mental, but interesting.

The Doctor and the Master butt heads.

Sue: Just use the stun gun you were using last week! It's probably still in your coat pocket.

The Master realises he's gone too far this time.

Sue: He never thinks it through, does he? New face, same stupid plans. But I'm not worried. Adric will sort it out. He's good at maths.

The Master attacks the Monitor via Nyssa's wrist, which he now controls.

Sue: What's the point of that? Just do it yourself, man! It would be a lot less aggravation. And why is the Doctor just standing there like a lemon?

But this is just a distraction because the universe is well and truly fucked.

Sue: It's just like *Lost*. You have to keep punching in those numbers or everything goes tits up. Actually, this makes even less sense than *Lost*, if you can imagine such a thing.

The Monitor decides to leg it.

Sue: I'm off to get a job on *Deal or No Deal*!

If they want to save the universe, the Master and the Doctor will have to

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work together.

Me: Are you excited?

Sue: Not really. The Doctor always has to bail the Master out when he cocks it up. I don't know why the Doctor doesn't just kill him.

Me: One more episode?

Sue: I'm flagging a bit. And we need to put the bairn to bed. Let's save it for tomorrow.

Part Four

Me: Come on, love, there are only three more Tom Baker stories left. We could be on Peter Davison in a week or two if we pull our fingers out.

Sue: Okay, okay. Let's just get through them.

The Doctor and the Master search for the Monitor as Logopolis collapses around them.

Sue: He's probably nipped off to telephone the Banker.

Entropy increases. And to demonstrate this, the Monitor slowly fades away.

Sue: Is it like *Back to the Future* where the photograph changes? Or is the chroma really dodgy this week?

The Watcher joins Nyssa and Adric in the TARDIS.

Sue: *Who is he?* Tell me. *Please.*

Me: Don't worry, it will all make sense at the end.

Sue: Adric called him the Watcher. What kind of stupid name is that? The Watcher? That makes him sound like a pervert.

The Doctor and the Master arrive at the Pharos Project on Earth. The Master immediately tries to murder a member of staff, but the Doctor pulls the man's chair away at the last moment.

LOGOPOLIS

Sue: So why didn't the Master's gun shrink the desk? It would be funny if they had to input the code into a computer the size of a matchbox.

Nyssa and Adric are taken out of space and time and they watch helplessly as an entropy field engulfs Traken.

Sue: Bloody hell. They just killed a planet.

Me: I think this story holds the record for the highest body count in *Doctor Who's* history.

Sue: Well, that's five people dead on Traken, at least.

Nyssa is overcome with grief.

Sue: Oh no. She's going to be a companion, isn't she? She hasn't got anywhere to go now, and I can't see them killing her off, so she has to stay. Is she a companion, Neil? Tell me.

Me: Yes. Yes, she is.

Sue: Three companions? How's that going to work? If they bring K9 back, it'll be like Enid fucking Blyton! *The Fabulous Five in Space.*

Me: We've had three companions before. Ben, Polly and Jamie, remember?

Sue: Yes, but that didn't last very long, did it? There wasn't enough stuff for them to do. This is going to be a nightmare.

The Master and the Doctor plan to send the Logopolitans' data through a Charged Vacuum Emboitment.

Sue: I'm not following this. I just want to know who the Watcher is. It's driving me nuts.

Our heroes (and the Master) head for the antenna control room.

Sue: I feel as if I should like this story a lot more than I do. We're on location, we're back on Earth, the direction is pretty good, and some of the ideas are quite interesting. But I just don't care.

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Our heroes are pursued by the Pharos Project's guards.

Sue: Nice wacka-wacka *Starsky and Hutch* guitar, there.

They take cover behind a shed.

Sue: Nice shed. I love sheds.

Tegan creates a distraction as the Doctor and the Master head for the radio telescope.

Sue: The Master still runs like a girl. His head is too big for his body. He reminds me of Ricky Gervais.

The arch-enemies do something impressive with a computer.

Sue: How many Tom Baker stories are left?

Me: Three.

I feel bad about this little white lie, but I've come too far to spoil things now.

Sue: I wouldn't trust the Master as far as I could throw him. He laughs like a pantomime villain, for fuck's sake! He even dresses like the bad guy from *Aladdin*!

The Master holds the universe to ransom.

Sue: Will he have to sit next to that computer for the rest of his life? Is it really worth the aggravation?

The Doctor and the Master fight it out on the telescope's gantry.

Sue: What a shit fight. Where's Stuart Fell when you need him?

The Master actually chortled at this point.

LOGOPOLIS

Sue: And now he sounds like bloody Mutley!

The Doctor is the only person who can stop the Master, so he heads for the gantry, even though it's beginning to tilt at a very dangerous angle.

Sue: This is a bit silly. And the chroma has frozen behind him as well. That can't be good.

The Doctor attacks the computer connection with a wrench.

Sue: If in doubt, bash it.

The Doctor falls.

Sue: Oh.

But his descent is halted by some metalwork, and as he hangs on for dear life, his enemies flash before his eyes.

Sue: Eh? What...? I... Hang on... He's going to regenerate! They wouldn't do this if he wasn't... IT'S THE BLACK GUARDIAN!

The Doctor begins to lose his grip.

Sue: It's okay. He can climb up from there. Or he could just sit there and wait for help. It's perfectly fine.

The Doctor lets go.

Sue: Does that count as suicide?

Adric, Nyssa and Tegan rush to the Doctor's aid.

Sue: I don't like this at all.

Me: Why not?

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Sue: He's going to die surrounded by strangers. He barely knows two of them, and he met the other one a couple of hours ago. This is so depressing. It should be Romana and K9 by his side.

The Doctor sees the faces of companions from his past.

Sue: See! He has to imagine some people he actually knows. Oh, it's Mary Tamm... Now I actually do feel sad.

Nyssa realises that the Watcher was the Doctor all the time.

Sue: EH? He was the WHAT?

The Watcher and the Doctor merge together.

Sue: So the Watcher was Peter Davison all the time?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Fucking hell.

The Doctor regenerates.

Sue: Yes! Peter Davison!

Me: We did it! We actually did it!

After an impromptu dance during the closing credits, Sue belts me in the face with a cushion.

Sue: That's for lying to me. Again.

The Score

Sue: What a terrible regeneration. That has to be the worst one yet. I feel cheated.

Me: You're not sad, then? Not even a little bit?

Sue: I'm sad he went out like that. He deserved better. He didn't even

know those people by his side.

Me: He died saving the universe.

Sue: Did he? I think he let go on purpose. He's been in tighter scrapes than that. I think the Peter Davison Doctor told him he had to kill himself or the ratings would never pick up.

Me: What mark are you going to give it?

Sue: I liked the first episode. The TARDIS-in-the-TARDIS idea was very clever, but it didn't go anywhere. The regeneration was rubbish, too. I'm disappointed.

4/10

COMMENT: "I've always been struck by the facial similarities between The Monitor and Noel Edmonds. There's also the fact that they both wear high-heeled boots to increase their height." – Simon Harries

THE TOM BAKER YEARS

BLOGGED: 2 September 2012

Me: The first question – and I think it's important we set the right tone – is from Kelley, who wants to know: Who would win in a fight between the Master and the Black Guardian?

