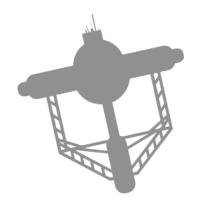
SCRUFFY DRUNK: THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 2

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NEIL PERRYMAN

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The Scruffy Drunk The Wife in Space Volume 2

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 7				
Foreword 10				
Introduction 13				
SEASON FOUR				
The Power of the Daleks17				
The Highlanders 28				
The Underwater Menace 36				
The Moonbase 43				
The Macra Terror 51				
The Faceless Ones 56				
The Evil of the Daleks 65				
SEASON FIVE				
The Tomb of the Cybermen 77				
The Abominable Snowmen 87				
The Ice Warriors 94				
The Enemy of the World 101				
<i>The Web of Fear</i> 110				
Fury from the Deep 120				
The Wheel in Space 131				

SEASON SIX
The Dominators 143
The Mind Robber 152
<i>The Invasion</i> 165
<i>The Krotons</i> 178
The Seeds of Death 186
The Space Pirates 197
The War Games 207
The Troughton Years 223
EXTRAS
<i>Downtime</i> 229
The Enemy of the World Redux 239
The Web of Fear Redux 257
The Underwater Menace Redux 272
An Interview with Sue 279
Sue's Scores 285

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And finally, and most importantly, I'd like to thank Sue, Nicol and Gary. This will all be over soon, I promise.

Neil Perryman July 2015

FOREWORDBY TOBY HADOKE

I like Neil and Sue Perryman. Very much. In fact, I can't think of anyone by whom I'd rather have an idea of mine stolen.

Some years ago I asked Neil to peruse my original draft of *Running Through Corridors*. I was delighted by his enthusiasm for it. Now, *Running Through Corridors* is a book with a gestation period that has lasted longer than the first episode of *The Space Pirates* seems to and thus far only *Volume 1* has been published (which is accurate as I write this in July 2015... and actually probably still will be even if you're reading in 2070 when we control weather from the Moon and make tea trays strong enough to patch up Moonbase walls). In it, myself and Rob Shearman (a *Doctor Who* writer, clever person and all-round good guy – nonetheless incapable of delivering a final edit within a four-year window) and I watch every *Doctor Who* story in order from the beginning and try to say witty and insightful things about it. Sound familiar? Yes, so it should. If it doesn't, it certainly will approximately 10 seconds into your reading of the rest of this book.

But that's okay, it's our fault for not getting it shipshape before Neil had started, finished and published this marathon odyssey online. Oh, and in a book. And then another book. And a series of sequels. I eagerly anticipate experiencing it in other digestible forms – a series of tweets perhaps, or vines, or smoke signals and a limited edition semaphore special. I can't complain because, frankly, the publication of *Running Through Corridors* has lasted longer than the marriage that takes place during it (I'm half expecting to discover Neil and Sue stole my wife as well). It's all right though, as a consolation Neil asked me to write some nice words to go on the jacket of the first book. And so they did, until Matthew Sweet wrote some and then they didn't any more.

All of the above might be genuine grievance, deeply felt. Or it might be a joke. Your interpretation will probably depend on how frequently you post on internet forums. Indeed, what I love about *The Wife in Space* is that it is what the internet far too often fails to be: it's joyful and

FOREWORD BY TORY HADOKE

it's charming. It's increasingly in our nature to whinge about what we don't like, to accentuate the negative. Quick recourse to a keyboard and a willing audience seems to bring this dreary aspect of human nature out all too often. When I first stumbled across a *Doctor Who* forum I thought, "Oh wow, there's a place where like-minded people can have fun discussing lovely things about *Doctor Who*". Then I read it. It seemed to consist largely of people calling other people twats for not liking *The Androids of Tara*.

Of course, sticking your head above the parapet you open yourself up to public criticism – a book, CD, or a show comes out with your name on it and someone will review it. There are steps you can take to avoid the horrible things, but inevitably you'll get drunk and Google yourself, realise people hate you and think you're rubbish even more than you already do yourself. The marvellousness of *The Wife in Space* is that Neil can clearly write, Sue has clearly gamely entered into the spirit of the thing and is very perceptive (Camfield!), and yet they still got batty feedback from lunatics. When you get criticism yourself it stings and you hang on every syllable: when you see it being doled out to other people whom you respect and admire, the necessary spite is shown up for what it is. You realise that it doesn't matter – that every corner of the internet has bred the most terrible things, things which act against everything you believe in. Things which probably still live with their mum.

And so to real life. More recent marathons aside, I have made lovers watch *Doctor Who*. My sixth form college love affair was punctuated by a weekly tryst in which my girlfriend and I would sample a randomly selected story. I look back now with horror that when we should have been doing heady teenage things I was showing her *Frontios*. Now that I'm no longer allowed to be alone in a room with an 18-year-old girl I want to punch my younger self in the head for not making the most of his opportunities. In all honesty though, I cannot imagine my life without *Doctor Who*, and you share the things you love with the people you love. The best times I've had, the friends I cherish, most of my professional successes and probably the best ideas I have had (that have been stolen from me) – they can all be traced back to *Doctor Who*.

We wouldn't spend this much time thinking about it, writing about

it, or posting anonymous diatribes online about people not liking *The Androids of Tara* if *Doctor Who* wasn't good. It's not perfect of course, but its weaknesses are reassuring – it's nice that the magic of my childhood was weaved by people who occasionally couldn't pull off a special effect or didn't know how oxygen and carbon dioxide worked. Or thought a tea tray could mend a Moonbase. Nothing's perfect: not *Doctor Who*, not life, not marriage, not copyright laws protecting the theft of very similar ideas. For every bit of brilliance in the era covered in this volume it also has *The Dominators*, General Hermack and the dance of the Fish People. And for every bit of wit and wisdom herein, *The Wife in Space* also has Gary.

I didn't know this volume would be called *The Scruffy Drunk* – those who know me will be aware that this is frighteningly apposite. Nonetheless, I was flattered to be asked. "It'd be great if you could write a foreword for us," said Neil. Took the words right out of my mouth.

And not for the first time.

Toby Hadoke July 2015

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for buying this book, which contains 17 per cent more Yeti than the previous volume at no extra charge.

It's no secret that I wobbled a few times during the Troughton years. The novelty of watching black and white episodes of *Doctor Who* with my wife had well and truly worn off by this point. I'd inadvertently attracted the attention of a militant branch of *Doctor Who* fandom who didn't like the cut of Sue's jib, and I was tired of removing long-winded comments about the pros and cons of *Logopolis* from blog posts about *The Macra Terror*. So yes, there were times when I floundered.

But every time I thought about throwing in the towel, or postponing *The Krotons* indefinitely, Sue would sit me down, call me a twat, and talk me out of it. In fact, it's probably more accurate to describe this phase of the blog as a wife encouraging her husband to watch *Doctor Who* with her, instead of the other way round.

Thank Rassilon she did, because if it hadn't been for Sue, to this day I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have seen *Fury from the Deep* or *The Faceless Ones*. Just think, I could have gone to my grave without ever hearing Milo Clancey complaining about his nutty bread. I know, it doesn't bear thinking about.

And it would have been my own stupid fault, because the only Second Doctor stories I knew anything about when we started the blog were the handful that had survived the great purge. Or, to put it more bluntly, I didn't give a fig about Patrick Troughton's 63 missing episodes. It was annoying, obviously, but I was too busy enjoying *Horror of Fang Rock* for the 27th time to spare them so much as a passing thought. I'd certainly never attempted to plug the gaps with audio recordings, reconstructions or photonovels, and I didn't feel sorry for the orphan episodes, either, despite them being, you know, orphans.

This means there are long stretches in this book where I am just as confused as Sue, especially when all I have to go on are barely-remembered facts that I'd somehow managed to glean via osmosis. For example, I knew *Fury from the Deep* featured sentient seaweed invading an oil rig, which sounded quite good, and I'd read *The Web of Fear* Target

novelisation in a caravan in Rhyl 35 years ago, so that rang a bell. But in 2011 you could have written everything I knew about *The Space Pirates* on a postage stamp (although to be fair, you probably still could).

These gaps in my knowledge also meant that not only did I have to concentrate on what Sue was saying to me as we watched these episodes together, I also had to follow what was happening on screen at the same time. This isn't as easy as it sounds; you try following a plot about elementary subatomic particles while your partner repeatedly compares the villains to malevolent bedside cabinets stuffed with underpants. This may explain why some of the entries in this book are a) slightly shorter than the rest and b) occasionally incomprehensible.

Anyway, aside from the incoherent floundering, other things to look out for in this volume include our daughter's first tentative steps as the blog's scientific adviser (elementary subatomic particles again); the first appearance of Sue's brother, Gary, (whether you like it or not); a cryptic email that will eventually result in a pensioner assaulting me at a book festival in Folkestone; and the growing realisation that nothing in the world was going to stop my wife now.

Neil Perryman July 2015

SEASON FOUR

AT LEAST I COULD SEE WILLIAM HARTNELL MOVE



This illustration funded by Robert A Crowder (above, right)

THE POWER OF THE DALEKS

BLOGGED: 16 June 2011

Episode One

Sue: Bring on the Troughton!

Me: Do you really mean that, or are you being sarcastic?

Sue: No, I really am excited. I honestly cannot wait. Do we get a new title sequence? Will it be a brand new show? Will it have a quicker pace? And better writers? Or is it just the same old tat with a different actor?

I deftly sidestep the question.

Me: Do you have any memories of Patrick Troughton, or any preconceptions about him before we begin this phase of the experiment, Sue?

Sue: Not really. I think his face scared me when I was a kid. Jet-black hair and saggy jowls – not a great look, if I'm honest. Maybe that's why I never watched him. Actually, now that you mention it, I'm sure he looked like this Irish priest I used to know.

Me: That's probably Patrick Troughton in The Omen.

Sue: Is it? Oh yes, so it is.

I open my laptop and locate tonight's recon. And then, after YouTube buffers the video for a few seconds, I toggle the display to full-screen mode and press 'play'.

Me: (Astonished) What the fuck is this?

Sue: What's wrong?

Me: What's wrong? It's the wrong fucking music!

Sue: It'll be over soon. It doesn't matter.

Me: Of course it matters! Why would anybody slap Murray Gold over

Patrick Troughton? It doesn't make any sense! **Sue**: Take it back to the shop and ask for a refund.

Me: I didn't buy it from a shop.

Sue: Exactly, so stop complaining. A fan has taken the time to make this video for you. You should show a little gratitude.

Me: But it's the wrong music!

Sue: You should have checked beforehand. Ooh, is that a face I can see in

the titles?

Me: (*Placing my hands over the screen*) Bollocks! **Sue**: Okay, it's finished now. Chill out, Neil.

The wrong music is replaced by the wrong trousers.

Sue: I don't remember William Hartnell wearing these clothes. When did

the Doctor change his costume? Have we skipped a scene?

Me: His clothes... They, erm... They sort of regenerate with him.

Sue: That's a bit silly, isn't it? Do they ever explain that? And when does

the Doctor explain what's happened to him? **Me**: He doesn't. Well, not for a few years yet.

Sue: Is it because the writers are trying to keep it mysterious, or are they

just making it up as they go along, like Lost?

Most people refer to Troughton's Beatle-esque hairstyle at this point, but not our Sue. According to her, he's a Rolling Stone.

Sue: He looks like Bill Wyman. It's the deeply etched lines in his face that do it; that haggard hangdog look. Actually, I can see why some women might fancy him.

Me: (Under my breath) Here we go...

Sue: He's got a cheeky face and some women might see him as a challenge. I mean, is he always this scruffy?

I'll spare you the rest, but according to Sue I am marginally more fanciable than William Hartnell, Jon Pertwee and Colin Baker. So that's a relief.

Sue: Why is the Doctor referring to himself in the third person? I bet the fans were livid when they saw this. The production team aren't exactly going out of their way to reassure the audience, are they? In fact, they're

THE POWER OF THE DALEKS

doing the exact opposite.

The TARDIS has arrived on the planet Vulcan.

Sue: Vulcan? Isn't that a Star Trek thing?

Me: It's a coincidence.

Sue: So who mentioned it first? *Doctor Who* or *Star Trek*?Me: I have no idea. Like I said, it's just a coincidence.Sue: I was hoping *Doctor Who* beat *Star Trek* to it.

Me: I'm too busy watching *The Power of the Daleks* to check.

Sue: Look at the size of the Doctor's hat! Talk about short-man syndrome!

Me: It's a stovepipe.

Sue: It looks like a traffic cone.

The Doctor stumbles across a murder scene, and when he picks up the victim's identity badge, he's mistaken for an Earth examiner who's been sent to Vulcan to check on a mining colony.

Sue: That reminds me – our external examiner is arriving on Thursday.

We should get our marking samples together after this.

Me: You're very easily distracted when it comes to the recons, aren't you?

As the Doctor contemplates his next move, he pulls out his recorder.

Sue: Please tell me the Doctor's recorder doesn't become a regular feature. It's wearing a bit thin already. This Doctor is much more irritating than William Hartnell ever was. Is he always like this? Is it an unwritten rule that you have to dislike the new Doctor for the first few episodes?

Me: Doctors can be very erratic after they go through 'the change'. But you know that already. David Tennant was so screwed up when he regenerated, he spent his first story in bed! Paul McGann couldn't remember who he was for ages. And Matt Smith spat yoghurt all over the floor. Just go with it.

The colonists have recovered an alien capsule from a nearby mercury

swamp, where it has been buried for thousands of years.

Me: What do you think is inside that capsule, Sue?

Sue: I'm going to go out on a limb and say it's the Daleks. I don't know

why. Call it a crazy hunch.

Me: We never had this trouble when they used individual episode titles.

The Doctor infiltrates the capsule, and even though we know what's coming, we still get a shock when the buggers finally appear.

Sue: Ooh, they're covered in cobwebs. I didn't expect that.

And then, just as the tension becomes unbearable, Murray Gold's music punches us in the face. And it isn't only the credits that suffer – that would be heinous enough – they dubbed the wrong music over the whole scene.

Sue: Even I'm annoyed by that. **Me**: Completely. Flipping. Ruined.

Episode Two

I switch to a different YouTube recon for Episode Two, although this results in another set of problems. For some unfathomable reason, it's been cut up into four uneven chunks, which isn't a crime in itself, but the person who uploaded it has decided to edit the title sequence to the beginning of every single segment. So that's four title sequences per episode! Thank God it's the correct title sequence.

Sue: Hang on... 'David Whitaker'? I thought Terry Nation wrote all the Dalek stories?

Me: I know. Good, isn't it? We failed to notice this yesterday because we were too busy arguing about the stupid music.

Sue: Let it go, Neil.

Me: Anyway, yes, Terry Nation wasn't involved in this one. I think he was too busy trying to make it big in America. So there's no foot-rub for you

THE POWER OF THE DAI EKS

tonight, I'm afraid.

Sue: Typical.

My wife still can't get her head around this new Doctor.

Sue: If I have one criticism of Patrick Troughton, it's that I can't make him out. I can recognise all the others just fine – even the new characters – but Troughton seems to be mumbling and fading into the background. The trouble is, I only have his voice to go on, so it's irritating. Oh, hang on, he's getting quite angry now.

As the Doctor rails against the Daleks, Troughton stumbles over his lines.

Sue: Bloody hell, I thought we'd seen the back of this.

But he recovers superbly.

Sue: Okay, fair enough.

When Lesterson experiments on a dormant Dalek, his feckless assistant is accidentally exterminated in the process. Bizarrely, Lesterson assumes that his friend must have been stunned, and he doesn't bother checking for a pulse.

Sue: This guy is an idiot. I'm counting down the minutes until he's exterminated himself.

Meanwhile, the Doctor decides to probe some fruit.

Sue: I can imagine Matt Smith listening to an orange like that. It's a very Doctor-ish thing to do. I really like Ben, too. He always wants to nick-off back to the TARDIS, and I like that in a companion because it's realistic.

When faced with a resurrected Dalek, the Doctor reacts with fear and loathing.

Sue: That's interesting. I expected the Doctor to stand up to them straight away. Hartnell's Doctor would. Is it because this Doctor is too fucked-up to take them on at the moment? I have to say, I'm not entirely convinced by him yet.

As the Doctor begs Lesterson to switch it off, the Dalek finally breaks its silence: "I am your servant."

Sue: That was brilliant. That's got to be the best cliffhanger so far.

Me: And the correct music too, thank God.

Episode Three

The Doctor is mortified when the Dalek starts behaving like an altruistic slave. Sue, on the other hand, is a lot more forgiving.

Sue: Maybe the Doctor is wrong. Maybe these Daleks are nice Daleks.

Me: What?

Sue: Maybe they're nice Daleks. You can't tar a whole race with one brush.

Me: We're talking about the Daleks, Sue, the most evil creatures ever

invented.

Sue: Yeah, sure, but that implies that every Dalek is inherently evil, no matter what it does. Doesn't that make the Doctor a bit... racist?

It's only when the Daleks start chatting amongst themselves and reveal their plans for conquering the colony that Sue finally admits defeat and changes her mind.

Sue: Okay, I take it back. Kill the bastards.

Sue's sympathy quickly shifts to Polly.

Sue: She's lovely, and she's played by a very good actress, too, but the programme isn't very nice to her. She's either making the coffee, offering to tidy up, or she's a damsel in distress. Even the Doctor doesn't pay her

THE POWER OF THE DAI EKS

any attention. In fact, this Doctor can be very nasty when he wants to be.

Having said that, Sue admits that this is the first time Patrick Troughton has acted anything like the Doctor, or at least a version of the Doctor she recognises. The off-hand remarks, the sly humour, the obscure flights of fancy, they all feel increasingly Doctorish to her.

Sue: I've just remembered something important: Patrick Troughton looks like a bloke I used to know called ■■■■■ – but you probably shouldn't print that. One day, he woke up in his car and he didn't know who he was. He couldn't remember his wife, his kids, or his address. Nothing. Total amnesia. I think he went to Canada.

Me: That sounds like Paul McGann's Doctor.

Sue: No, he definitely looked like Patrick Troughton.

As the story unfolds, Sue informs me that the sets are extremely good, the supporting actors are very believable, and the plot is a cut above the rest.

Sue: At least they're doing something different with the Daleks. They're much more interesting when they're cunning and spiteful.

However, their cunning suddenly takes a back seat when they unite to chant, "We will get our power!" at the top of their metallic lungs. They just can't help themselves.

Sue: They shouldn't have given themselves away like that. They had Lesterson eating out of their suckers a minute ago. They've completely blown it, now.

Me: But are they giving themselves away? You could interpret that scene as several microwave ovens all beeping at once.

Sue: Look, if this bloke still trusts them after all that chanting, he's an even bigger idiot than I thought.

Episode Four

Sue didn't say very much during this episode (which is a relief because I've exceeded 2,000 words already), although she did raise an eyebrow when she discovered that the Daleks are reproducing themselves.

Sue: Please tell me they aren't having sex with each other back at the capsule.

Incredibly, the Daleks are still given the run of the place, even though their masks are starting to slip.

Sue: I like the way the Daleks can hardly bring themselves to say, "I obey" to the humans any more. "I am your servant" is becoming increasingly sarcastic, too. This would be funny if it wasn't so sick.

The final scene, where the Daleks assemble an army on an industrial scale – "Like an evil Nissan" – is breathtaking in its scope.

Sue: I bet that looked great. I really wish we could have seen that.

Episode Five

The Doctor spends a large proportion of this episode locked in a cell, which he eventually escapes from by using a wet finger. (Trust me, it's less exciting than it sounds.)

Sue: This version of the Doctor is very resourceful and tenacious. He definitely seems to be settling down. He's almost the Doctor now. However – and I can't believe I'm going to say this – I still miss William Hartnell.

She's even beginning to feel sorry for Lesterson.

Sue: I thought he'd be the Daleks' first victim. Now that he's running

THE POWER OF THE DAI EKS

around like a madman, desperately trying to stop what he's started, he's gained my sympathy. And he's played by a very good actor, which helps.

The scene where the Daleks congregate for a quick megalomaniacal rant still survives in the archives. It's a fantastic cliffhanger.

Sue: The Daleks are an excitable bunch, aren't they? The direction is pretty good, though, even if they are going round and round in a big circle. I bet the kids must have loved this.

As the credits roll, Sue sighs.

Sue: I know I'd like this so much more if I could actually see it. I don't want to sound like a stuck record, but all these recons are wearing me out. Even when we get a really good one, they still take twice as much energy and concentration to watch. It's a shame. This script is one of the best so far – it's funny and scary – but I'm beginning to feel frustrated now.

Episode Six

Sue: Do you want to name-drop before we start this episode?

Me: Do you think we should?

Sue: Yeah. Somebody might find it interesting.

Me: If you say so.

To cut a very long story short, Sue sat next to the person who wrote the linking narration for the BBC's audio release of The Power of the Daleks at a wedding in 2009. Her name was Sue as well.

Sue: And very nice she was too.

With that revelation safely out of the way, we dive into the final episode, where large swathes of the action are seen from the Daleks' point of view ("I haven't seen this many periscopes since we watched Das Boot"). And then, when all hell breaks loose, it's difficult to have that much sympathy for the

humans, because they brought this on themselves, frankly.

Sue: I really like Janley. She's a kick-ass cross between Emma Peel and Patty Hearst. I really hope she becomes a companion.

Less than a minute later, Janley is killed by a Dalek.

Sue: Oh.

When Lesterson starts behaving like a Dalek himself, the episode flirts with macabre genius. He pleads with the Daleks for mercy – he gave them life, after all. They acknowledge the debt, and then kill him anyway.

Sue: Bunch of cunts!

The Daleks slaughter the colonists.

Sue: This is grim. Come on, Doctor, pull your finger out!

The Doctor obliges – by accident or design, it's not entirely clear – but the Daleks' power supply overloads and the bastards are blown to bits.

Sue: Wow. I bet that looked great. Oh, it does look great!

Thank heavens for surviving clips.

The Doctor decides to leg it before the colonists can send him a bill for the damage he's caused, and Ben is royally pissed off when nobody bothers to thank them.

Sue: Poor Ben. Hang on a minute... He did fuck all!

THE POWER OF THE DALEKS

The Score

Sue: Well, that was definitely the best Dalek story so far.

Me: You gave The Dalek Invasion of Earth seven out of 10. Not that I'm

trying to lead you or anything.

Sue: Did I? Well in that case I'll have to give this:

8/10

Sue: I want to make it perfectly clear that I'm giving it eight out of 10 for the story. I'm still not convinced by this Doctor fella yet.

Me: Really? I thought you'd take to Patrick Troughton straight away. I can't believe you're actually pining for William Hartnell.

Sue: At least I could see William Hartnell move! Maybe we should skip to a story that exists, so I can see how he's playing the role. I need to see how he commands the screen before I can form an opinion of him. It was a bloody good story, though.

COMMENT: "Troughton's official height was five-foot nine inches, which makes him an inch taller than William Hartnell (and Paul McGann). Odd, isn't it?" – Matt Sharp

NOTES: If you think name-dropping the person who wrote the linking narration for the BBC audio release of *The Power of the Daleks* was impressive, then hold onto your stovepipe hats, because while we were watching this story, we learnt that Steven '*Coupling*' Moffat was reading our blog. And not only that, he said he was enjoying it too. He even told us that he'd asked his wife (whoever she is) to watch *Genesis of the Daleks* with him. Unfortunately, the attempt ended in disaster (he refused to elaborate).

The recon with the egregious music was removed from *YouTube* for violating copyright. I had absolutely nothing to do with it, I swear.

* THE HIGHLANDERS BLOGGED: 21 June 2011

Episode 1

Sue recognises Frazer Hines immediately. Well, I say recognise.

Sue: It's whatshisface from *Emmerdale Farm*. He definitely becomes a companion. Don't ask me why, but I know that for a fact. Does that mean Ben gets himself killed? That wouldn't be very nice.

The Doctor is still sporting a stovepipe hat.

Sue: Why doesn't Ben or Polly tell him that it looks like a dunce's hat?

Later, when the Doctor is presented with an opportunity to swap for a Tam o' Shanter, Sue practically begs him to take it. Because anything would be an improvement on the chimney that's perched on his head.

Sue: This Doctor has a hat fetish.

Me: It could be worse, he could be wearing a fez.

Sue: Oh yeah, now that you mention it, I can see a bit of Patrick

Troughton in Matt Smith. And there's the bow tie, of course. Do you think Matt Smith watched any Patrick Troughton stories before he played the part? And did he sit through any recons?

Me: Of course he did. Everyone who auditioned for the role had to watch at least one recon. I believe Chiwetel Ejiofor was a big fan of *Mission to the Unknown*.

Thanks to some nervous Australian censors, we're treated to some surviving footage, which means we actually get to see Patrick Troughton's feet move for two – infinitely fascinating – seconds.

Sue: What an odd thing to cut. It was okay to show him with a noose around his neck, but they couldn't show him standing on a bench?

THE HIGHI ANDERS

Australians can be very strange sometimes.

Sue is convinced that Kate Bush is playing Kirsty, even though I've told her it's Hannah Gordon, and when Frazer Hines' narration mentions windy moors, there's simply no shifting her.

Sue: Didn't Kate Bush write for *Doctor Who*? I'm sure you told me that

once.

Me: Yes. Yes, she did.

Sue: I look forward to it. Oh, wait, now that I can see a better image of

her, I recognise her now. She isn't Kate Bush.

Me: I know! It's Hannah Gordon! **Sue**: Wasn't she in *Crossroads*?

I give up.

Sue: I still can't get a handle on Patrick Troughton. I'm sorry, Neil, but he

sounds drunk to me. He's a mess!

Me: He isn't the Doctor yet. This is another atypical performance.

The atypicality is ramped up another notch when the Doctor suddenly launches into a German accent.

Sue: He sounds like Peter Sellers in that film where they fight in the war room.

Thankfully, Sue didn't pick up on the reference to Doktor Von Wer, otherwise we would have ended up having a "Doktor comma Von Wer" debate, and nobody wants that.

Sue: I enjoyed that. I can handle the recons when the stories are rooted in reality. Now if only the Doctor was.

Episode 2

Sue: One thing I've noticed about this story so far is the lack of science fiction in it.

Me: That's nothing new. We've seen lots of historicals.

Sue: Yes, but William Hartnell's Doctor always felt alien to me. He stood out like a sore thumb. He was the science fiction element in the story. Troughton blends into the background a lot more. He's just another character in the story. Does that make any sense?

Me: A bit.

At least Polly is trying to be proactive.

Sue: She's got a cheek, moaning about being too girly, given that all she ever does is make coffee and scream. She's acting like a completely different character all of a sudden. Not that I'm complaining.

But the highlight of the episode has to be the delightful moment when the Doctor locks a solicitor in a cupboard.

Sue: Troughton has proved to me that he can do comedy, but he's the total opposite of William Hartnell. Hartnell was serious with flashes of comedy; Troughton is comedic with flashes of seriousness. It's a massive departure, and I don't know if I like it or not.

At least Sue likes this episode's wood.

Sue: I know some people will laugh at me for saying this, but the carpentry is fantastic. I'm deadly serious. The BBC had some great carpenters. Has anyone made a documentary about the carpentry in *Doctor Who*? They haven't? They should. If I could go back in time and live my life all over again, I'd be a carpenter for the BBC.

Me: Just think, you could have erected Paradise Towers.

THE HIGHI ANDERS

Episode 3

It's Father's Day today and Nicol gave me a lovely card. It was homemade (always the best kind), and it featured the TARDIS exterior on the outside and a photo of me posing next to the 10th Doctor's console at the Doctor Who Experience on the inside.

Nicol: Sorry about the mistake. **Me**: What mistake? It's perfect, Nic.

Nicol: It's Matt Smith's TARDIS on the outside and David Tennant's

TARDIS on the inside. I know it's not quite right.

Sue: For fuck's sake, Neil. It's bad enough that you've dragged me into this

world of yours, you can't drag Nicol in as well.

Me: Blame her boyfriend. He's making her watch the Matt Smith episodes.

I have nothing to do with this.

Nicol: Given that it's Father's Day, do you want me to watch *Doctor Who*

with you tonight? **Me**: It's a recon.

Nicol: I've just remembered that I have to revise for an exam.

Me: But your exams are over.

Nicol: Then I'll revise for my re-sits, just in case.

Sue immediately becomes fixated on two things – the Doctor's transvestism and his decision to brandish a gun.

Sue: The Doctor doesn't usually use a gun, does he? **Me**: Very rarely. This is a bit out of character for him.

Sue: I suppose he's managed to subvert it by dressing as a lady. Do you think Monty Python were inspired by this? He looks like Brian's mum.

Meanwhile, Ben and Jamie are being held captive on a pirate ship, and the episode ends with Ben being thrown overboard.

Me: That's it. Ben's dead. **Sue**: Oh no he isn't.

Me: You said it yourself, Sue – if Jamie joins the crew, Ben has to leave.

Sue: No way... But that's horrible!

Look, it's the only pleasure I get from watching this drivel. Give me a break.

Sue: At least he died a sailor's death. It's what he would have wanted.