Sue: That's easy. The Black Guardian. The Master is bloody useless. He'd probably have to ask the Doctor for help. The Black Guardian is much more frightening, even though he hasn't actually done anything yet. I'd rather have fuck-all than a complete fuck-up.

Me: Okay, Si Hart wants to know: If you had to go for a drink with any of Tom's companions, who would you choose and why?

Sue: The first Romana. I think she'd be the most interesting, although I wouldn't say no to a threesome with Sarah Jane Smith. No, not like that, Neil. Okay, this is getting a bit weird and it's only the second question.

Me: Moving swiftly on, James P Quick asks: If you were, for some inexplicable reason, asked to take part in the 50th Anniversary special, what role would you like?

Sue: Is it the Moff asking that question?

Me: No, it's James P Quick.

Sue: Like that's his real name. Okay... I'd be a scientist in a white lab coat, and I'd like to set off an alarm if that's okay.

Me: I'm sure you'd do it beautifully. Anyway, Alisaunder says: According to Neil, Tom Baker took his boots with him when he left *Doctor Who*. (I never said that, but never mind). Anyway, he wants to know: Which companion costume from the Tom Baker era would you have taken home with you?

Sue: Romana's pink coat. I keep looking for one on *eBay*.

Me: Gdb wants to know: Tom Baker has said he'd like to play the Master in the new series. What do you think of this idea?

Sue: It's a stupid idea. Look, he's too old and there's too much baggage. You wouldn't be able to take him seriously in the role. And it might damage your memory of him. So it isn't worth the risk.

THE TOM BAKER YEARS

Me: Matthew Clarke and Ruth Deller both want to know: Who should Romana look like the next time she regenerates?

Sue: Her off of *Episodes*.

Me: Tamsin Greig.

Sue: Yes. Her.

Me: JB from Chicago went for this old chestnut: Snog, Shag or Kill – Murray Gold, Dudley Simpson, and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

Sue: How could I possibly shag the Radiophonic Workshop? Oh, I don't know. I'd kill Murray Gold and I'd marry Dudley. I bet he's really nice and he could play his marimbas to me as I fell asleep on the couch. Oh, I hate questions like that.

Me: John Wilson and Glen Allen both went for a safe, but interesting, question: Who's your favourite Doctor so far?

Sue: Patrick Troughton. The rest haven't even come close.

Me: Fair enough. Paul Roche asks: If you and Neil were to renew your wedding vows, would you dress as Romana and the Fourth Doctor?

Sue: Yes, but not during the ceremony. And not at the reception, either.

Me: Lots of people asked variations on the next question, including Ciaran Dunne, James Skinner, Chris Orton and Andrew Marsden: Did Tom Baker stay in the part too long? And if he did, when should he have left?

Sue: He should have left when Romana and K9 did. In fact, none of them should have done that last season. Peter Davison should have turned up when John Nathan-Turner did. I don't think Tom enjoyed himself very much in his final year.

Me: Sarah Hadley wants to know: When Tom Baker was interviewed about his imminent departure, he introduced some controversy by suggesting the next Doctor could be a woman. What do you think? Could the Doctor be played by a woman? And if so, who should play her?

Sue: That's a good question. I have no problem with the Doctor being a woman. It doesn't bother me at all. I'd cast the woman from *Episodes*.

Me: Right, Bob McCow asks: Did you ever fancy Tom Baker?

Sue: Never. I liked his roman nose but he was much too hairy for me.

Me: Oodverse asks: Tom's acting improves when he's playing against someone he respects. Who did he respect the most?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Himself. He was brilliant when he shared the stage with himself.

Me: Roderick T Long came up with this: What question should I ask, and what would your answer to it be?

Sue: What?

Me: He's a philosopher.

Sue: Right... Okay, the question you should ask is: Are you going to do the new series? And the answer is: No, Neil won't let me.

Me: Jonny Morris wants to know: If it wasn't for Neil, when would you have stopped watching?

Sue: I wouldn't have started in the first place. You should probably ask that question to Neil instead. How long would you have lasted if I wasn't watching it with you, love?

Me: *The Sensorites* Episode Three, probably. And on that bombshell, Sue, if you had to sum up Tom Baker in three words, what would they be?

Sue: Charming, unpredictable and bonkers.

EXTRAS

WHY ARE WE PUNISHING OURSELVES LIKE THIS?



THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE



K9 AND COMPANY

BLOGGED: 8 September 2012

Sue: I am so ready for Peter Davison.

Me: We have to watch a Christmas special first.

Sue: A *Doctor Who* Christmas special?

Me: Well...

Sue: This had better not be a fan-thing which doesn't count. I can't be bothered with that. It's not that *Shada* thing you keep banging on about, is it? Has it got anything to do with Ian Levine?

Me: Well...

Sue: Oh, just put it on. The quicker we do this, the quicker I can watch Peter Davison.

A Girl's Best Friend

We all know how this begins...

Sue: What the hell is this?

Ten seconds in and I'm already laughing hysterically.

Sue: Is this a spoof? I mean, is this actually real?

She soaks up the title sequence in shocked silence.

Sue: Stop the DVD. What the hell is *K9 and Company* when it's at home?

Me: It's a pilot for a series which would have featured Sarah Jane Smith and K9. Like that would ever work.

Sue: But it was never shown on television, right?

Me: No, it's a real Christmas special.

Sue: Good Lord. Okay, if we really have to do this, can I watch the titles again? I couldn't take it all in. I think I'm still in shock.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

So we watch it again.

Sue: This is terrible. I love how they've run out of footage and they have to repeat the shots. Are you sure this isn't taking the piss? You can see K9's wheels when he's on that dry stone wall. I thought he was supposed to hover?

Me: What do you think of the music?

Sue: It's absurd!

Me: It's by Ian Levine.

Sue: Is this why *Doctor Who* fans don't like Ian Levine very much?

When we reach the end, Sue demands to watch it again.

Sue: I want to make sure it really happened.

Sarah sips on her chardonnay, with a deadline fast approaching, probably.

Sue: Just your average day for Samantha Brick.

Sarah jumps into her car.

Sue: It's hard to believe now, but there was a time when Austin miniMetro cabriolets were very trendy. The second car I ever owned was a miniMetro. It was metallic brown with cream seats. It was a rust bucket. It wasn't convertible either, although it did end up with a hole in the floor.

I pause the DVD.

Me: Is that enough?

Sue: More than enough. I've got it out of my system now, thanks.

K9 and Company begins with a pagan ceremony already in progress, which is led by a priestess wearing the head of a goat.

Sue: I can't understand a word she's saying. Not a single word. Take the

K9 AND COMPANY

mask off, dear.

We cut to a pair of gossiping middle-aged women.

Sue: I know what this is. This is a sequel to *The Stones That Dripped Blood* (sic). It's got elderly lesbians in it and everything.

It's Sarah Jane Smith's Aunt Lavinia and her friend, Juno.