Episode 4

If there was ever a moment when the experiment threatened to derail itself – or at least have its parameters fundamentally changed – then this is it. I've got recon fatigue (this will be our 10th in a row), and I'm beginning to struggle. Just thinking about spending another evening watching yet another reconstruction depresses me. It hangs over me like a cloud all day. In fact, I seriously consider throwing in the towel. I'm not only flirting with failure, I've invited her back to my place for coffee.

Me: It's been suggested that we skip ahead to a surviving story, so you can get a proper feel for Patrick Troughton.

Sue: I suggested that last week and you dismissed the idea out of hand.

How many recons are left until Troughton moves?

Me: Two, not including the one we're about to watch.

Sue: That's not so bad. I can last until then.

Me: Or we could just skip the recons entirely.

Sue: Are you serious?

Me: I didn't plan on showing you all the recons – maybe one or two, just to give you a flavour. The original plan was to read out a synopsis for the missing episodes. We didn't watch *Marco Polo* in seven parts and nobody had a problem with that. (*Note: everybody had a problem with that - see* Volume 1). Even Steven Moffat can't be arsed to sit through *The Power of the Daleks*.

Sue: Well, if Steven Moffat can't be bothered, maybe we should skip them, after all.

Our daughter has the last word.

THE HIGHI ANDERS

Nicol: You can't give up now. It's like climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, Neil. You can do it the hard way, or you can do it the easy way. You know, with the comfy beds and the ice-cold bottles of coke. You'd still get to the top, but you wouldn't feel the same sense of achievement.

Me: This is nothing like climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, Nic. This is much, much worse

Sue: I vote that we carry on. We'll only regret it if we stop.

Me: Okay, we'll carry on. But let's spice things up a bit. Let's watch the last part as an animated reconstruction!

I manage to stomach 64 seconds before I have to switch it off.

Me: I'm sorry but I can't watch 25 minutes of that. It's *Captain Pugwash* meets *Waiting For Godot*. No disrespect to the fan who made it, but I'd rather chew my own leg off than watch the whole thing.

I revert to a tried and tested Loose Canon recon for the final episode.

Sue: Ben *isn't* dead, you git! I knew you were winding me up.

Me: I know this is all about you, Sue, but I have to say that this is the worst story I've sat through so far. At least *The Celestial Toymaker* was interesting. This is irritating.

Sue: In what way is it irritating?

Me: Do I have to spell it out to you? We've got the Doctor playing 'the Doktor' with a comedy German accent, and he's embroiled in a scenery-eating contest with a pantomime "Oooh-arrr!" pirate. It's doing my head in.

Sue: It's definitely odd, but that's Doctor Who for you.

The Highlanders concludes with a massive battle on a ship. Or if you're watching the recon, with the sound of men huffing and puffing for several minutes.

Sue: Jamie didn't do very much. I'm surprised he didn't play a more active role. And I bet there's a love triangle between Jamie, Polly and Ben later

on. It'll end in tears, you mark my words.

Me: I never knew *The Highlanders* was like that. I always thought it was a story about the Scots fighting the Redcoats, with plenty of sword-fighting and people hiding in caves. I didn't expect a bloody pirate adventure! I wouldn't mind, but we had one of those a couple of weeks ago. I've got pirate fatigue coupled with recon fatigue and I don't know if I can take much more.

Sue: Don't worry, it's finished now. I'm sure the next one will be a lot better.

The Score

Sue: It was all right. Unlike you, I didn't have a problem with it. I'm sure I would have gotten more out of it if it existed, but I've seen worse. And I like the historical ones. Plus it's a recon, so you have to give it the benefit of the doubt.

5/10

COMMENT: "Neil, if you don't mind me asking, are you a cup half full type of guy?" – Alisaunder

NOTES: Kate Bush wrote *Kinda*; I'm not entirely sure about *Snakedance*. After we watched *The Highlanders*, we both appeared on BBC Radio Tees to discuss our crazy experiment with our friend, DJ and fellow author, Bob Fischer (I think the band he'd booked that night must have pulled out at the last-minute). You can listen to the whole thing on our blog, but here's a short extract to whet your appetite:

Bob: Did you see any (*Doctor Who*) when you were a kid?

Sue: I must have seen it at some point because I remember having a Dalek

outfit.

Bob: Right! Hang on... **Me**: This is news to me!

Sue: I remember it being red and plastic – like PVC – and it came in a

THE HIGHLANDERS

box. It wasn't the sort of Dalek costume Neil would have liked me to wear, obviously. It was one my mam had bought me for Christmas. Actually, I don't know if it was for me, or whether it was for my brother. I can't remember. I just remember it being there.

Just think, if she'd refused to play with it, and kept it in its box, we could have retired by now.

THE UNDERWATER MENACE

BLOGGED: 24 June 2011

Episode 1

When the TARDIS arrives on a beach, Polly thinks she recognises the place.

Sue: Not Cornwall again! It's always fucking Cornwall! **Me**: It's Mexico, actually. But it's an easy mistake to make.

It isn't long before our heroes find themselves in trouble. A platform they are standing on is actually a lift, and as they hurtle beneath the sea, they all succumb to the bends.

Sue: That's interesting. Ben asked Polly to get them out of there. He didn't ask the Doctor, and he's standing right next to him. I don't blame Ben, though. This Doctor is useless.

When they regain consciousness, Polly finds some pottery with the 1968 Mexico Olympiad logo emblazoned on it, and when our heroes are suddenly confronted by people dressed in clamshells and seaweed, Sue thinks she's figured everything out:

Sue: Are they rehearsing for an Olympic Opening Ceremony?

Their number includes a high priest with a dead fish on his head.

Sue: I really hope the Doctor doesn't get a hat like that.

Our heroes are strapped to some slabs and lowered toward a mad man's pet sharks.

Sue: Is this a Bond movie now? **Me**: *You Only Live 13 Times*.

THE UNDERWATER MENACE

When the Doctor signs his name 'Dr W', he reignites an old debate.

Sue: You can't argue with that. That settles it, his name is Doctor Who.

You'll just have to accept it, love.

Me: Unless his name begins with a W.

Sue: Like Doctor Wibbly-Wobbly-Timey-Wimey, you mean? Would that make you feel better? And why does it matter, anyway? I call him Doctor

Who all the time.

Me: Yeah, and every time you do, part of me dies.

The TARDIS crew are on the lost continent of Atlantis (which is miles away from Cornwall).

Sue: Atlantis. Of course it's fucking Atlantis. Where else could they possibly be in this fucked-up programme? Okay, so it's James Bond on Atlantis. Got it. Fine.

The episode ends with some mad scientists strapping Polly to a table so they can turn her into a fish.

Sue: I don't know what Polly is complaining about. She could stick around and enter the 1972 Olympics. Mark Spitz would have nothing on her.

Episode 2

Me: Blimey. Just how short is Polly's surgical gown?

Sue: Trust you to notice that, love.

The hot topic of conversation during this episode is Professor Zaroff. Obviously.

Sue: He reminds me of the mad scientist in that show you love, Neil.

What's it called? *Comedy Theater 2000?* **Me**: *Mystery Science Theater 3000.*

Sue: That's it. He reminds me of the scientist in that. He's an over-the-top

pantomime villain.

Me: Believe it or not, the guy who's playing him is a very fine actor. **Sue**: Oh, I don't doubt it. He's obviously having a laugh with the part. And who can blame him? How else could you possibly play it? His plan is completely pointless. There's no reason for him to do any of this, he just wants to blow up the world. There's no benefit or motive *at all*.

Me: He's insane.

Sue: It's lazy. I like him, though. He's committed. He's definitely the funniest villain in the series so far.

Me: Have you warmed to Patrick Troughton yet? He's basically playing his version of the Doctor now. Well, more or less.

Sue: He reminds me of Ken Dodd in some of these photos. The music doesn't help, either. It's atrocious. It sounds like they've let a small child loose on a Bontempi organ. This is the worst music I've heard in the series so far. Who's responsible for it?

Me: An Australian called Dudley Simpson.

Sue: Sack him. He's rubbish.

Episode 3

Finally, after 13 consecutive recons, we're treated to a bona fide episode. I never thought I'd ever hear myself say this, but thank Amdo for The Underwater Menace Episode 3.

Sue: Even though the story is still a mess, it's a thousand times easier to follow because it actually exists. I don't want to state the obvious, but even the worst story improves when you can see it. Which means all the recons I gave good scores to must have been *really* good.

The highlight of the episode for Sue is, of course, the sight of Jamie and Ben gallivanting around in tight-fitting black rubber.

Sue: They should have called this story *The Underwear Menace*. **Me**: I think the playwright Joe Orton mentioned this story in his diary.

Or was it in Salmon Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*? No, it must have been

THE UNDERWATER MENACE

Joe Orton; he fancied Jamie in his rubber suit. Or was it was Kenneth Williams?

Sue: Does Patrick Troughton ever go through a story where he doesn't play that bloody recorder? And are there any stories where he doesn't dress up at the drop of a hat (which he'll probably pick up and put on)? He's a borderline transvestite.

Me: You may want to hold onto something during the next scene. We're about to meet the Fish People.

Sue: They look like a second-rate dance troupe waiting to audition for *Britain's Got Talent*. I bet they launch into a dubstep version of *Yellow Submarine*.

A miner named Jacko attempts to turn the Fish People into striking militants. "Are you not men?" he cries.

Sue: No! We're fish, you idiot! Are you blind?

And then it happens – impossible to describe, and even more impossible to watch.

Sue: This is the lowest point in *Doctor Who* so far. Please make it stop.

Me: Is it worse than *The Web Planet*?

Sue: Yes, it's even more half-arsed than that.

Me: It's a perverse joke. You wait 13 episodes for a real episode to turn up

and you get this.

Sue: I take it all back – this would have been better as a recon.

The Fish People's rebellion has an immediate effect on Atlantis, because the food that they farm has to be consumed immediately.

Sue: Okay, let me get this straight: Zaroff has a nuclear reactor but he hasn't got a fridge?

Me: This is your first proper look at Patrick Troughton. Have you formed an opinion of him yet?

Sue: I feel a little more comfortable with him now that I've seen him.

in action. He's more animated than I expected, and he's definitely got charisma to spare. Yes, there's something about him. Sadly, the director isn't doing him any favours, so I'll have to reserve judgement until I've seen some more.

And then we reach the moment that The Underwater Menace is probably best known for. Take it away, Professor Zaroff...

Sue: Wow.

It's so mesmerising, we have to watch it again. And again. And again. Nothing in the world can stop us now.

Sue: He's having a whale of a time.

Me: I'm glad someone is.

Episode 4

Sue: I still can't believe that he didn't bring some fridge freezers with him. Still, I guess if you're planning to blow up the world, you can't think of everything. You know, I think every episode of *Doctor Who* would be improved with a Zaroff. The only thing missing is a scene where he tears his hair out and screams, "Why am I surrounded by idiots?!"

Me: There's still 20 minutes to go. I wouldn't rule it out.

Sue: I also like the way the show has kept its educational remit.

Me: What?

Sue: Jamie is from the past, so he doesn't understand what radioactivity is. Some of the children watching this programme wouldn't know what radioactivity is, either.

Me: Yeah, that's great. There's just one problem – they don't explain it to the audience. Polly says she can't be bothered!

Polly is much too busy trying to escape the rising waters of Atlantis.

Sue: It's turned into a disaster movie now.

THE UNDERWATER MENACE

Me: Oh, this is definitely a disaster, Sue.

Sue: Why is Polly wearing a fireplace corbel on her head?

Me: I don't even know what that means.

Thanks to those Aussie wimps, we see Professor Zaroff drown. Well, I say drown

Sue: Zaroff has hours left before the water rises above his head. Maybe he was bored and decided to commit suicide.

The world is saved, and the Doctor and his companions leave the Atlantans to rebuild their completely fucked-up society.

Sue: Why are they rebuilding Atlantis anyway? Why don't they just move to the surface? They've got fridges up there. And while they may have missed the 1968 Olympics, Mexico has the World Cup in 1970.

The Score

Sue: That was bonkers. And a little bit shit.

2/10

Sue: Zaroff was excellent, though. I could have watched him all day. I don't think he's dead, either. I think he was just wetting his hair a bit. He should definitely return in the new series. The League of Gentlemen could play him.

Me: What, all of them?

COMMENT: "I think it's about time *Doctor Who* offered a fourth explanation for the destruction of Atlantis." – Steve O'Brien

NOTES: As luck would have it, not long after we blogged this story, some idiot found Episode 2 of *The Underwater Menace* in an old man's shed. Why he couldn't have kept his mouth shut and left it there is beyond me. I

mean, it's not as if the BBC will ever release it on DVD or anything. Anyway, this unexpected recovery meant we had to blog the whole thing again, for the sake of completism, and you can see if the extra episode makes any difference to Sue's score in the *Extras* section of this book.



BLOGGED: 3 July 2011

Episode 1

Sue: I bet the Moon was very topical when this first went out.

Me: Just a bit.

Sue: I'm not convinced by the Ronson hairdryers on their backs. And

their helmets are steaming up something rotten.

When a base commander tells us that we're on the Moon in the year 2070, Sue sighs.

Sue: I realise that the Doctor can't control the TARDIS at this point, but what I don't understand is why he doesn't know when and where he is. That seems like a pretty fundamental piece of equipment to have on a time and space machine, don't you think? A tiny display with the date and a little map that says, 'You are here'. How hard could that be? Even my iPhone can do that.

Me: The TARDIS gains that ability eventually.

Sue: The Doctor should install that feature immediately. It's ridiculous when he blunders around without the basic facts. No wonder he always ends up in trouble.

It doesn't take Sue long to realise that the Moonbase is an international concern.

Sue: That's the worst French accent I've ever heard.

Me: That's André Maranne. He's French.

Sue: Are you sure? He sounds like he's trying to impersonate Raymond

Blanc.

Me: And you have the temerity to accuse the 1960s episodes of being

racist.

A mysterious plague has swept through the base (infecting Jamie in the

process), and it's this, and the isolated location, that reminds Sue of something vaguely significant.

Sue: It's The Thing.

Me: You're referring to the Howard Hawkes original, of course.

Sue: Yeah, obviously. If that's the one where the guy's head falls on the

floor and turns into a giant spider.

When she isn't comparing The Moonbase to The Thing, she's comparing it to a gay sauna.

Sue: Everyone on this base is very camp. Even the ones who *aren't* wearing cravats and shower caps.

And then Sue's saviour turns up.

Sue: Ah, someone called Bob. I like a good Bob. You can't go wrong with a good Bob, and this Bob looks like a proper Bob. I bet he comes from England. Birmingham, probably.

Me: He's from New Zealand, I think.

Sue: Close enough.

Sue recognises the Cybermen from the shape of their shadows, which blows the surprise cliffhanger out of the water. But the most remarkable moment by far occurs when Polly gets the screaming ab-dabs as she witnesses a door closing.

Sue: Get a grip, pet.

And then, as the still images flicker to life once again signalling the arrival of another cliffhanger, a Cyberman shows its radically redesigned face.

Sue: I prefer the originals.

THE MOONBASE

Episode 2

Sue: How did Polly recognise that Cyberman? It doesn't look anything like the ones she met.

Me: You recognised the Cybermen just fine yesterday, and you only needed a shadow to do it.

Sue: Yeah, but I've seen plenty of Cybermen in my lifetime. I'm not 10 years old, you know. And do I have to mention the little Cybermen dolls on your bookshelf again?

Me: They aren't dolls.

Sue: Whatever.

Sue isn't a fan of the Doctor's "some corners of the universe" speech.

Sue: He's all talk, this Doctor. It's easy to make a speech like that, but when is he actually going to do something?

Me: You could argue that this is the moment when the Doctor finally becomes the Doctor.

While I labour this point, the Doctor is up to his neck in test tubes as he tries to find a cure for the virus.

Sue: So the Doctor becomes the Doctor when he's pretending to be a

doctor. That's interesting.

Me: How do you feel about Patrick Troughton now?

Sue: He's all right, I suppose.

Me: Just all right?

Sue: He's not doing it for me yet. I wouldn't want to travel with him, that's

for sure. He's very passive-aggressive.

Jamie is still out for the count in the medical bay.

Sue: He looks like he's strung out on nicotine patches. Perhaps the pipe

he's calling for is stuffed with tobacco?

Me: What have the Cybermen got against Jamie? That's the second time

one of them has passed up an opportunity to abduct him.

Sue: The picky bastards.

The Doctor asks Polly to put the kettle on. Again. It's like the 1967 version of 'Bad Wolf'.

Sue: The sexist pig. And just when I was beginning to like him.

When a Cyberman leaps off a table to confront our heroes, Sue has her eyes on other things.

Sue: Ooh, there was some major furniture wobble there. Still, that's what you get when you lie on a table that's designed for pasting wallpaper. There's no stability.

INTERLUDE

And then our experiment came to a premature end.

It had nothing to do with Morris Barry, Kit Pedler, or even the threat of another recon. No, it pivoted around an animated discussion about how loudly a husband can raise his voice when he's trying to warn his lovely wife that if she doesn't apply the brakes on her car immediately, they will hit another vehicle and almost certainly die. It's a discussion that went on for far longer than was strictly necessary and many things were said, including the following:

Sue: And you can call that stupid blog of yours *Adventures with the Ex-Wife in Space*!

Me: Does that mean if I divorce you, you'll still carry on with it?

Sue: Don't try to be clever, Neil.

I almost said "Clever, clever, clever" at this point, but we haven't reached that point in the story yet, and it didn't feel appropriate. In fact, things were so bad, I even drafted a final, melodramatic, "It's all over, folks" epilogue for the blog, but common sense prevailed in the end, and we kissed and made-

THE MOONBASE

up before I could post it.

Episode 3

Sue: I don't like the Cybermen's new voices.

Me: That's a shame. They're probably my favourite of all the Cybermen

voices.

Sue: It's a Dalek rip-off. The sing-song lot were much more frightening. And why do they have accordions strapped to their chests? Watch out,

they could break into a polka at any moment.

Just as she's putting the Cybermen down, they zap Bob in the chest.

Sue: Noooo! They killed Bob! Brave, burly Bob!

She's relieved when she learns Bob isn't dead after all – he has been taken away to be 'converted' ("I know how he feels"). Cue some barely comprehensible exposition where the Cybermen lay out their plans for destroying planet Earth with bad weather.

Sue: This Cyberman is very sarcastic with his "clever, clever, clever" routine. But doesn't that mean he has emotions? That doesn't make any sense, Neil.

Meanwhile, Polly, Ben and Jamie hatch a plan to defeat them.

Sue: At least Polly is trying to find a solution, and it makes a change from making the bloody coffee. It's a bit like *Blue Peter* for terrorists, this scene.

When Jamie and Ben vie for the role of alpha male, you can cut through the testosterone with a knife.

Sue: I knew there was a love triangle brewing. Polly secretly loves the fact that these two want to fight over her. She won't sleep a wink tonight.

Despite their McGuyver-like ingenuity, Sue is less than impressed with their chosen delivery system for Polly's deadly cocktail. It looks like they're armed with Mr Muscle spray-cans.

Me: I'm sure they converted some fire extinguishers in the novelisation. **Sue**: If anyone asks, they should say they're there to clean the windows. And there are a lot of windows to clean.

The plucky youngsters emerge triumphant when the Cybermen melt away to nothing.

Sue: The Cybermen are a bit crap, aren't they? How can you be a supervillain when you're allergic to nail polish remover? It's pathetic.

Episode 4

Sue: You can see the Moon's floor bouncing up and down as they walk across it. Bless 'em.

Me: It's epic. It's Cybermen marching across the surface of the Moon.

Does it get any more iconic than this?

Sue: I'm sure the kids enjoyed it. I definitely didn't see this when it went out, or I'm sure I would have remembered it.

Just when we think the enemy is contained outside the base, a cyber-slave named Evans threatens to overturn it from within.

Me: His quiff makes David Tennant look like Bobby Charlton.

Sue: It's Sean Penn with varicose veins.

Despite looking like a berk, Evil-Evans manages to bounce a rescue ship into the sun. It will take its crew over a week to die.

Sue: This Doctor is far too dithery for me. He just let a spaceship full of people die. And it isn't just him – the whole room is made of windows and nobody saw a thing. The base's peripheral vision is shocking.

THE MOONBASE

Me: Could you imagine any other Doctor in this story?

Sue: I suppose so. But it would be a lot shorter. They would have done

something by now.

Me: Some people argue that this story sets the template for the entire

series. It's called the 'Base Under Siege' formula.

Sue: You mean they're all going to be like this from now on? Really? Oh

no.

When the Moonbase's hull is breached, the crew try to plug the gap with some loose fabric, but it doesn't work. Strange, that.

Sue: Stick Bob in there! He could plug it up!

A tray, which Polly was using to serve coffee on earlier, saves the day. I think it's worth pointing out here that Kit Pedler was a real scientist.

Me: I'm surprised the French bloke hasn't surrendered already.

Sue: I love the way the lead Cyberman reacts to the fact that their big gun doesn't work. It's priceless.

And then, with only a few minutes left to spare, the Doctor comes up with a cunning plan.

Sue: It's about fucking time.

The plan, such as it is, involves hanging onto a very expensive piece of equipment and hoping for the best.

Sue: The Doctor couldn't even sort this out himself – the commander had to do all the heavy lifting, and he's probably 70 years old! This Doctor is just taking the piss. The commander is the real hero.

When the Cybermen drift aimlessly away into space, Sue laughs. But it's an affectionate laugh. I think.

Back on the TARDIS, the Doctor has found the button that activates the

ship's previously unheard of 'Trailer Mode', and he gives his companions a preview of their next adventure. Polly practically wets herself with fear.

Sue: Would you really scream at a crab claw like that? It could be a normal-sized crab claw hanging off the camera for all she knows. From a rock pool in Cornwall, probably.

The Score

Sue: That was a good effort, I suppose. This Doctor still isn't doing it for me though. He needs to buck his ideas up.

6/10

Sue: Put the kettle on, love. I don't know why, but I could murder a cup of coffee.

COMMENT: "I'm glad you're not getting divorced, for the purely selfish reason that I can keep reading this blog." – Richard

THE MACRA TERROR

BLOGGED: 6 July 2011

Episode 1

Sue: Ooh, that's new.

Me: Proper *Doctor Who* titles. Finally.

Sue: He looks drunk. **Me**: He looks magnificent.

Sue: He looks like a drunk who's been arrested and had his mug shot

taken. This isn't a good look, Neil.

Me: It's an iconic title sequence.

Sue: Shame about the font.

Me: Yes, well...

Sue: It looks like Times New Roman. Is that the best font they could come up with? It looks like something they've tacked on at the end when they were in a rush.

Our heroes have arrived on a futuristic colony that's run like a holiday camp.

Sue: Going to the Med back then would have been a big deal, a real luxury. This probably looked very aspirational, especially these sun beds.

Now it looks like *The Only Way Is Essex*.

Me: It isn't that horrific yet, love.

A face on an enormous screen welcomes our heroes to the colony, but Sue isn't fooled for a second.

Sue: So this is basically *1984* meets *Hi-de-Hi!* Am I close? **Me**: Do you recognise the voice narrating this recon?

Sue: No. It doesn't sound like Peter Purves, I know that much.

Me: It's Colin Baker.

Sue: Is it? Hang on a minute, so why is he saying "the Doctor did this" and "the Doctor did that"? Shouldn't he say, "I did this" and "I did that"?

They missed a trick there.

The Doctor defies the colony's strict curfew rules to go searching for giant insects.

Sue: What am I supposed to be looking at here?

Me: It's a Macra.

Sue: Is that supposed to mean something to me?

Me: You've seen the Macra before. In a David Tennant episode. The one

with the talking cats and the giant crabs. **Sue**: How can you remember this stuff?

Me: How can you forget this stuff? The episode featured talking cats and

giant crabs! How much more memorable does it have to be?

Sue: How do we know it's a giant crab? I've tried squinting at it and I still can't make it out. There's no sense of scale. It could be six feet tall or six inches. I don't know if that's the recon's fault or the director's. It was either terrifying or ludicrous. I honestly can't tell.

Episode 2

Sue: This bloke is very good. He's definitely been in stuff before.

Me: Peter Jeffrey? I believe the producer offered him the role of the

Second Doctor but he turned it down.

Sue: He'd have been good. He'd have been less scruffy for a start.

Ben, Jamie and Polly head for bed, but as they sleep, a hypnotic voice urges them to conform.

Colin Baker: Jamie was tossing restlessly...

Sue: Was he, Colin? Now there's a recon I'd like to see.

Me: You'll have to form an orderly queue behind Joe Orton. **Sue**: This reminds me of *The Prisoner*. The happy façade, the

brainwashing, the annoying PA announcements.

Me: They both aired the same year.

Sue: Actually, I'm starting to drift off myself...

THE MACRA TERROR

The Doctor wakes Polly before her conditioning can take hold. And then he notices a sweet smell in the air.

Sue: Have they been pumping marijuana into that room? Now that's a

holiday camp I'd like to visit.

Me: I'm surprised you haven't mentioned Polly's hair yet.

Sue: You sexist pig!

Me: People need to know!

Sue: It's very Vidal Sassoon, but it doesn't really suit her. It's too severe,

and it isn't doing her any favours. Okay?

Polly and Jamie resist their conditioning (and we're not talking about hair care products here), but Ben falls for it completely.

Sue: I'm not surprised Ben has turned to the dark side. He's a young solider who's used to following orders without questioning them. And at least it gives him something interesting to do for a change.

Polly runs off in a huff, upset by Ben's new, aggressive personality, but she bumps straight into a Macra. Luckily, Ben still has the presence of mind to help her.

Colin Baker: Ben started beating the monster relentlessly...

Sue: You know, I'm sure the person who wrote Colin's narration was

taking the piss.

Episode 3

Sue: Patrick Troughton's voice is very soothing. He'd be great on the radio.

The Doctor gives himself 11 out of 10 for solving a complicated equation.

Sue: The Doctor has some great lines. It's a good script. But what the hell is that noise? Is it supposed to be background music, or a sound effect? I can't tell any more.

Me: Nothing else on television sounded anything like this back then.

Sue: I'm not I'm surprised. It's terrible. Who's responsible for it?

Me: Dudley Simpson.

Sue: *Again*? How many stories does he fuck up before they sack him?

Jamie escapes from a gas mine.

Sue: The marigolds and leather apron is a very interesting look.

Colin Baker: Jamie moved back along the shaft...

Sue: Seriously, how is Colin doing this without laughing?

The cliffhanger involves Jamie running straight into another Macra.

Sue: It's probably for the best that we can't actually see this.

Episode 4

Sue: Sometimes I amuse myself by imagining Matt Smith saying Patrick

Troughton's lines. Nine times out of 10, it's really easy to do.

Me: He's a lot more engaging than Hartnell ever was.

Sue: Yes, definitely.

Me: So you agree? Patrick Troughton is better than William Hartnell?

Sue: I'm starting to warm to him, yes.

Jamie escapes from the Macra's clutches only to stumble into something even more sinister and horrific – cheerleaders. They mistake him for an auditionee and, well, you can guess the rest.

Sue: It's turned into Glee.

Me: I bet Frazer Hines is pleased this episode doesn't exist.

Sue: The producers love to humiliate the male companions. First Peter

Purves, and now this. Ben must be shitting himself.

Thankfully, Ben overcomes his conditioning and saves the day, blowing the Macra to smithereens in the process.

THE MACRA TERROR

Sue: I knew he'd come good in the end. He's like Billy Mitchell (if Billy Mitchell was dressed as a dental technician), and he's got a heart of gold. That's definitely Ben's best story so far.

The colony, now freed from tyranny, holds a joyous celebration. The Doctor joins in, wearing a majorette's helmet.

Sue: That's his worst yet. Even Matt Smith wouldn't wear a hat like that.

Before the Doctor can be appointed as their new leader, our heroes dance their way out of the colony.

Sue: I wish I'd seen that. What a shame.

The Score

Sue: I enjoyed that. The Doctor is beginning to take control, and I like it. The script was pretty good, too.

7/10

Sue: I'm not convinced it would have been better if it existed. I don't think they could have pulled the crabs off.

Me: You're starting to sound like Colin Baker.

COMMENT: "Thank you for all the new euphemisms for masturbation. I particularly like 'beating the monster relentlessly'. I also hope that Dudley fingering his organ doesn't become too unbearable." – John Peacock

NOTES: The new font used in the title sequence is Eurostile. And if you're reading the paperback edition of this book, then look up at Sue's score or the teeny text at the top of the page. Yep, Eurostile. That's those *Kickstarter* £s working hard for you.

THE FACELESS ONES

BLOGGED: 15 July 2011

Episode 1

Sue: That isn't something you see on Doctor Who every day – stock

footage of a plane.

Neil: That isn't stock footage, Sue.

As soon as our heroes step out of the TARDIS, they are faced with imminent danger. In fact, it happens so fast, Ben and Polly are running for their lives before they can utter a single word of dialogue.

Sue: What are they running from?

Me: I think that plane is supposed to be heading straight for them. **Sue**: If they did this today, the wheels would miss the TARDIS by a few inches, instead of it looking like the plane is landing at a completely different airport. Great idea, though.