Sue: Lavinia is a proper smoker. Anybody who can talk with a cigarette dangling from their lips for more than 10 seconds really knows how to smoke a tab.

Sarah Jane arrives at her aunt's house.

Sue: What is she wearing? Could she look more frumpy? Even the ridiculous jogging outfit from the opening titles would have been better than the brown sack she's wearing now.

Sarah is greeted by George Tracy, who begrudgingly welcomes her to Moreton Harwood.

Sue: Wasn't he in A-ha?

George's son, Peter, brings Sarah a flask of tea.

Me: Oh, it's whatshisface from *Eldorado*. He was in *EastEnders* not so long ago. Sharon jilted him at the altar.

Me: It's not Jesse Birdsall.

Sue: Yes it is.

Me: Okay, have it your own way. I don't care.

Sarah meets Lavinia's young ward, Brendan, at the train station.

Sue: What the fuck are we watching? What is this?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Brendan and Sarah discuss the lost art of market gardening.

Me: What I don't understand is why anyone thought it would be a good idea to set a TV series in the giddy world of market gardening.

Sue: Shhh, Neil. I'm interested in marketing gardening. Brendan's right, it can be very scientific these days.

Back at Lavinia's mansion, Brendan and Sarah are introduced to Colonel Pollock.

Sue: It's Uncle Monty from *Withnail and I*. Which means Brendan is in all sorts of trouble tonight.

Juno invites Sarah to a get-together with the other villagers.

Sue: Is it Doreen's sister from *Birds of a Feather*? I'm probably reading too much into this but she sounds like she could be a swinger. Or a dogger. Maybe that's where K9 comes into it. Where the hell is he, anyway?

Commander Pollock warns Sarah not to get involved with Juno and her husband, Howard. "He's so big, what he loses on the swings he gains on the roundabouts. And we haven't got any roundabouts," he explains.

Sue: That was code. If you know what I mean.

As soon as the Colonel leaves, Sarah and Brendan turn their attention to a large box that's been gathering dust in an attic in Croydon.

Sue: They never got that crate into an attic in a million years. I simply refuse to believe that.

They open the box and out pops K9. Well, a K9.

Sue: (As Brendan) Thanks. It's just what I've always wanted.

Me: He probably thinks it's the latest gadget from Clive Sinclair.

K9 AND COMPANY

K9 is a gift from the Doctor.

Sue: That's sweet. Did he give K9s to everybody that Christmas? Did Benton get one?

Brendan is very excited. Too excited, in fact.

Sue: This is basically Matt Smith 25 years too early. Did Matt watch *K9 and Company* when he was preparing for the role?

Me: I'm sure it was at the top of his viewing list.

Sue: Brendan just needs a bow tie and he's basically the Doctor. Seriously.

Sarah visits Lily, the local postmistress.

Sue: We had a gas fire like hers while I was growing up. It's making me feel quite nostalgic, this. I really like the locations in this one. They just need to speed up the plot.

Sarah arrives at Howard and Juno's party.

Sue: As soon as they've drained the punch bowl, they throw their car keys into it. They'll all be after the keys to the miniMetro cabriolet, just you wait and see.

You can cut the sexual tension with an electric carving knife.

Sue: What time did this go out? Was it post-watershed?

Me: 5:45pm.

Sue: Jesus. What did the kids make of it?

Me: I remember being bored shitless by the whole thing. But I stayed with it to the bitter end. Through gritted teeth, probably.

It's safe to assume that Sue isn't a fan of Peter Howell's incidental music.

Sue: It's terrible. It's a weird mix of Pink Floyd and *Play School*.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

The Tracys gang up and attack Brendan. So K9 stuns Peter and chases after his dad.

Sue: (*Singing*) Take on me! Take me on!

Sue has an issue with K9's new sound effects.

Sue: The other K9s didn't make silly tinkly noises. The Mark III is too noisy for me. I think the Mark II was the best model.

Meanwhile, back at the ~~swingers~~ party...

Sue: Is that Les Dawson eating a ham and cheese sandwich in the background?

George Tracy believes K9 is a fire-breathing hound, sent by the pagan goddess Hecate, but Peter thinks his father is crying wolf. The next morning, Colonel Pollock surveys the damage the devil dog has caused to a greenhouse. Yes, it really is that exciting.

Sue: (*As the Colonel*) We may be forced to camp!

Brendan and George discuss the local soil's pH levels.

Sue: This is quite interesting if you're into this sort of thing.

George finds his son polishing his helmet.

Sue: Mr Sheen. That's early product placement, that is. And on the BBC, too. Dear me.

George starts raving like a lunatic.

Sue: Never trust a man who tucks his jumper into his trousers.

K9 AND COMPANY

And then...

Sue: Bloody hell. Sarah Jane just made a silk kimono look unsexy. This is her own series, for heaven's sake. She should look fabulous! She's had hundreds of costume changes and each one is even worse than the last. I know the 1980s wasn't a great time for fashion, but this is bloody ridiculous.

Peter kidnaps Brendan and Sarah visits the local police station.

Sue: She should call in a UNIT airstrike. That'll teach 'em.

As she leaves the station, Sarah bumps into Lily.

Sue: I like Lily from the Post Office. Would she have been a regular character if this had gone to a series, Neil? I bet she would have been Sarah's best friend.

Me: That's K9's job. Didn't you read the episode title? You saw it three times!

Sarah changes into another outfit.

Sue: Her coat looks like it used to be a continental quilt.

She sets off in her trusty miniMetro with K9 riding shotgun.

Sue: She should stick K9's head out of the window. Dogs love that.

Sarah finds a dead copper in the middle of the road, which would be bad enough, but there also goats around these parts!

Sue: So the scariest thing in the episode is a goat. That says it all.

The ceremony gets underway.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: So are they alien goats from the planet Goataloid or something? Is that it?

When Sarah heads to Juno and Howard's for answers, Howard hands our heroine a soothing glass of Rohypnol.

Sue: Don't drink it, Sarah Jane. The next thing you'll know, there'll be topless photographs of you in *Readers' Wives*.

Juno strokes Sarah's arm.

Sue: This isn't even subtext any more.

The pagan ceremony is now in full (ahem) swing.

Sue: It's *The Wicker Man* meets *Gardeners' World* meets *Abigail's Party*.

Juno offers Sarah a spot of dinner, and when she complains that she's too tired, Juno promises to have her tucked up in bed before midnight.

Sue: Yeah, I bet she fucking will.

Sarah and K9 search for the location where Peter's sacrifice will take place.

Sue: The sun's gone down very quickly.

Me: The sun doesn't always shine on TV, Sue.

Howard arrives at the police station, only to find it devoid of life.

Sue: The bell in this police station sounds like a loud fart.

Me: Yeah, please stop honking, Howard.

Brendan is prepared for a ritual sacrifice. Or a gang bang. It's not entirely clear.

K9 AND COMPANY

Sue: What is he wearing? Did John Nathan-Turner have anything to do with this?

Me: Yes.

Sue: I thought so.

But before the villagers can remove Brendan's virginal white dress, K9 comes to the rescue.

Sue: You can hear K9 coming a mile off. Turn his notifications off, or put him into airplane mode, for God's sake.