The TARDIS crew split up.

Sue: I like the contemporary Earth-based stories. They're so much easier

to deal with.

Me: Oh look, it's Sherlock Holmes' mum.

Sue: What?

Me: It's Wanda Ventham. Benedict Cumberbatch's mum.

Sue: He'd be an excellent Doctor Who.

Jamie and the Doctor are held-up at Immigration and Customs.

Sue: Why doesn't the Doctor wave his psychic paper at the official?

Me: He hasn't got that yet.

Sue: That's a shame. This episode could have been over by now.

Polly suddenly claims that she doesn't remember her friends, but the episode

THE FACELESS ONES

ends on a far more traditional cliffhanger, as a misshapen creature is led towards a sterile medical centre.

Sue: That's the worst case of eczema I've ever seen.

And then Sue notices something important.

Sue: I've noticed something important.

Me: What's that? Sue: The credits.

Me: What about them?

Sue: The Doctor is called 'Doctor Who'. **Me**: Have you only just realised that?

Sue: Yes. And now I'm annoyed that we wasted so much time arguing about it when the answer was right there all the time. I can't believe we

didn't check the credits in the first place!

Episode 2

Sue: Is the music different all of a sudden?

Me: Yes. Do you like it?

Sue: I prefer the Matt Smith version. And why did they wait until the

second episode to use it? That's a bit slapdash.

When Jamie and the Doctor can't get through to Polly, they decide to make a run for it instead, at which point a gloriously pompous commandant calls the police.

Sue: They're looking for a scruffy drunk and a bloke in a skirt. It shouldn't be too hard to find them.

Sue's description is then repeated almost verbatim in the actual dialogue (they leave out the drunk part).

Sue: Frazer Hines' voice-over on this recon sounds like he's narrating an

episode of Come Fly With Me.

The image of Ben, Jamie and the Doctor hiding in a cramped photo booth raises a smile, and then Samantha Briggs turns up.

Sue: It's Shirley Valentine!

Me: Pauline Collins to her friends.

Sue: I love Pauline Collins. She was great in those *Upstairs*, *Downstairs* episodes that you made me watch last month. Her hat is terrible, though. It doesn't even fit her! I bet the Doctor ends up wearing it, too.

Feeling frustrated, the Doctor threatens to blow up air traffic control with a fake bomb.

Sue: You can't even make jokes about bombs in airports nowadays. You don't even have to be in the airport when you make them. It's a different world now.

The cliffhanger involves Ben finding Polly lying motionless in a box.

Sue: That's a very disturbing image. So is Polly dead? Is she leaving the series? Will Shirley Valentine be the new companion? She'll have to tone her Liverpudlian accent down if she does.

Episode 3

Me: Is the new theme music growing on you yet? **Sue**: I like the tinkly-winkly bits in the background. **Me**: It's my second favourite version of the theme music.

Sue: Do you have any idea how sexy you sound when you talk like that?

Talking of sex...

Sue: Shirley Valentine has a serious crush on Jamie. Get a room!

Me: It's 1967. The sexual revolution and all that. Samantha is probably on

THE FACELESS ONES

the pill.

Sue: She'd better be. If she joins the crew, they'll be at it like rabbits.

As the Doctor tries to reason with some very recalcitrant airport staff, Sue makes an interesting point.

Sue: Is this the first story with the Brigadier in it? Does he turn up soon?

Me: No, UNIT doesn't exist yet.

Sue: Is this where they got the idea for UNIT from? The Doctor working with authority figures to thwart an alien invasion? And where's Torchwood? They've been around since Victorian times, haven't they? And I only remember that because John Barrowman mentioned it in that American thing you made me watch last night.

Me: Funnily enough, Pauline Collins set Torchwood up in...

Sue: Stop it, Neil. My head hurts.

And then a line of dialogue sends a chill down Sue's spine.

Sue: Abducting children is a bit near the knuckle, isn't it? You couldn't get away with that today.

Me: It's okay, they're teenagers, not children. And Matt Smith's first series vaporised a playground full of kids, remember?

Sue: Oh, that's all right then.

Whenever we're presented with moving images, Sue is keen to analyse the episode's direction.

Sue: It's pretty good. That's a nice deep three-shot with Troughton eavesdropping on all the people who think he's insane. I like the fact that no one takes him seriously, even though he's clearly the smartest person in the room.

The cliffhanger goes down well too, as the odious Blade reveals to a bemused DI Crossland that the plane's passengers have disappeared.

Sue: I'm enjoying this. I don't see how they can string it out to six episodes, though.

Episode 4

Blade really is a piece of work.

Sue: Could he be any more evil? He's got a slimy David Cameron look about him.

Jamie, Samantha and the Doctor are left to die on a hanger floor as a laser beam slowly arcs towards them.

Sue: It's turned into James Bond again. Why don't the villains ever hang around to watch their victims die, just to be on the safe side? **Me**: Maybe they're squeamish.

When the Doctor starts fiddling with the Chameleons' equipment, he does so with a bog-standard screwdriver.

Sue: Hasn't the Doctor got a sonic screwdriver yet?

Me: Not yet.

Sue: He hasn't got much, has he? No psychic paper, no sonic screwdriver,

no UNIT, a faulty TARDIS, and bad hair. The poor sod.

Jamie snogs Samantha, but it's just a pretext for stealing her plane ticket.

Sue: How will Jamie get on that plane without a passport?

Me: They get out of that plot-hole by blaming it on administrative incompetence. At least somebody is thinking this stuff through, no matter how bizarre it seems.

Sue: By the way, where are Ben and Polly? Have they gone on holiday as well?

We chuckle when Troughton dismisses the capabilities of the modern fighter

THE FACELESS ONES

jet that's been sent to intercept the plane Jamie is travelling on. And we laugh even more when, instead of going straight down, the Doctor suggests the plane may have gone straight up.

Sue: *Transformers*. Aeroplanes in disguise.

Episode 5

The plane's passengers have been miniaturised and stored in a drawer.

Sue: Wow. That's a striking image. Actually, it reminds me of your *Doctor Who* doll collection.

Me: For the last time - they aren't dolls!

Sue: Okay, so let me get this straight: 50,000 teenagers are missing. How long has this been going on for? Wouldn't anybody notice this? Or care? Not counting Shirley Valentine, of course.

Me: Perhaps it's only been a fortnight and the aliens are going to bugger off before the shit hits the fan.

Sue: How can an explosion destroy your identity, anyway? And why are they storing that nurse in a cupboard? Why don't they shrink her down and pop her in a pencil case?

Despite this anomaly, Sue is still impressed with the Chameleons' crazy plan.

Sue: I suppose it makes sense for them to steal the bodies of 18-30 passengers. If they'd infiltrated Saga Holidays, they would have been completely screwed.

When DI Crossland turns out to be a Chameleon, Sue believes she's spotted a recurring theme.

Sue: *Doctor Who* likes doing stories with doubles in them. It must save them from having to pay for a large a cast.

The Doctor blags his way onto the Chameleons' satellite, but the Chameleon

version of Jamie betrays him with a voice that's had its Scottishness removed.

Sue: So you steal a person's identity, but you don't steal their voice. How does that work, exactly? Is this how they get around Shirley's accent when she joins the programme full-time? Maybe they'll interfere with her voice so she'll end up talking all proper-like. It wouldn't be the first time a companion has changed their accent.

Me: Dodo used to do it mid-sentence.

Sue: And where are Ben and Polly? This is turning into a very long holiday.

Episode 6

The Chameleons want to steal the Doctor's identity.

Sue: Who'd want the body of a scruffy drunk?

The Doctor tells Blade his double isn't safe, which means he could lose his identity at the drop of a hat.

Sue: I like how he's bluffing his way through this. It's starting to feel like proper *Doctor Who* now.

As the Doctor sabotages the Chameleons' processing machine, Sue remains fixated on his screwdriver.

Sue: So what kind of screwdriver does the Doctor use at this point? It is a

Philips? A Pozidriv? A Frearson? What? **Me**: I haven't got the foggiest idea.

Sue: And you call yourself a fan?

The Doctor's bluff becomes a genuine threat when the authorities discover some inert bodies hidden in the airport car park.

THE FACELESS ONES

Sue: Why didn't they shrink them? They could have taken the bodies to the satellite with them as hand luggage.

Me: They can only miniaturise people on the plane, I think.

Sue: You know, there's a mad logic to this, if you can be bothered to

search for it.

The Doctor continues to push Blade's buttons, reminding him that while the Director is safe, he could cease to exist at any moment.

Sue: Oh, this is very *Doctor Who* now. He's playing the bad guys off against themselves.

When Blade turns his weapon on the Director, something remarkable happens. The Doctor offers to open peaceful negotiations with the aliens.

Sue: Right, well he's definitely the Doctor now. He didn't just blow them up, and he didn't watch somebody else blow them up, either. He showed humanity and forgiveness. And that's what the Doctor is all about.

Me: Is this the point where you feel like you're watching 'real' *Doctor*

Who?

Sue: Yes. Yes, I think it is.

Sam and Jamie enjoy a farewell snog.

Sue: Hang on a minute. Shirley isn't going with them?

 $\boldsymbol{Me}\!:$ They offered to take her on as a companion, but she turned them

down.

Sue: I missed that bit. Rewind it.

Me: No, I mean the producers asked her to stay on as a companion, but

she refused.

Sue: Surely you can't be serious.

Me: I am serious. And stop calling her Shirley!

Sue: What a shame. She'd have been great. So Ben and Polly are back

instead, then.

Ben and Polly suddenly realise they've arrived on Earth the same day they left it back in The War Machines.

Sue: As if! I'm not having that. That's poor scriptwriting. It's too much of a coincidence.

When the Doctor bids farewell to Ben, he tells him to become an admiral. When he bids farewell to Polly, he tells her to look after Ben.

Sue: It's as if a totally different writer has stepped in at this point, because the script has gone from very good to very annoying. I'm surprised the Doctor didn't tell Polly to get married and have lots of babies.

Me: Will you miss Ben and Polly?

Sue: Not really. I got by without them for three episodes, so why grieve over them now?

The Score

Sue: I really enjoyed that. The plot was a bit convoluted – it could have been a lot shorter – but it was very interesting. And I finally feel like I'm watching proper *Doctor Who*.

8/10

Sue: I'm tempted to give it a 9.

Me: You can give it whatever you like.

Sue: Oh, sod it then:

9/10

COMMENT: "Our prime minister is a very nice man." – Matthew C

NOTES: For some reason, our *Upstairs*, *Downstairs* spin-off blog failed to catch on.

THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS

BLOGGED: 23 July 2011

Episode 1

As luck would have it, when this story's title appeared on-screen, Sue was momentarily distracted by our cat, Tegan (who really is a mouth on legs).

Sue: Sorry, I missed that. What's this one called?

Me: The Antiques of Death.

I think I got away with it.

Sue: This is odd. It's as if they're still hanging around the fringes of the last episode and they can't find a way out. I suppose they're getting their money's worth out of Gatwick Airport, but the Doctor must be knackered after his last adventure. He isn't Jack Bauer, you know.

Sue correctly guesses that Waterfield is a time traveller ("Forget the antique sideboards, it's his antique sideburns that give him away"), but she runs into severe trouble when he addresses his alien overlords.

Sue: I can't say I'm impressed with the monsters in this one – they look like evil Stair Masters.

Me: They aren't the aliens! That's a time machine!

Sue: Oh, I thought they were tiny robots. Bloody recons. So does this guy have a better time machine than the Doctor? It looks more reliable than his. Does that mean Waterfield is a Time Lord? Is he the Mad Monk? Has he regenerated? Who's he working for?

And then a Dalek turns up.

Sue: I didn't expect that! Oh, that *is* exciting. Hang on a minute, does this mean there were two sets of aliens running around on Earth at the same time? The Daleks and the Chameleons?

Me: Yes. And don't forget WOTAN.

Sue: What?

Me: We're in London the same day Ben and Polly joined the TARDIS crew – 20th July, 1966 – can you remember what happened on that date?

Sue: England won the World Cup? **Me**: No. What was the Doctor doing?

Sue: God knows. I haven't been taking notes.

Me: *The War Machines*! Remember? We only watched it two months ago. **Sue**: Oh yeah, the Post Office Tower and those stupid robots. So does that

mean there were two Doctors in the same city, on the same day?

Me: Yes. You thought the Daleks were involved because William Hartnell's Doctor said he could sense them (which, in retrospect, he probably did). **Sue**: Can the Doctors meet each other? If, for example, the Chameleons hadn't turned up, could Patrick Troughton have got a taxi to the Post Office Tower and helped himself out? Is that allowed? Or can you only do that for *Children in Need*? Can William Hartnell give Patrick Troughton a hand with the Daleks?

Me: It's an interesting idea...

Episode 2

The Doctor and Jamie have been kidnapped and transported back in time to a Victorian house. A maid named Mollie tells the Doctor the master will see him soon.

Sue: Ooh, the Master is behind this! **Me**: It's not *the* Master, it's just *a* master.

Sue: Oh, that's disappointing. But the Doctor definitely looked worried when they mentioned the master. It can't be long before he turns up if

they've started dropping massive hints about him.

When Jamie wakes up, he's drawn to a painting of Victoria's mother. Victoria is said to be the spitting image of her, and the young Scot is completely bowled over by her beauty.

THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS

Sue: That portrait looks nothing like her! How can Jamie believe that

Victoria is beautiful when this is his only reference point?

Me: I've seen sexier Jackson Pollocks.

As Maxtible and Waterfield spill the beans to an increasingly suspicious Doctor, Sue becomes fixated on the increasingly bizarre science.

Sue: Did this bloke really make a time machine out of mirrors, or are the Daleks just winding him up? This doesn't sound very credible to me.

As the credits roll, I think it's fair to say The Evil of the Daleks is living up to its seminal status so far.

Sue: That was a 10 out of 10 episode. I can't complain about that at all.

Episode 3

Sue: This doesn't feel right to me.

Me: It isn't right. The people who made this recon have hired actors to

stand around with their backs to the camera. **Sue**: They really went to that much effort?

Me: Yes.

Sue: But it looks weird.

And then Kemel turns up.

Sue: Does the Doctor steal this guy's Fez? You know what he's like.

The Doctor provokes Jamie into having a blazing row with him. It's an electrifying scene, and Sue's extended silence means she must be gripped by the drama too.

Me: This is powerful stuff, don't you think? Sue?... Sue?... SUE!

It's no good. She's out for the count.

Me: SUE!
Sue: What?

Me: You fell asleep.

Sue: No, I didn't. I'm just resting my eyes.

Me: So you saw Jamie's argument with the Doctor?

Sue: Erm, yes. Um, it was, er, very good.

Me: What about the bit when Jamie punched the Doctor in the face and

broke his teeth?

Sue: Okay, okay, I fell asleep. IT'S BORING!

I refuse to rewind, opting to sulk instead. Sue doesn't say a word until the credits are over.

Sue: Did Jamie really punch the Doctor in the face?

Episode 4

I've made Sue sit up in her chair, and I've plied her with coffee, but it doesn't seem to help.

Sue: This is very difficult to watch. It's too quiet. I can't get into this.

The Doctor helps the Daleks extract the human factor from Jamie.

Sue: How do you extract the human factor from somebody? Is it a gas? A

liquid? How does it work, exactly? **Me**: You just have to go with it.

Sue: I can't. I need to know how it works or I won't be able to concentrate. **Me**: Jamie's thought processes and emotions are stored on a computer – I think.

Sue: So is 'shitting yourself' one of the emotions they're trying to extract?

Jamie can't stop going on about how beautiful Victoria is, even though he hasn't met her yet.

THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS

Sue: Yes, she's beautiful, Jamie, but her voice sounds like fingernails scraping down a blackboard. You're going to be very disappointed when you rescue her, love.

As CGI versions of Jamie and Kemel climb a CGI rope towards a CGI balcony, Sue sinks deeper into her chair.

Sue: I'm really struggling with this story, Neil. Be honest with me, are you actually enjoying this rubbish? Does everyone struggle with it, or is it just me?

Episode 5

We both agree that Maxtible is a bit of a git.

Me: I bet this isn't the first time Maxtible has hypnotised Mollie.

Sue: Is Mollie the new companion? She seems nice.

And then Sue's patience with this particular recon finally runs out.

Sue: I'm starting to think this story was badly directed. It's as if the director is shooting everything from the waist down.

Me: They're using stand-ins again. It wouldn't have looked like this originally.

Sue: So why do it then? It's distracting. I need the narration, too. I think I've turned into a recon purist, God help me.

When Jamie challenges the Doctor's authority again, Sue manages to stay awake this time.

Sue: Jamie is the first companion who's given the Doctor a hard time since Barbara, I think. I like it.

When a Dalek with the human factor suddenly takes the Doctor from behind, Sue just can't help herself:

Sue: Is that Dalek being influenced by Jamie's sexy thoughts? That has to be the weirdest cliffhanger yet.

Episode 6

Sue: So are these Daleks children, then? We've never seen Dalek children

before. How does that work?

Me: They've been injected with the human factor. It makes them childlike.

Sue: Why?

Me: Now you're beginning to sound like them.

Sue: Is it because they've just been born? Because we saw Daleks being born on that production line story not so long ago, and they didn't seem very childlike to me.

Me: What?

Sue: Why weren't those Daleks childish? Childish in a Dalek way, I mean.

Me: You've lost me now.

Sue: Never mind. But if this is what they've managed to extract from

Jamie, he should be thoroughly ashamed of himself.

Me: Don't you think this scene is disturbing? The Daleks with the sing-

song voices freak the hell out of me.

Sue is more disturbed by Maxtible, who's becoming crazier by the second.

Sue: Why is he still obsessed with alchemy? He's invented time travel. He could make more money as a time-travelling Lovejoy, surely? How much money does he need, anyway? It's not as if he's spending any of it on hair care products.

Sue isn't impressed by the Emperor Dalek, either.

Sue: It doesn't look right to me. It looks silly.

Me: What? It looks fantastic! **Sue**: He's got massive tits!

Damn, she's right you know. I'd never noticed that before.

THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS

Sue: Are you sure it isn't an Empress? If the Doctor decides to give that Dalek a name, it should be Jordan.

Episode 7

Sue: Why is this story seven episodes long, Neil? Seven feels like such an arbitrary number. They could have told this story in four parts, easily.

As it hurtles towards its conclusion, the Doctor starts banging on about his home planet like he's David Tennant in, well, every episode of Doctor Who David Tennant was in.

Sue: The Doctor is very keen to get back to Gallifrey, isn't he? Does Gallifrey exist at this point or has it been destroyed in the Time War? **Me**: Let's not get into that now.

As the Doctor walks through the archway, which makes Daleks even more Daleky, Nicol walks in on us.

Nicol: So this is what a recon looks like. How can you watch this rubbish? I had no idea you were torturing my mam like this.

Sue: (Pointing at the screen) Don't step through that door, you idiot!

Me: Don't worry, Nicol, she's fine.

Nicol leaves us to it, shaking her head on her way out.

Sue: That was a scary moment for the kids. The Doctor must be putting it on, though. He's much too smart for the Daleks.

As the guest cast start dropping like flies, Sue finally gives in to the conclusion that she's been subconsciously battling against ever since we started this story.

Sue: So, is Victoria the new companion or not? I'm running out of options, and I'm sure I know the rules.

Me: Finally, she gets it.

Sue: (Sighing) She's no Shirley Valentine.

The Doctor infects a squad of Daleks with the human factor, and before you can say "Genocide!", he's started a civil war on Skaro.

Sue: This probably looked great. It feels like a proper series finale with all these explosions going off. It feels epic. Is this what it would have looked like when it went out? The moving images we're watching now?

Me: No. Not exactly.

Sue: Oh, this is really starting to piss me off now. What's real and what isn't? How am I supposed to judge this?

Another thing Sue has a problem with is not seeing Maxtible die.

Sue: They can't do that! He has to get his comeuppance.

Me: He's wandering around – insane and brainwashed – on an alien planet that's tearing itself apart. I don't think he got away with it.

Sue: He could come back.

Me: Don't hold your breath. Although if anyone from Big Finish is reading this, please call me.

As Skaro is plunged into chaos, the Doctor proclaims it to be the Daleks' "final end".

Sue: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They'll be back next year. Just you wait and see.

The Score

Sue: That was a game of two halves. I was going to give it Three out of 10, but the last two episodes were quite good, and now I'm torn. I think the choice of recon ruined it for me. I'm going to blame you for that.

6/10

THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS

Me: Don't worry, I've got a special treat lined up for our wedding

anniversary this weekend.

Sue: A romantic meal?

Me: Better than that, love. Our first Patrick Troughton story that actually

exists!

Sue: You really know how to treat a woman.

COMMENT: "Sue was only 10 days out in guessing that England won the World Cup on 20 July. Bobby Moore lifted the Jules Rimet trophy on the 30th." – John G

NOTES: Of course we didn't watch any *Doctor Who* during our wedding anniversary celebrations. I'm not *that* stupid. No, we watched an episode of *Torchwood* instead. The one with the giant American vagina.

This is the last time Sue falls asleep in the middle of an episode of *Doctor Who* until *The Keeper of Traken*.

SEASON FIVE

DON'T JUST STAND THERE! SMOKE IT!



This illustration funded by Dave Sanders

THE TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN

BLOGGED: 27 July 2011

Me: Look! A complete story! On DVD and everything! Our first complete adventure starring Patrick Troughton! How exciting is that?

Sue: The last time I was this excited about *Doctor Who* was when you showed me a trailer for Matt Smith's next episode a few minutes ago.

Me: Remind me to tell you a story about Matt Smith and *The Tomb of the Cybermen* later. I don't want to prejudice you before we start. Although having said that, most fans didn't see this story until 1992, when the common consensus was...

Sue: I don't care. This is heaven compared to watching a bloody recon. And it's only four parts, too. It doesn't get any better than this. Now hurry up and stick it on.

Episode 1

Victoria is introduced to the TARDIS.

Sue: "Look at all those massive knobs!" It's suddenly turned into *Carry On... Doctor Who*.

Meanwhile, a party of intrepid explorers are stumbling around on a planet called Telos.

Sue: They look like a bunch of beatniks. Are they on holiday, or is this a team-building exercise? That guy with the beard could be David Brent's dad.

And then Sue claps eyes on Toberman.

Sue: (Sighing) It's going to be Kemel all over again, isn't it?

When the explorers detonate some impressive-looking explosives, they reveal a mysterious structure hidden in a cliff-face.

Sue: Oh look, they've discovered a bus shelter.

The doors to the tombs are electrified, as a poor grey-shirt discovers to his cost, and it's left to the Doctor to disable the booby-trap.

Sue: Hang on a minute. Why does the Doctor want to open the doors? This lot would probably give up and sod off if he just left them to it. It's not as if he doesn't know what's in there. He's practically encouraging them to enter a tomb full of Cybermen. I'm not sure how I feel about that. Hartnell would be halfway back to the TARDIS by now.

Sue loves the moment where Jamie and the Doctor accidentally end up holding hands, but it's slim pickings.

Sue: I'm going to take a wild stab in the dark and say the foreigners are the baddies. They may as well be carrying white cats under their arms. And they have a slave, as well. In the future. How progressive of them.

Victoria discovers a huge machine pointed at a Cyberman-shaped sarcophagus.

Sue: Is this where the Cybermen spray themselves silver?

But it's the tombs' interior design that really catches Sue's eye.

Sue: The Cybermen are like Banksy – they can't stop tagging themselves. They have to stencil everything. These Cybermen have a huge ego, if you ask me.

Me: And a brilliant graphic designer.

Sue: I don't understand this at all. Why is the Doctor leading everyone to their doom? He should be warning them off, not encouraging them. There had better be a good explanation for his shiftiness in this story.

THE TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN

Come to think of it, he was a sneaky bastard in the last one as well.

When Kaftan traps Victoria in the Cyber-sarcophagus ("Maybe it's a tanning booth?"), a nervous-wreck named Viner believes that pure logic is the only answer to her predicament.

Sue: I don't see anything logical about banging on the door and crying like a baby, mate!

Sadly, the cliffhanger doesn't elicit much joy, either.

Sue: Oh, look – an anorexic Cyberman. What's that all about?

Episode 2

Haydon is dead ("The only one I liked"), shot in the back by a gun, which appeared when a Cyberman model suddenly slammed into view. And yet nobody saw a thing.

Sue: Are they all blind? They were looking straight at it at the end of the last episode! What is it with people's peripheral vision in this programme? There were five of them in that room, not counting the dead guy. Someone must have seen something. I'm starting to lose my patience now.

As the Doctor frets about the explorers gaining access to the tombs, he surreptitiously helps them to do just that. At which point Sue can't contain her frustration any longer.

Sue: WHY DID YOU OPEN THE FUCKING DOORS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

The explorers discover a honeycombed vault packed with dormant Cybermen.

Sue: There aren't that many, are there? Six or seven, maybe? I was

expecting hundreds, if not thousands.

Me: In 1967?

Sue: Fair enough. But seven?

Me: Imagine this is one chamber, and there are thousands of these things

down that corridor over there. **Sue**: Okay. I can do that. Thanks.

As the Cybermen begin to stir, Sue begins to fidget.

Sue: This is quite good, I suppose, but it's very slow. Has the director never heard of editing?

Victoria shoots a Cybermat in the face.

Sue: I like Victoria. She's not as soft as I'd feared.

The reanimated Cybermen awaken their leader.

Sue: Is he sitting on the loo?

The Controller strides menacingly towards the humans.

Sue: What a dickhead. Seriously, he literally has a dick for a head. And

why hasn't he got an accordion on his chest like all the rest?

Me: This is one of my all-time favourite cliffhangers. Don't you like it? **Sue**: It's a good cliffhanger, I just didn't understand a word the Cyberman

said. The close-up was pretty scary, though.

Episode 3

Sue: The Cybermen's plan is a bit mad, isn't it? Are they too ashamed to be

rescued by idiots or something?

Me: They're shit out of luck if they are.

It's not all bad news, though.

THE TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN

Sue: I'm warming to Victoria. She's very proactive. I like her nurse's watch, too. It's cute.

The Controller threatens to turn his human captives into Cybermen.

Sue: You can see where the Borg get it from, can't you? What a rip-off. And why do the Cybermen have wah-wah pedals installed in their throats? Seriously, what is that dreadful noise? What are they supposed to be saying as they waddle down these corridors? It's bizarre. They sound like demented Donald Ducks.

When we reach the scene where the rope that's holding up Toberman manages to exude more screen presence than the actor it's supporting, Sue's verdict is damning:

Sue: Oh. My. God. That's the worst effect in *Doctor Who* so far. Why did they keep that in the transmitted version? Surely they could have edited that out? That's just incompetent.

Sue's patience is tested even further when Hopper returns with the news the explorers' spaceship is effectively the total opposite of a deux ex machina.

Sue: I can't take much more of this guy. He's a bad actor with a bad accent in a bad part. Please tell me he dies horribly, Neil. Or at least let Jamie punch him in the face. He has such a punchable face.

She still doesn't warm to him when he's lobbing smoke grenades around.

Sue: It's the direction that lets this down. The dialogue-heavy scenes are fine – there are some nice touches here and there - but it's all very basic multi-camera stuff. However, when it comes to the action sequences, it seems to be a case of "let's film the mayhem and hope for the best". It doesn't cut together at all.

A Cyberman follows the Doctor through an open hatchway.

Sue: And yet that was genuinely exciting. If only they'd remove the ridiculous wah-wah sound effect.

The Cybermen respond by unleashing their secret weapon.

Sue: The Cybermats look like cuttlefish. Or a dustpan brush with fish-eyes stuck on it, finished off with a nice felt fringe.

The Cybermen line up their Cybermats, ready to unleash hell.

Sue: Are they going to race their new toys?

Me: The build-up to getting these things started is almost as long as your average Grand Prix.

Sue: How long is it going to take these things to get up that ramp? We could be here for months.

The Doctor and Victoria share an intimate moment together in the calm before the storm.

Sue: Aww. That was really sweet. Troughton's great. I loved that.

But when a phalanx of Cybermats move in for the kill, Sue struggles to take them seriously.

Sue: They're not exactly facehuggers, are they? Although the principle is pretty much the same, so maybe this is more influential than I'm giving it credit for. Oh, for pity's sake – just kick them! A good hard kick into a wall will sort them out.

In fact, the Cybermats are so ineffective, they don't even feature in the cliffhanger.

Sue: So what's the Matt Smith story you alluded to earlier? **Me**: Well, Matt Smith watched some old episodes before he started playing the Doctor, and when he finished this one, he telephoned Steven

THE TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN

Moffat in the middle of the night...

Sue: Was it to make sure that the people who wrote this story weren't still

working on the programme?

Me: No, he loved it. He raved about it.

Sue: Well, nobody's perfect. He should have watched The Faceless Ones

instead.

Episode 4

Klieg makes a pact with the Cybermen.

Sue: I'd ask for something in writing if I were him. Good grief, now he's talking about arousing the Cybermen. How do you arouse a Cyberman? Oh, that reminds me, if they ever decide to remake this story, Krieg should be played by Armando Iannucci. I just thought I'd throw that in.