Sarah Jane uses her karate skills to kick the living daylights out of the coven.

Sue: You go, freelance journalist!

Sarah unmasks the coven's leaders: Commander Pollock and Lily the postmistress!

Sue: No! I really liked her! She was the only decent character in the whole thing.

Me: And she would have gotten away with it if it wasn't for that pesky dog.

Sue: So that's it, then? No aliens? No mind-control involving pH levels or anything like that? They're just nutters?

The episode concludes with Juno and Howard's third party that week.

Sue: So they weren't in on it, then? They were just weird sexual predators?

Sue has a question.

Sue: So what happened to Aunt Lavinia? Was she sacrificed to the giant goat god?

Right on cue, Sarah receives a telephone call from America.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: So there was nothing wrong with her aunt? She was just gallivanting around America? What kind of mystery is *that*?

Sarah has some shocking news for her aunt.

Sue: The whole village is banged up in prison. Apart from a couple of swingers.

Cue credits.

Sue: If I'd never seen *Doctor Who* before, I would have said, "What the fuck was *that*?"

Me: But you have seen *Doctor Who* before.

Sue: Yes, and I'm still going to say, "What the fuck was that?"

Me: Are you surprised it didn't go to a full series?

Sue: Hardly. Would it have been like that every week? The swinging subplot would have been a nightmare.

The Score

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

Sue: I'm not going to give it a mark. That wasn't *Doctor Who*.

Me: It was pretty close.

Sue: It was nothing like *Doctor Who*! There should have been some aliens instead of middle-aged swingers who were probably brain-damaged from all that interbreeding.

Me: Harsh.

Sue: I just want Peter Davison. Was there really any need for that? Why are we punishing ourselves like this?

I place the DVD back on its shelf.

Sue: If I had to mark it – which I'm not – I'd probably give it a three, but only because Sarah Jane and K9 were in it. I mean, there's nothing wrong with the idea – they proved that 25 years later – but it just fell flat. Can we

K9 AND COMPANY

put Peter Davison's first episode on now, please?

Me: Wouldn't you rather watch *Hot Fuzz* instead?

Sue: And why would I do that?

Me: No reason.

COMMENT: "This is the best *Wife in Space* so far. From *The Web Planet*, via *The Mind Robber* to *The Ambassadors of Death*, Sue has never been subjected to anything which so utterly diverges from the agenda of *Doctor Who*. And she has never reacted with such utter disbelief. A joy." – Dave Owen

NOTES: I had to look up Samantha Brick when I was editing this blog entry for the book. So that's nice.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE



We watched Shada between Survival and The TV Movie. Because it doesn't count.

Part One

I haven't told Sue what we're watching tonight, and I expect a cushion in the face when she eventually finds out.

Sue: So what are we watching this week?

Tom Baker enters the Museum of the Moving Image Doctor Who exhibit circa 1992.

Sue: Are we watching a *Blue Peter* special?

Tom begins reeling off the names of the Doctor's enemies.

Sue: He's just reading off the signs in this exhibition. He can't remember the monsters' names, and he played the bloody Doctor! I don't feel bad about forgetting them now.

And then, completely out of the blue, Tom yells: "SHADA!"

Sue: Oh for fuck's sake. Not *Shada*! You promised, Neil!

Tom reminisces about this uncompleted story.

Sue: Doesn't Ian Levine have something to do with this?

Me: No.

Before you ask, I wouldn't show her Ian's animated version even if I had a

SHADA

copy. I'm not in the mood for receiving death threats, thanks.

Sue: For fuck's sake, Neil. What is this? Is it a documentary?

Me: No, we're actually going to watch *Shada*, even though bits of it are missing.

Sue: Oh, so it's a recon.

Me: Sort of. You'll see. Just imagine it's 1992 and you haven't seen any new episodes of *Doctor Who* for three years.

Sue: Sounds wonderful.

Tom cried a lot when Shada was cancelled, and the cast were very sad, too.

Sue: Oh, get over it. These things happen.

And then the Doctor Who title sequence circa 1979 sequence suddenly kicks in.

Sue: Oh for fuck's sake.

Me: What's wrong?

Sue: I didn't think I'd ever have to sit through this again. We're going backwards.

Shada begins on a space station.

Sue: The sleeping arrangements in the 200th season of *Big Brother* leave a lot to be desired.

One of these sleeping men is Skagra.

Sue: Oh, it's him from *Peep Show*. The one who isn't married to the brainy woman you fancy. You know, the other one.

Skagra wakes from his slumber and does something heinous.

Sue: Who is doing this fucking music?

Me: It's Keff.

Sue: For fuck's sake.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Me: It's Keff trying to be Dudley Simpson.

Sue: FOR FUCK'S SAKE!

The sleeping men begin to shake in their chairs.

Sue: It looks like an airport lounge, where you get a massage while you wait for your flight.

A sphere floats into the air.

Sue: It's the Yeti!

Me: It isn't the Yeti.

Sue: But Tom Baker mentioned the Yeti at the beginning. Are all the old monsters not in this, then? So what was the point of that beginning?

Sue is brought back down to Earth. Cambridge, to be precise.

Sue: Now this is more like it. We're outside, we're on Earth, and there's no fucking music. Bliss.

Unfortunately, the silence doesn't last very long.

Sue: Just because Keff has found the oboe setting on his Casio keyboard, that doesn't make him Dudley. I bet Dudley is turning in his grave.

Me: Dudley isn't dead.

Sue: So why not hire Dudley, then? This makes no sense at all!

Chris Parsons arrives at St Cedd's College.

Sue: Nicol went for an interview at Cambridge but they turned her down, the idiots. Oh well, their loss. Maybe if she'd kept her double-barrelled surname, she may have stood a chance.

We enter Professor Chronotis' office.

SHADA

Sue: I wish my university office looked like this. It's gorgeous.

The Professor's scatterbrained approach to life reminds Sue of someone else.

Sue: He's just like Patrick Troughton. He would have been a great Doctor.

Meanwhile, on the Cam...

Sue: This is lovely.

Me: Doesn't this ring any bells?

Sue: Yes, you've made me watch this before. Why did you make me watch this before?

Me: *The Five Doctors*. Remember?

Sue: Oh yes, it's all coming back to me now. Hang on, how can this possibly happen twice?

Me: Well, *Shada* was never shown on television, so, erm...

Sue: So it doesn't count?

Me: Not really, no.

Sue: SO WHY AM I WATCHING IT?

I quickly change the subject.

Me: Aren't you pleased to see Tom and Lalla back together again?

Sue: I suppose so. When you take a break from someone, you still miss them after a while, even if they were getting on your nerves. You'll understand when we divorce, Neil. So were they shagging at this point?

Skagra struts around Cambridge in what can only be described as a thoroughly ridiculous outfit.

Sue: Well, that's not conspicuous, is it? Who does he think he is? Gary Glitter?

An elderly Tom Baker interjects from the future.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: That was a bit shit. Is he going to do this all the time? Oh dear...

The Doctor and Romana arrive at St Cedd's College.