Toberman starts throwing an empty Cybersuit around the set.

Sue: It's like *The Goodies* throwing dummies of themselves off rooftops. Or was that *Monty Python*? Or maybe it was *Benny Hill*? It doesn't matter. The director is out of his depth. There are lots of striking images in this story, but it doesn't hang together. I haven't got a clue what the Cybermen are up to any more. It's a bit of a mess.

But what really winds her up is the way in which the Doctor provokes Toberman into switching sides.

Sue: So it's okay to be a slave, as long as you're a white man's slave. I'm getting a bit irritated now.

The Doctor fawns over Krieg so he can ascertain just how insane he is.

Sue: I can definitely imagine Matt Smith doing something like that.

Toberman reverts to doing what he does best - protecting the white man -

but Sue is too distracted by a Cyberman's frothing innards to kick up a fuss.

Sue: I didn't know the Cybermen were made of marshmallow.

The Cybermen return to their tombs to be refrozen. In other words, we're back to square one.

Sue: I can't stop thinking about how it's the Doctor who caused all this grief. If he hadn't opened those doors in the first place, those people would still be alive. Especially the one who was quite nice in the first episode. Was it a deliberate decision to make the character more dangerous and unpredictable, or are the writers just oblivious to the consequences of his actions?

The Doctor rigs the tomb's door so it will deliver a deadly electric shock to anyone who comes a-knocking.

Sue: They should put a warning sign on the door at the very least. The next bunch of clueless beatniks will lose a crewmember as well, now. He isn't thinking this through. I'm very disappointed with the Doctor in this story. He's usually better than this.

At least there's one small crumb of satisfaction.

Sue: "When I say 'run', run" is a very funny catchphrase. I've noticed the Doctor says it a lot. It's a very odd thing for a hero to say. It's the sort of thing you'd expect a coward to say. It's very *Doctor Who*.

Before you can say 'noble sacrifice', it's all over. Victoria finds some time to annoy Hopper, which Sue appreciates, and then it's back to the TARDIS for tea and cakes. Probably.

Sue: I hope the Doctor can live with himself after all the misery he's caused. Does Toberman come back as a Cyberman to take his revenge in another story? Does he team-up with a Cybermat and come after the

THE TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN

Doctor? He bloody better had.

The Score

Sue: I'm disappointed. It just didn't do it for me. It was great to see a moving story all the way through, but the plot was terrible. Patrick Troughton was excellent, though. He's making the whole thing worthwhile, even if I don't approve of the way his character is being written

4/10

Sue: It could have been worse. It could have been six episodes. So what's

next?

Me: I won't lie to you, Sue, Season Five is going to be tough. Coming up

next we have six six-part stories...

Sue: Oh, wonderful!

Me: And 27 of those 36 episodes don't exist.

Sue: You're joking. **Me**: I only wish I was.

Sue: Remember when you climbed the submit of Mount Kilimanjaro, Neil? You did it in the dark, because if you saw how high it was, you wouldn't have tried. Well, you just turned the lights on for me. Thanks for that.

COMMENT: "What utter nonsense!" - Tallifer

NOTES: The response to the blog up to this point had been uniformly positive. In fact, the closest Sue had come to anything approaching a backlash was when someone became incredibly upset with her score for *The Massacre of St Bartholomew's Eve*, although I'm happy to report that this was smoothed over in the end, and Toby even agreed to write the foreword to this book.

Everything changed when Sue called *The Tomb of the Cybermen* racist nonsense. If only she'd known her verdict would open the floodgates to a

torrent of anonymous abuse, several inept death threats, and an internet forum dedicated to running her down – she still would have called *The Tomb of the Cybermen* racist shit. Because it is.

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN

BLOGGED: 2 August 2011

Episode One

Sue: The Doctor should have a car boot sale. He's a hoarder.

Aside from that little gem, Sue didn't say very much for the first 10 minutes of The Abominable Snowmen. Either she was totally engrossed or bored out of her gourd. But she definitely wasn't sleeping. I know because I checked.

Sue: The carpentry looks nice.

We are both extremely grateful for Frazer Hines' narration on this one; it carries us through several dialogue-free longueurs until Deborah Watling suddenly ups the ante by screaming her head off.

Sue: Victoria has a great pair of lungs.

Professor Travers has been searching for the legendary Yeti all his life.

Sue: There are lots of expeditions in *Doctor Who* all of a sudden. Do I detect a theme? Will this guy end up paying the ultimate price for finding a Yeti? Is it another one of those morality tales where you should be careful what you wish for?

Me: Wait and see. And stop trying to jump the gun.

Sue: I've also noticed something odd. If this is the Himalayas, where has

all the snow gone?

Me: Blame it on freak weather conditions.

And then we reach the cliffhanger, which involves one of the titular monsters harassing Jamie and Victoria in a cave.

Sue: I honestly can't tell if the Yeti look good or not when I can't see them moving around.

Episode Two

Sue: Ahh, moving images. Lovely.

Me: Make the most of it.

Sue's impressed with the action-packed opening to this episode, but she's even more impressed with the quality of the restoration work.

Sue: The location filming looks incredible for its age. Do you think this will ever be released on Blu Ray, Neil?

Sadly, the moving images aren't doing the Yeti any favours.

Sue: It looks like a Teletubbie in a fur coat. I'm sure it wants to play with Jamie and Victoria. It's cute.

Back at the monastery, the monks are talking in hushed tones about their master.

Sue: A-ha! It's the Master! I knew he'd turn up eventually.

Me: I'm going to put you out of your misery before you tie yourself up in

knots: it isn't 'the Master', it's just another 'a master'. Sorry.

Sue: But he said, "Dok-TORRRR!" in a scary voice.

Me: Seriously, let it go.

The Doctor is deposited outside the monastery as Yeti-bait.

Sue: Why didn't the Doctor give the sacred bell back to the monks in the first place? Why does he have to rely on Rafa Nadal getting it for him now?

Brilliantly, just as she says this, the Doctor explains - at length - his reasons

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN

for doing just that. This will score some points with Sue; she's not used to having plot holes plugged on command like that. Then Songsten, who looks like a plump Ted Rogers, meets his master, Padmasambhava.

Sue: He sounds like Gollum. It's a very distinctive and disturbing voice. He probably scared the kids half to death.

It's a shame the same thing can't be said about the Yeti.

Sue: I'm sorry, but these Yeti are too cuddly to take seriously. The Sugar Puffs Honey Monster could have this lot for breakfast.

Episode Three

Sue: Khrisong is very aggressive for a monk, don't you think? I like him – don't ask me why – but it's an odd career path for such an angry man to take.

Me: Speaking of odd career paths, what do you make of Harold Pinter's performance in this story? He's the guy playing the guard, Ralpachan. **Sue**: He looks more like Freddie Mercury than Harold Pinter. Not that I know what Harold Pinter looks like.

Me: Don't you think it's a bit odd that a phenomenally successful playwright – a man who was already a big name when this was made – would sneak onto *Doctor Who* under an assumed name to play a bit-part? **Sue**: Well, if you put it like that. Was he a fan of the show?

Me: (*After a very long pause*) So, you are entirely happy with the concept of Harold Pinter appearing in *Doctor Who*? In a bit-part? At the height of his fame?

Sue: All I know is Toby Hadoke keeps banging on about Harold Pinter being in *Doctor Who*, but I tend to tune out when he goes into the details. **Me**: Toby will have us both killed if I don't stress that Harold Pinter WASN'T in *Doctor Who*. Even if some fans – and some books written about *Doctor Who* – say otherwise. Don't listen to them. And blame Rob Shearman while you're at it.

Sue: Does this mean Kate Bush wasn't involved in *Doctor Who* as well?

Me: No, that's definitely true.

As the credits roll, Sue admits she's struggling with the whys and wherefores of the plot.

Sue: That was pretty good but I can't keep up with who's controlling who any more. Isn't this a bit too complicated, for a kid's show?

Me: That's probably down to me banging on about Harold Pinter for 10

minutes. Sorry.

Episode Four

Sue: When I was at school, I had a parka with fur lining in the hood, and if I did the hood all the way up, I'd end up with a face like that Yeti. I bloody loved that parka.

A Yeti bounces down a hill.

Sue: It looks like a fat American in a fur coat!

Me: Racist.

Sue: The Yeti aren't scary enough. They're missing something.

Me: A gun?

Sue: Don't be stupid. I suppose you can get away with the bad design because they aren't *real* Yeti. There is a perverse logic to it, I guess.

Deep inside a cave, some silver balls have been arranged in the shape of a triangle.

Sue: Are the monks praying to the snooker gods?

As the Doctor approaches a Yeti, Sue is thankful for small mercies.

Sue: It's a good job these Yeti are robots. If they weren't, they'd probably try to mate with the Doctor's coat. And I can't believe he still doesn't have a sonic screwdriver yet. Sort it out, Doctor!

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN

When Songsten hypnotises Ralpachan (who definitely didn't write The Caretaker), Sue drops another bombshell.

Sue: You know, I vaguely remember this. I'm sure I've seen this before. **Me**: Are you serious? You can't remember the Yeti but you can remember this innocuous scene where somebody is hypnotised by a monk? Are you sure you weren't hypnotised yourself?

As we debate how likely it is that she can remember 90 uninteresting seconds from this story, the Yeti begin chasing a control sphere down a hillock.

Sue: (Giggling) They look like they're taking part in It's A Knockout!

And then Victoria finally comes face to face with Padmasambhava.

Sue: It's Count Dracula!

Episode Five - Escape to Danger!

Through the ruin of a kitchen stalked the ruin of a man.

There were two people in the kitchen. One was a middle-aged man who wished he still had a shock of untidy hair. He wore a pair of baggy tracksuit bottoms and he was cooking an elaborate meal. Watching him was a beautiful young, old-ish woman with a pleasant, open face, dressed in the style of a county tennis player. Her name was Sue.

Sue sometimes wondered if her decision to watch *Doctor Who* from the very beginning had been a wise one. But now her husband was making her listen to something called a 'Target novelisation'. She really didn't know what to make of it but she was finding unexpected resources of courage when it came to this kind of thing.

Neil attempted to explain the importance of these novels as he chopped some onions. He even read aloud from an introduction by a scientist Sue had never heard of before. He made the books sound very interesting, and she eventually agreed to let Patrick Troughton's son, David, read to her while Neil cooked their evening meal.

Sue looked on as Neil peered into his saucepan of chilli. She wondered what to do with her hands. "He sounds just like his dad," she said.

Neil stirred the mince and smiled.

Some time later, when chapters nine and 10 were complete, Neil beckoned his wife over to his bubbling pot. She made a wheezing, groaning sound. "Too hot?" Neil asked. Sue frowned as she put down the tasting spoon.

Neil put the pita bread in their sprightly yellow toaster, and then they sat down to eat. Neil turned to his wife and asked her what she thought.

Sue looked up from her bowl. "I thought the narration was lovely," she said. "He sounded so much like his father. It was uncanny at times. The music and sound effects were really good, as well. I usually find it hard to concentrate on things like this, and I'm still confused by the plot, but I thought the prose was excellent. It was very precise, but engaging at the same time. I can see how these books would have been very important before you had video recordings, but I also get the impression that they might colour your appreciation for an episode when you finally got to see it."

"That paragraph is far too long," said Neil, gently.

Episode Six

Sue: This reminds me of a dirty phone call I received once.

Me: Jesus! What?

Sue: A cross between Charlie Drake and Mark King from Level 42.

Me: The guy who rang you up?!

Sue: No! This guy – Padsdanavratilova (sic).

Songsten, who's under the influence of the Great Intelligence, slays Khrisong.

Me: I like the way they turned a photo of Khrisong on its side to show us he was dving.

Sue: I liked Khrisong. He was very committed to his moustache.

As the Doctor battles the Intelligence, Sue is surprised when he cries out.

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN

Sue: The sound of the Doctor screaming like that is very distressing. I wish I'd seen this. I bet it would have been very exciting.

Padmasambhava's face appears in an extreme close-up, and the effect is, well, homespun to say the least.

Sue: Was the make-up really that bad or am I being unfair? Because it looks terrible. Then again, we're staring at it for ages. That close-up was probably only fleeting when it was originally shown. At least I hope it was.

As Travers bids farewell to the Doctor and his companions, Sue guesses the final twist.

Sue: I bet he finds a real Yeti. Oh, look, there's a real Yeti. At least proper Yeti actually exist, and they aren't just silly robots with enormous arses. **Me**: Yeah, imagine if they'd turned the Loch Ness Monster into a robot, or something stupid like that.

Sue: I feel sorry for the Yeti. They are nowhere near deadly enough to compete with some of the other monsters I've seen. Even the Macra. I notice that you don't have a Yeti doll on the bookshelf, Neil. I think that says an awful lot.

The Score

Sue: I enjoyed that. It was two episodes too long, of course, but you can say that about a lot of *Doctor Who*. However, there was a calm and measured approach to the story, which I really liked. You didn't get the hysteria you sometimes do with these things. Troughton was very good, which goes without saying now. In fact, most of the performances were pretty good. Yes, it wasn't bad at all.

7/10

COMMENT: "Sure looks like Harold Pinter to me..." – farsighted99

THE ICE WARRIORS

BLOGGED: 8 August 2011

One

Sue: The credits are HUGE! Brian must be really proud of this story.

When we're introduced to the bedlam that is Brittanicus Base, Sue immediately has a problem with its central computer.

Sue: Is there a Dalek loose on this base? Is that why everyone is panicking?

The next thing Sue notices is the base personnel's rather distinctive clothing.

Sue: It's like an avant-garde fashion show. It's very 1960s. Has Mary Quant taken over the world? I like the way they aren't all wearing the same design. It shows a great deal of imagination, even though it must have cost them a fortune.

As tensions rise inside the base, Sue lets out a weary sigh.

Sue: Remember how I praised *The Abominable Snowmen* for not being too hysterical? Well, this is hysterical. I'm surprised this woman's plastic visor hasn't steamed up yet.

The base's computer continues to be a source of irritation for Sue.

Sue: I didn't understand a thing that computer just said. Apart from the words 'South Africa'. I can only assume that something bad is going to happen there. This is probably yet another example of the rac...

Me: Don't even go there! You mentioned the R-word during *The Tomb of the Cybermen* and now a militant faction of fandom wants to burn us both at the stake. Well, they want to burn you, but I'll do my best to protect you.

THE ICE WARRIORS

The TARDIS lands askew and slides down an embankment, which forces the crew to evacuate the ship horizontally.

Sue: Didn't Matt Smith have to do this once? I keep seeing all these links to the new series. The crew have great chemistry, by the way. They are very comfortable together. Can't we just knock about with them for a bit, without them getting into trouble? That would be nice.