Sue: Oh look, it's Ronnie Corbett.

It's only when our heroes enter the Professor's office that Sue finally begins to enjoy herself.

Sue: The script is very funny. I could watch these three all day.

Professor Chronotis is a retired Time Lord.

Sue: Hang on a minute... If he's been on Earth for hundreds of years, why hasn't he helped out more? What was he doing when Earth was being invaded by aliens?

Me: Marking student essays, probably.

Sue: Fair enough. That's a lot harder than saving the world.

Skagra glimpses himself in a mirror.

Sue: Even in the 1970s that outfit would have turned heads. Only one person could pull off a look like that, and that's Eddie Izzard.

Skagra is forced to deal with Ronnie Corbett.

Me: Keffing hell! They're only having a conversation. This isn't a Dalek invasion! Do you really need all these bloody stings, Keff? *Really?*

The Doctor tells Professor Chronotis he heard strange voices while he was punting. The Professor thinks it was probably undergraduates talking to each other, which he's trying to ban.

Sue: This is now officially the best *Doctor Who* script ever.

SHADA

Skagra hitches a lift from a passing motorist.

Sue: Does a man opening a car door really deserve the DER-DER-DER! treatment, Keff? And does this villain actually hypnotise people, or does this bloke in the car think he's pulled?

Skagra drives the car to a nearby field.

Sue: He's left the fucking gate open. I hate it when people do that.

Skagra enters his invisible spaceship.

Sue: If Tom Baker hadn't mentioned the invisible spaceship in his introduction, I'm sure that would have been a nice surprise.

The episode concludes with an image of a Krarg.

Sue: Is that it? It looks like they've glued some tiles together.

Cue credits.

Sue: It's a shame they didn't finish this. The Professor is such a lovely character. So is that it, then? I'd probably give it a 7 for...

Me: It isn't over yet. There are five episodes left.

Finally, a cushion in the face.

Part Two

Sue: Actually, I do miss these titles. There's none of that stupid winking bollocks for a start. And proper music, too.

The Doctor admits he used to have a boyhood crush on the stylish Gallifreyan criminal known as Salyavin.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: The Doctor needs to give his head a shake. He's anything but stylish.

Me: That isn't Salyavin. That's Skagra.

Sue: Two silly names beginning with S? I can't keep up.

The Doctor quizzes Chronotis about a book he borrowed from the Panopticon Archives on Gallifrey, but the professor's memory isn't what it used to be.

Sue: The bits which survive are brilliant. I just wish it wouldn't turn into Jack-a-bloody-nory every five minutes.

Skagra decides to change into something less conspicuous.

Sue: I never thought I'd be happy to see someone dressed as a geography teacher.

Skagra enters Chronotis' office.

Sue: He should open a tea shop. All he seems to do is make tea.

Chronotis is attacked by Skagra's sphere.

Sue: Oh no. I really liked him. Shouldn't he regenerate or something?

And then K9 appears.

Sue: K9! I forgot that K9 was still around. Oh, this keeps getting better and better.

When the Doctor finally runs into Skagra, he tells him he isn't mad about his tailor.

Sue: You should have seen what he was wearing five minutes ago!

Skagra's sphere pursues the Doctor, who escapes on a bike.

SHADA

Sue: Those wheels could do with some oil.

*The Doctor hurtles past some students singing The Chattanooga Choo-
Choo.*

Sue: They are so into that song, they didn't notice the silver ball flying past their faces, the posh twats.

The Doctor leaves his bike behind.

Sue: Does he know that the book has fallen out of his basket?

Me: I don't think so.

Sue: So why is he leaving his bike with the book still in the basket, even though it's not in the basket? Oh, you know what I mean!

The Doctor enters a back alley, but the exit is blocked with a locked gate.

Sue: Use your sonic screwdriver, you idiot! You've still got it at this point, haven't you?

The Doctor tries to wriggle under the gate instead.

Sue: Is he taking the piss?

Cue credits.

Sue: I'd forgotten how fucking stupid this Doctor was.

Part Three

Romana arrives in the TARDIS and the sphere buggers off.

Sue: How the hell did she know where to find him?

Tom Baker: Romana explained K9 had traced the sphere after it had attacked the Professor.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I wish Tom Baker had been around to answer all my questions from the very beginning. Thanks for that, Tom.

Meanwhile, on a river bank...

Sue: He isn't a real angler. You can tell by the way he passed his line. He's never fished in his life before.

Skagra's sphere attaches itself to the angler's face.

Sue: You'd try to punch it out of the way, surely? That was badly directed.

The Doctor, Romana and Chris follow Skagra's sphere to a nearby field.

Sue: It reminds me of a floating beach ball. I hate beach balls.

The Doctor walks straight into the hull of Skagra's invisible spaceship.

Sue: That would have been even funnier if there were loads of unconscious cows dotted around.

The Doctor notices something odd about the grass.

Sue: What's the point of an invisible spaceship if you're going to advertise its presence with a red carpet? Is the bad guy holding an awards ceremony or something?

Skagra is back in his glad rags again.

Sue: He's dressed for the after party. He's even wearing a medallion!

K9 and Chris Parsons are taken to the spaceship's brig.

Sue: Why doesn't he ask K9 scientific questions to pass the time? He should be asking him questions about quantum physics instead of

SHADA

moaning.

Clare explores Chronotis' empty office and accidentally activates some hidden machinery.

Sue: Oh, he's got one of those computers like Sarah Jane's.

And then the penny drops...

Sue: I bet this is a TARDIS. And if it is a TARDIS, that's a *very* clever idea.

The episode ends with Tom summing up. Again.

Sue: What a shame. I bet that would have been great.

Part Four

We are unable to bring you Part Four of Shada due to technical difficulties. So here's Nicol with a quick summary:

Nicol: My mother thinks the monsters look like owls. She complains that there are too many gaps in this story, and they should watch the animated version instead. Neil refuses to budge. Mother is amused by the reference to an analogue spaceship. When the Professor reappears, she wants to know where Wee Willie Winkie has been all this time. At one point, she's convinced the Professor regenerated into his own body, and even I know that would be silly. My mother then complained the gaps were covered up too quickly, and she doesn't have enough time to visualise what she's missing – it's probably her age. She also believes Tom Baker must have been short of cash when he recorded these links, and she can't understand how a room full of old men could survive for so long without anything to eat. She believes the Think Tank sounds like something out of *Dollhouse*, whatever that is. My mother then becomes increasingly annoyed by the number of names that begin with the letter S, and when the monsters turn up, she doesn't think they're worth the wait. Then, right at the end,

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

she turns to Neil and screams, “Keffing hell!”

Part Five

The Doctor, Chris and K9 escape the advancing Krarg.

Sue: I don’t think much of the direction. That was a bit cack-handed. And Keff’s music sounds nothing like Dudley’s. It shouldn’t have been allowed.

Tom Baker then plugs an exceptionally large gap in the narrative.

Sue: It’s becoming more and more difficult to keep up with what’s going on. Nice explosion, though.

Professor Chronotis and Clare bond in his office.

Sue: These two should have had their own spin-off series. She’s basically his Sarah Jane.

Chronotis’ eyes turn a funny shade of green.

Sue: Is he the Master?

Me: No, he’s the Great Intelligence.

Sue: Is he really?

Me: No.

Sue: Is he Saly-whatshisname?

Me: Damn, you’re good, Sue.

The Doctor and Chris burst into the Professor’s TARDIS.

Sue: That double-take was brilliant.

I think it’s fair to say that Sue has fallen head over heels in love with the Professor’s time machine.

SHADA

Sue: This is what my TARDIS would look like if I had one. Lots of wood and an endless supply of tea.

The Doctor explains the plot.

Sue: That almost makes sense. I'm back on track now. Thanks.

And then we finally see Shada for ourselves.

Sue: What the hell is that supposed to be? I was expecting something a lot less shit than that after all the build-up.

Tom Baker plugs another huge gap in the narrative.

Sue: I'm becoming more and more irritated that *Shada* wasn't finished because I'm convinced that it would have been quite good, actually.

When Clare and Chris leave the Professor's study, we are treated to a reprise of Keff's 'Opening and Closing Doors' theme.

Sue: What is it with Keff McCulloch and fucking doors?

And wouldn't you know it, the episode concludes with another piece-to-camera.

Tom Baker: Chris and Clare entered the chamber and the young man rushed forward to try to help. A sphere absorbed Chris' mind in an instant. The prisoners, including Chris, advanced menacingly towards me.

Sue: Okay, this is really beginning to irritate me now.

Part Six

When Romana reminds the Doctor that a copy of his brain exists inside Skagra's sphere, he's so pleased, he actually gives her a medal.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: That was very cute. They are *definitely* shagging at this point.

Two TARDISes collide in the space-time vortex.

Sue: That doesn't look good, does it?

Me: God knows what it would have looked like in 1979.

And then Tom Baker takes over for absolutely ages.

Sue: I can't keep up with this. Slow down, Tom!

Skagra is deposited back on his ship.

Sue: Has his spaceship fallen in love with the Doctor? I've definitely missed something important somewhere along the line.

Meanwhile, Ronnie Corbett has taken it upon himself to report the theft of a college room to the police.

Me: (*as Ronnie*) So I said to my producer, I said, "I've lost the whole room!"

But the room has already returned, and the Doctor is currently using it to host a book club.

Sue: Thank God he's not reading *50 Shades of Grey* to them.

Sue is pleased that Chronotis is alive and well.

Sue: So he's definitely okay? He's going to be all right?

Me: Well, he's got his annual appraisal coming up, and loads of marking to do, but apart from that, yes, he'll be fine.

SHADA

The Score

Sue: I bet that would have been great if I'd understood it.

Me: Just for fun – and this doesn't count – what score would you give it?

Sue: It's impossible to judge, there's so much missing. I enjoyed what I saw, though, so I'll give it:

7/10

COMMENT: "I'm surprised nobody spotted Tony Stamp from *The Bill* at the start." – Rosette Blayfoi

NOTES: I know two people who worked on Ian Levine's *Shada*. One of the animators was an ex-student of mine (I'll never forget the time he requested an extension to an essay deadline because Ian Levine was pestering him for keyframes), and one of my friends provided the voice of the Fourth Doctor (because Tom Baker was too expensive, natch). To preserve their anonymity, I'll call them Bert and Paulo.

The first I knew about Ian Levine's plans for an animated version of *Shada* was at a *Doctor Who* convention in Newcastle. Bert was there and he wanted to show me some secret test footage he'd been working on.

"Take a look at this!" he said, handing me his iPhone. "Just ignore the bad Tom Baker impersonator; he's rubbish."

As I watched the animated clip, I realised he was talking about Paulo, who I'd seen checking in to the hotel a few minutes earlier. Bert and Paulo didn't know each other and had never met before.

"What's that?" asked Paulo on his way to the bar.

"It's Ian Levine's *Shada*," said Bert, excitedly. "Here, take a look, but ignore the bad Tom Baker impersonator because he's fucking shit!"

Paulo nodded politely as he examined the footage. And then, when it was finally over, he pulled a sour face.

"Yeah, he is a bit shit," said Paulo, handing the phone back to Bert. "Fancy a pint?"

Believe it or not, Bert and Paulo are still friends on *Facebook*.



BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY

BLOGGED: 26 September 2016

Sue: So what are you putting me through tonight?

Me: Do you remember me telling you about the time I stopped watching *Doctor Who* when I was growing up?

Sue: When you discovered girls?

Me: No, it was long before that. It was when I decided to watch something else instead.

Sue: Not *Star Trek*, surely?

Me: No, this...

I press 'play'.

Vegas in Space

Sue: What the hell is this? This isn't *The Six Million Dollar Man*, is it?

Me: No.

Sue: I'm sure I've seen this before...

Me: Well, it was on ITV...

Sue: It looks terrible.

A pompous voiceover gets Sue up to speed.

Sue: Oh, it's Buck Rogers. *Buck Rogers in the 21st Century*.

Me: Twenty-fifth, actually.

Sue: Same difference. I remember you telling me about this once. It looks like *Dallas* in space. Is the writer related to Joan and Jackie?

No, Anne Collins isn't related to either of them. I checked Wikipedia and everything.

BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY

Sue: At least this is written by a woman. That's something, I guess.

The episode begins with Buck and Wilma simulating an attack against a squadron of Draconian fighters. Actually, I'm sure all the episodes started like this (with exactly the same footage).

Me: I had a Corgi Buck Rogers starfighter. I loved it to bits.

Sue: You are so fickle, Neil.

Me: I also had a massive crush on Wilma Deering.

Sue: Really? You do surprise me.

Buck and Wilma are struggling to get a fix on the Draconians' new Hatchet Fighters.

Sue: Draconians... Why does that name ring a bell?

Me: It's funny you should say that...

Sue: Hang on. WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?

A young woman named Falina is stripping down to her skimpy underwear as she takes a video call from her elderly foster mother.

Sue: So this is why you watched *Buck Rogers*. It all makes sense now.

Falina appears to be in danger.

Sue: Either the camera operator is drunk or somebody is sneaking up behind her.

Falina is kidnapped, which annoys the hell out of Caesar Romero.

Sue: He looks like a Steampunk Darth Vader.

Me: I'm surprised you know what Steampunk is, Sue.

Sue: One of my students told me about it. Actually, he looks like Dick Van Dyke crossed with Lee Van Cleef.

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Romero is playing a notorious smuggler named Amos. He tells Earth's Defence Directorate that Falina stumbled across a secret code which could ruin three-fourths of his operations.

Sue: Three-fourths? Who the hell talks like that?

And then Sue starts asking awkward questions.

Sue: So how did Buck Rogers end up in the 21st century?

Me: Twenty-fifth.

Sue: Whatever.

Me: It's basically the same thing that happened to John Crichton in *Farscape*.

Sue: I used to love *Farscape*. Why can't we watch that instead?

Me: Anyway, as much as I love talking about *Farscape*, Buck was a space shuttle test pilot and he...

Sue: We should have watched the first episode, Neil. Just saying.

Me: The first episode is twice as long as this.

Sue: Okay, fair enough. Good choice.

Amos wants to do a deal with Dr Huer.

Sue: He looks like Dr Smith from *Lost in Space*.

Me: His name is Dr Huer.

Sue: Doctor Who, er...?

Me: If you like.

Sue: I bet they tried to get Lee Majors to play Buck Rogers, but he turned them down so they had to settle for this charmless idiot instead. Am I right?

And that's as good as things will get for Gil Gerard over the next 40 minutes.

Sue: And why does his uniform have a rainbow on its sleeve? Are they providing security at a Gay Pride rally?

BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY

Buck agrees to help Major Marla Landers rescue Falina from the clutches of Morgan Velosi, a gangster who runs a gambling complex on the planet Sinaloa. In exchange for this, Amos will provide them with the schematics to the Draconians' Hatchet Fighters.

Sue: This is a blatant *Star Wars* rip-off.

Me: To be fair, George Lucas ripped-off *Buck Rogers* when he made *Star Wars*. He tried to get the rights to *Buck Rogers*, but they refused and he had to make up his own nonsense instead.

Sue: So *Buck Rogers* is ripping-off *Star Wars* ripping-off *Buck Rogers*. That's a bit timey-wimey, isn't it?

Speaking of Star Wars, it's time to meet Twiki and Dr Theopolis...

Sue: Does this robot have Tourette's?

Sue thinks Twiki is doing all the talking, and that his dual personality is the result of some faulty wiring.

Me: No, Sue. The clever one doing all the talking is the medallion hanging around the robot's neck.

Sue: What? Are you joking?

Me: No.

Sue: Bloody hell. That would be like C-3PO hanging R2-D2 around his neck like a cheap pendant. What the fuck?

Me: Bid-di-bid-di-bid-di...

Sue: What?

Me: Never mind.

Buck and Marla arrive on Sinaloa.

Sue: This is basically the 1970s' *Babylon 5*, isn't it?

Me: Can you believe that only 13 years exist between this and *Babylon 5*? How weird is that?

Sue: You mean they're supposed to take place around the same time?

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Me: No, I mean...

Sue: What in God's name is that woman wearing?

"That woman" is Tangie (maybe it's short for Tangerine) and she's wearing a deconstructed glitter ball which makes Princess Leia's gold bikini look like a burka.

Sue: I bet you'd go to *Buck Rogers* conventions all the time if the women dressed as extras from this episode. That's all I'm saying.

Meanwhile, Falina is about to be tortured in a skirt which resides in a different postcode to her knees.

Sue: What else has this actress been in?

Me: Not a bloody thing if her acting is anything to go by.

Sue: Are you sure she didn't shoot JR?

Velosi intimidates Falina by simply staring at her.

Sue: Is he supposed to be *Buck Rogers'* version of the Master, then? Don't look at me like that, Neil. He's got a stupid goatee and he's wearing a cravat.

Back at the casino, Buck is about to proposition a sexy blue alien when he discovers that the buxom wench is actually the male of the species.

Sue: Captain Jack would have been in there like a shot.

Me: They should have called this *Bangkok in Space*.

Sue: They should strip him of his rainbow armband after his reaction to that. Buck is obviously homophobic.

So Buck decides to flirt with a human hooker instead (Buck's words, not mine) aka Tangie.

Sue: He can't take his eyes off her sparkly tits. He'll go blind if they turn

BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY

the house lights on.

The background music in the casino is provided by Daft Punk. And if you don't believe me, try watching this episode yourself. Go on, I dare you.

Sue: So what was *Doctor Who* doing at this point?

Me: Do you remember a Tom Baker episode which began with a camera panning across some deck chairs? It lasted about 20 minutes.

Sue: God, yes. Although I think I'd rather watch the deck chairs than this. Actually, I'd rather watch paint dry than this.

After continually winning at blackjack without the aid of a calculator (which are still a big deal in the year 2491), Buck is followed into the toilets by one of Velosi's leather-clad security guards.

Sue: Are they going to arrest him for cottaging?

Buck retaliates by kicking the shit out of him.

Sue: That isn't the same person fighting!

She's right, Gil's stuntman doesn't look anything like him and the director can't be bothered to hide it.

Sue: It looks like Buck Rogers has been replaced by Alan Partridge!

When Buck has the goon safely pinned to the floor, he starts plying him with drugs.

Sue: Is that supposed to be Rohypnol?

Buck claims the pill will make the goon more susceptible to his intense questioning, and if he won't agree to take it orally, there are other ways and means...

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: Good God. This has to be one of the worst things you've ever made me watch, Neil.

Me: Hang in there, Sue, we're almost three-fourths of the way through.

Buck and Marla free Falina from Velosi's evil clutches. However, as they leave Sinaloa behind, they are pursued by Draconian Hatchet Fighters. The very same ships they can't get a bloody fix on!

Sue: Just use the force, pet. There. Good. Has this finished yet?

Me: I can't believe I was obsessed with *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*. I pestered my mum into buying me everything: the novelisation of the TV movie, the colouring books, the Corgi toys, a Wilma Deering action figure... I'm sure I had a fancy dress version of Buck's costume, too. Either that or I made one myself.

Sue: So you borrowed your sister's white leggings? Is that what you're saying? It's all coming out tonight!

Amos tells Falina that he's her estranged father.

Me: No! That's impossible! It's ripping-off *The Empire Strikes Back*, which hasn't been released yet.

Sue: (In her very best Darth Vader voice) Impressive!

Wilma tells Buck that Tangie has been shipped to his apartment as requested.

Me: Written by a woman, Sue. Written by a woman.

Sue: Written by a moron!

The episode ends on a cheesy freeze-frame and Sue pretends to vomit into her coffee.

The Score

Sue: Well, that was...

BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY

Me: Ssh! The theme music is the best bit.

Sue: For fuck's sake...

Me: Okay, you were saying?

Sue: That was bloody awful, Neil. What were you thinking?

Me: I'm sorry. I think I accidentally showed you the worst episode.

Sue: No, I mean what were you thinking when you decided to watch that instead of *Doctor Who*?! I know *Doctor Who* has its problems, but compared to that drivel it's *Breaking Bad*.

Me: So are you going to give *Buck Rogers* a score out of 10?

Sue: No. It doesn't deserve a score. What a load of old shit. Let's just pretend it never happened.

BIG FINISH

BLOGGED: 16 October 2016

Me: Do you remember the time you tried to talk Tom Baker into working with Big Finish?

Sue: Of course I do. How could I forget?

As unlikely as this sounds, this actually happened in February 2001: Tom was promoting some books on QVC when Sue unilaterally decided to call him on my behalf. And because I was annoyed that he wouldn't work with Big Finish, she proceeded to badger him about it for a laugh.

Me: Well your words must have haunted him because he eventually agreed to work with them.

Sue: I also convinced Peter Davison to make that film with Colin Baker and Paul McGann. I should be on some sort of commission.

Me: We'll cover that in the next book. For this book we're listening to a Big Finish adventure called *The Auntie Matter* by Jonathan Morris.

Sue: (Sighing) I'm bored already.

Me: That's Auntie spelt A-U-N-T-I-E.

Sue: Oh, okay. That is marginally more interesting, I suppose.

The Auntie Matter

*Because audio dramas mainly consist of wall-to-wall dialogue, we agree that talking over the episodes while we listen to them will almost certainly result in even more confusion than usual (see *The Creature from the Pit*). So, in order to ensure that we didn't distract one another, we listened to the play in separate locations: I was sprawled out on a sofa downstairs while Sue listened to it in the bath.*

Me: So what did you think of that, then?

Sue: Hang on a minute, I have to dry my hair.

BIG FINISH

One hour later...

Me: Well?

Sue: I enjoyed it, even though I didn't think I would. Not at first, anyway.

Me: Why's that?

Sue: I thought it was going to be a play about Boris Johnson's grandparents, and I thought, "Who gives a shit about them?" But then the Doctor turned up and I started to get into it.

Me: And what did you think of Tom's performance?

Sue: At first I thought you were pulling my leg and they'd hired someone else in to impersonate him. But then I realised it could only be him. He was very good. Still as mad as ever.

Me: He sounded more like an old Tom Baker instead of the Doctor I remember.

Sue: That's probably because he's old now, Neil.

Me: I know. But...

Sue: Would you have preferred it if your friend had impersonated him instead?

Me: Christ no! He's shit! But I did find it hard to accept that he was playing the Doctor in that particular time frame, although he did get better as he went along. Or maybe it just didn't bother me so much by the end.

Sue: It didn't bother me at all. Am I right in thinking she was the real Romana as well?

Me: Are you serious?

Sue: She definitely sounded like one of the Romanas, but I thought she'd passed away? In real life, I mean.

Me: Mary Tamm recorded it just before she died.

Sue: Oh, I see... So that's why she sounded exactly the same. That confused me at first, because I didn't think it was possible. You know, we probably should have discussed who was who playing who before I listened to the play, Neil.

Me: Did you expect the Doctor and Romana to start looking for the Key to Time?

Sue: Not really, no. Should they have been? I definitely remembered the

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Black Guardian when they mentioned him, though. He was a complete waste of space. He did sod all in this story as well.

Me: What about the other characters?

Sue: Posh. Everybody was posh. It was exactly what I thought listening to a play on the radio would be like.

Me: You don't listen to that many audio dramas, do you?

Sue: No. Never. Nicol listens to them on Radio 4 all the time, and this is exactly what I thought they'd sound like – very upper class.

Me: The gamekeeper wasn't very posh.

Sue: Yes, but he doesn't really count because [SPOILERS!]

I tried to keep our discussion spoiler-free, just in case you haven't heard the play yet.

Me: And the maid, Mabel. She definitely wasn't posh.

Sue: Oh yeah, I liked her. I especially liked what happened to her at the end. Clever girl.

Me: So you liked Reggie, then?

Sue: Don't you mean Weggie? He was harmless enough. A bit thick, but he meant well. I couldn't help but like him. Maybe Boris Johnson isn't so bad after all.

Me: Let's not get ahead of ourselves...

Sue: All the actors were very good, actually. The woman who played the Auntie reminded me of Mrs Slocombe from *Are You Being Served?*

Me: Really?

Sue: Yeah, all those fake airs and graces. Very funny.

Me: Did you notice that the TARDIS doesn't appear in the story?

Sue: Only now that you've mentioned it.

Me: And did you miss K9?

Sue: Only now that you've mentioned him.

Me: Did you pick up on the *Time and the Rani* in-joke?

Sue: No.

Me: Would you like me to explain it to you?

Sue: No.

Me: Okay. So what did you enjoy the most about the play?

BIG FINISH

Sue: Well, it was short.

Me: Oh.

Sue: Don't look at me like that. It didn't need to be any longer than that – it was just the right length to keep me interested. Plus the bath was getting cold.

Me: (*Sighing*) Right...

Sue: Stop pouting. It was fun. The plot was easy to follow, it was very funny in places, and Mary Tamm was brilliant. I enjoyed her bits even more than Tom's. I liked how they were running around the same place without realising they were having the same adventure. That was very funny. That actually made me laugh out loud. In fact, they never should have found out at all – that would have been even funnier – but Tom's Doctor is such an egomaniac, he had to brag about doing it single-handedly at the end. Still funny, though.

Me: Do you think it successfully replicated that particular era of Doctor Who?

Sue: Not really.

Me: Oh.

Sue: No, it was a lot better than that. If that had been on the telly, it would have taken twice as long and the special effects would have been crap. I bet the house would have looked amazing, though.

The Score

Me: If you had to score that story, what would you give it?

Sue: In other words, you want me to score it.

Me: Yes.

Sue: You always have to reduce everything down to a number.

Me: Yes.

Sue: Why is that?

Me: Reasons.

Sue: Well, if it makes you happy...

8/10

THE (STILL) MAD ONE: THE WIFE IN SPACE

Sue: I really enjoyed it, and I'm not used to that sort of thing – I usually listen to Brandi Carlile in the bath. The plot wasn't anything to write home about, but the performances and the jokes were great. Yes, it was all very jolly.

Me: So you agree that Doctor Who works in that medium, then?

Sue: Definitely. Like I said, it's probably better. And it must be nice for the older Doctors who can't do it on the telly any more. At least David Tennant has something to look forward to when his looks fade.

Me: He's already done some, with Catherine Tate.

Sue: Really? He didn't waste any time, did he? But I suppose it makes sense to carry on. If the fans like it, and the cast enjoy it, why not keep doing it? It sounded like Tom Baker was having a wonderful time. I bet he's kicking himself for not doing it sooner. That'll teach him for not listening to me!

Me: Does this mean you'll listen to another Big Finish play in the future, say if Peter Davison was in it?

Sue: Absolutely. As long as I can do it in the bath.

SUE'S SCORES

- The Ribos Operation:** *One of the best.* 9/10
The Pirate Planet: *An imaginative mess.* 6/10
The Stones of Blood: *I enjoyed that.* 8/10
The Androids of Tara: *Loads of fun.* 9/10
The Power of Kroll: *Above average.* 7/10
The Armageddon Factor: *A waste of time.* 4/10
Destiny of the Daleks: *What a mess.* 2/10
City of Death: *That was faultless.* 10/10
The Creature from the Pit: *Rubbish.* 2/10
Nightmare of Eden: *It did the job.* 7/10
The Horns of Nimon: *Silly.* 5/10
The Leisure Hive: *Not enough substance.* 6/10
Meglos: *Shit.* 2/10
Full Circle: *I liked Adric.* 7/10
State of Decay: *The ending let it down.* 7/10
Warriors' Gate: *A breath of fresh air.* 8/10
The Keeper of Traken: *Tedious.* 3/10
Logopolis: *I feel cheated.* 4/10

NEXT TIME

THE MYRKA
CYBERMEN
GIANT SNAKES
and A PAIR OF BLACK UNDERPANTS

in

**THE FIT ONE:
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 6**

Castrovalva to The Caves of Androzani

Foreword by Jenny Colgan

March 2017

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