It doesn't take very long for Sue to notice the antique chandeliers.

Sue: They must have spent all the money on the costumes, which means they couldn't afford to make any futuristic sets. It's a clever way out of it, I suppose. And even if the decor does look old-fashioned, they still have gadgets like the vibrochair, which sounds sexy and modern. Can we get a vibrochair, Neil?

When the Doctor and his companions are threatened with transportation to Africa, Victoria almost faints.

Sue: What's Victoria got against Africa? You know, this show is definitely...

Me: Stop it!

Sue: Okay, on a more positive note, I really like Peter Barkworth. He has the intensity of Patrick McGoohan and the charm of Simon Pegg. He's great. I like the way he fills in the back-story with a little quiz. That was a very clever way of doing it.

An Ice Age has enveloped the planet and it's up to the base's ionisier to stop the glaciers from advancing across Britain. Clent shows the Doctor just how bad things are on a map.

Sue: They've put an Elastoplast on some glass. What the hell does that mean?

Me: Perhaps it's a subtle metaphor for the role they're playing in the unfolding disaster.

Sue: Or perhaps all the budget went on their costumes.

A frozen Ice Warrior, which was discovered by the base's resident archaeologist (don't ask), is brought to Brittanicus Base and starts to thaw.

Sue: So, this is basically *The Thing* meets *Downton Abbey*. Okay, I can go with that

Two and Three

A few hours before we settled down to watch the next episode, I suddenly remembered that the 1998 VHS release of this story included a condensed recon of episodes two and three. And it's only 15 minutes long! Sue almost kissed me when I told her.

Sue: Everything's gone green.

Me: I'm not sure if that's the age of this copy, or the recon was tinged with

green deliberately. It's very odd, but it won't last long.

Sue: I bet the Ice Warriors are green.

Me: They are.

Sue: They don't look that bad, actually. **Me**: Why do you sound so surprised?

Sue gives me that 'do I really have to ask?' look.

Sue: I can't understand anyone any more. The Ice Warriors slur their words, the computer is unintelligible, and everybody else is either Scottish or yelling over a storm. This story should come with subtitles.

The telesnaps allow Sue to concentrate on every detail of the Ice Warriors' design, and she thinks she's spotted a fatal flaw.

Sue: How did the Ice Warriors get to where they are today without

opposable thumbs? How do they carry their guns?

Me: Their guns are built in to their hands.

THE ICE WARRIORS

Sue: I bet they don't go on that many dates.

Me: Maybe, but they do make great drink holders.

Four

Sue: I'm starting to go off Victoria. She's turned into just another damsel in distress. She was kick-ass in that Cyberman story, but now she's just a passive victim. And her scream could start an avalanche.

Sue will be proved right later on (which doesn't exactly help), and she's even more aggravated when an Ice Warrior walks straight past Victoria without a second glance.

Sue: So, poor peripheral vision affects the Martians too? At least they can blame it on their big helmets, I suppose. Actually, I like their design. It's very organic, and it doesn't look too fake. I'm surprised this lot haven't turned up in the new series. And look at the size of that Ice Warrior's arse! In fact, that Ice Warrior in the middle doesn't look quite right to me. Is he the runt of the litter, or did the fibreglass mould go wrong?

As the Doctor heads off to face the Martians, Clent monitors his progress via a communicator.

Sue: Peter Barkworth's great. He's selling this scene to me even though he's just staring at a screensaver. I can't praise him enough, even if the character he's playing is a bit of a dick.

Five

Sue: The Ice Warriors remind me of the snake from *The Jungle Book*.

Me: All that hissing?

Sue: No, they're sending me to sleep. I'm joking. I quite like the Ice Warriors. At least you can take them more seriously than a cuddly teddy bear. I like the way they snigger at things. It's not your typical evil villain laugh either, it's proper full-on sniggering. Not that you can blame them –

the last cliffhanger was a complete joke.

The base's staff laments the fact the central computer won't tell them what to do next.

Sue: It can't tell them because they can't understand a bloody word it's saying!

When Penley and Clent finally meet, sparks fly.

Sue: Peter Barkworth is very good in this. Have I mentioned that yet? This story is very intense and it's mainly down to his performance.

The Ice Warriors decide to destroy the base with a sonic canon.

Sue: It's Bernie the Bolt.

Me: Nice 1967 reference. Well done.

Sue: I can imagine Matt Smith taking on an alien monster with a stink

bomb and not being able to get the cap off. It's very funny.

It's funny until Victoria throws acid in an Ice Warrior's face. Unfortunately, he still manages to fire the bloody canon.

Sue: Oh dear, the Doctor seems to have lost this one. You don't see that very often. Now that's how you do a cliffhanger.

Six

Sue: I like the way this guy suddenly freaks out and points out the blatantly obvious – he's playing the Rhys role in this. You know, like on *Torchwood* when Rhys suddenly flips out and says what everyone is thinking. Which is that they're basically fucked.

Me: Because this is the last episode, there's just enough time left for us to play 'Let's spot the heavily disguised *Carry On...* actor playing the lead Ice Warrior'.

THE ICE WARRIORS

Sue: Is it Hattie Jacques?

Me: You're not taking this seriously, are you?

Sue: No, but Jamie and Victoria are getting serious. There's definitely a romance blossoming between these two. Did you see the way Victoria

reacted to the thought of Jamie being in danger?

Brittanicus' computer errs on the side of caution when it comes to blasting the Ice Warriors with its ioniser.

Sue: It's the computer that says, "No". It's probably made by Apple. Just look at its curves. And it's gone wrong at precisely the same moment you need it to work. Yeah, it's definitely made by Apple.

Penley urges Clent to ignore the computer, but the commander falls to pieces instead

Sue: This is basically a bad day at the office for Peter Barkworth. I can't say I'm surprised that he's finally had a nervous breakdown. He's bound to redeem himself at the last minute, though.

He doesn't, and it's left to Penley to sort out the mess. Sue can hardly believe it. She thought the ending would be a lot more pat than that.

Sue: I can't understand a word the Ice Warriors are saying as their ship blows up. This story needs some bloody good sound remastering. Do you think they'll ever VidFIRE this one day? Are you impressed that I remember what VidFIREing is, Neil? Because it depresses the hell out of me.

Me: Yes, I'm impressed. You even got the capitalisation right.

And then it's all over. But before Penley can thank the Doctor and his companions, they've already legged it back to the TARDIS.

Sue: Oh look, it's standing upright again. That's nice.

The Score

Sue: That was fairly enjoyable. It's a shame about the missing bits. There were some good performances, some interesting monsters, and the plot wasn't bad, either. However, it's all getting a bit samey now. I hope we get something different soon.

7/10

COMMENT: "I look forward to seeing 'fairly enjoyable' emblazoned across the front of *The Ice Warriors* DVD release when it finally appears." – Nigel

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD

BLOGGED: 16 August 2011

Episode 1

Sue: The TARDIS doesn't sound very healthy. That can't be good.

Our heroes have landed on a beach. Sue keeps Polly's memory alive by suggesting they've arrived in Cornwall. The Doctor doesn't care where they are and goes paddling in the sea.

Sue: I'm glad this scene with the Doctor in his underwear only exists as a blurry photograph and you can't see anything. Recons do have their advantages, sometimes.

The Doctor and his companions are menaced by some grumpy-looking Australians in a very cramped hovercraft. Jamie is flabbergasted when he sees the floating beastie.

Sue: Why doesn't Jamie believe in hovercrafts after everything he's been through? It's not as if it's a very impressive hovercraft, either. I'm sure it's just a VW camper van with bits of cardboard stuck to it. It's the steering wheel that gives it away.

Suddenly, a helicopter arrives and it's piloted by...

Sue: Yootha Joyce!

... Astrid Ferrier, who manages to save our heroes in the nick of time.

Sue: Do you think Astrid is a forerunner to Anneka Rice?

Me: Well, she does have a very nice arse.

Sue: I like Astrid. She's brave, she can fly a helicopter and she doesn't piss about. Is she the next assistant? They could just leave Victoria behind in Cornwall. It wouldn't bother me if they did. Don't kill her, though. Just

dump her somewhere nice.

Sue notices just how atypical this episode is.

Sue: This is very James Bond. I wonder what it looked like when they blew that helicopter up. That is frustrating. The photo looks nice, though.

The Doctor just happens to be the spitting-double of Salamander, a ruthless megalomaniac who is dominating the United Zones Organisation with his high-tech thingamy whatsit.

Sue: Is Salamander really the Master, scheming under an assumed name? Or am I jumping the gun again?

When Salamander shows his face, Sue can't believe her ears.

Sue: Is he French? No, wait, he's German. Or Spanish, maybe.

Me: Close enough. He's Mexican.

Sue: Mexican? Mexican?! Are you fucking joking?

The secret police turn up and the Doctor is forced to impersonate his way out of trouble. It should be a tense cliffhanger, but Sue's in hysterics because the Doctor's Mexican accent is even worse than Salamander's!

Episode 2

Sue: The Doctor looks like the Milk Tray man in that jumper. It's a good look for him. "And all because the lady loves... bad Mexican accents."

Salamander is an endless source of fascination for Sue, and she perks up whenever he's on screen. She's not convinced by his wardrobe, though.

Sue: The Doctor shouldn't wear a frilly shirt. In fact, now that I think about it, nobody should wear a frilly shirt. And he reminds me of Al Pacino in *Scarface*. "Say hello to my little friend!"

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD

Sue can't stop laughing. It doesn't matter how evil, corrupt or villainous Salamander acts, every time Troughton opens his mouth, she's in stitches. She finds it especially hilarious that he ends every other sentence with an upbeat, "Huh?"

Sue: It's Inspector Clouseau meets Speedy Gonzales. This is supposed to be funny, isn't it?

Jamie and Victoria infiltrate Salamander's inner-retinue by going under cover.

Sue: Are Jamie and Victoria boyfriend and girlfriend now, or is that just part of their cover? Have they started dating yet? I'm curious.

A volcano is about to explode in Hungary.

Sue: This is too weird for me to keep up with. There are too many people, too many locations and too many accents. I feel like I'm being bludgeoned to death by accents. And what is it with the Doctor and evil doubles? They can't leave that plot alone, can they? Oh, was that the cliffhanger? That wasn't very exciting.

Episode 3

After performing our real episode dance, we settle down to watch Salamander cheerfully blackmailing everyone he bumps into.

Sue: He's the Mexican Rebekah Brooks.

The rebels' contact on the inside is Denes, Controller of the Central European Zone, but he's currently being held captive in – wait for it – a security corridor.

Sue: What the hell is this? Have they run out of money? Did they spend it all on the helicopter? I can't believe they can't build a simple prison cell!

This is absurd. Were the carpenters on strike? Seriously, Neil, what the hell is this?

Victoria is taken to meet Griffin the chef.

Me: The Monoids would have locked Denes up here instead.

And Griffin proves to be a bit of a taskmaster.

Sue: It's the Australian Hell's Kitchen.

Me: Hungary.

Sue: Then you've come to the right place! Ha! Get it? Hungary? No? But seriously, I can't keep up with this. Where are we? Who are these people?

Who's in charge? Can I see the wine list?

Griffin forces Victoria to rustle up a recipe from memory.

Sue: Now it's turned into a surreal episode of *MasterChef*! **Me**: Cooking doesn't get more incongruous than this!

Sue: What is it with the BBC and latex? Do the people working in the wardrobe department have a fetish? Perhaps they bought a job-lot of kinky-gear in the mid-'60s, and now they're trying to get their money's worth? I have to say, Jamie looks, er, interesting this week.

The next scene takes place in Kent's static caravan.

Sue: It's the Lyndhurst 2000!

Me: Ah, yes, the caravan years. The frozen toilets; the swaying violently in gale force winds; cooking in the living room; the sound of rain as it bounced off the roof like nails; and not having enough room to swing any of our cats. Yes, I remember it all.

Sue: You loved every minute of it. Oh wait, this isn't good. When the secret police smash your crockery, you know you're in trouble. Giles must be bricking himself. You know, I'm sure if this was a James Bond film we would have had a big car chase, or a death-defying stunt by now. But in

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD

Doctor Who, all we get are some smashed plates.

Jamie and Victoria try to break Denes out of his, er, corridor, but they fail miserably.

Sue: I've just realised that Victoria is wearing Jamie's skirt, which means they must going out with each other. It must be serious if they've started sharing each other's clothes.

Me: That reminds me – you're wearing my socks.

Sue has taken a particular shine to Fariah, Salamander's duplicitous food taster.

Sue: She's great. And very beautiful. She'd be a good companion, but I'm not stupid enough to suggest it, for obvious reasons. I'll leave you with that thought.

The episode concludes when Salamander realises that someone is doing a bad impersonation of him in Australia. He isn't very happy about it.

Sue: Why did they make the bad guy Mexican, especially when they knew Patrick Troughton was going to play him? There has to be a reason for it. It can't have been an arbitrary decision. Why not make him German? The accent is practically the same and you'd avoid all this blacking-up nonsense.

Episode 4

Sue and I have started talking to each other in bad Mexican accents, even when we're not watching Doctor Who.

Me: Hey, what's up, Sue? So you wanna watch *The Enemy of Ze World* with me, huh?

Sue: Sure-a thing, Neil. You wanna make-a me-a cup of tea first, huh?

Thankfully, Nicol is away this week and she doesn't have to put up with this madness.

Sue: I had a fringe like Benik's once. It wasn't a good time for me at school.

Me: (*Singing*) "Fariah! I've just met a girl named Fariah! And suddenly that name, will never be the same to..."

Sue: Why did the writer give all the characters names that sound so similar? Ferrier, Fedorin, Fariah. Is he trying to confuse me on purpose? This is hard enough to follow as it is.

She may not understand what's going on, but at least she's enjoying the overall vibe.

Sue: I like the good guys in this story – Astrid, Giles, Fariah – they're a good bunch. They should have their own TV series. In fact, it's as if the Doctor has stumbled into their show by mistake. This isn't *Doctor Who*. I'm enjoying it – I think – but it isn't *Doctor Who*.

Sue is horrified when Fariah is brutally murdered by Benik's men, and she goes into a bit of a huff as a result. And when Frazier Hines describes Salamander's trip to his secret base, it sounds like something straight out of Thunderbirds.

Sue: Is he heading for the Salamander-cave?

We end up staring at a photograph of an empty room for what feels like an eternity. Either John Cura was ill, on holiday, or he left his lens cap on.

Sue: Will somebody please answer that bloody phone!

And then the plot twist hits us.

Sue: Is Salamander the world's biggest practical joker? This is the result of a bet with a rival dictator, isn't it? Because it's insane!

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD

Salamander's underground captives include Harold Steptoe and Frank Spencer. Well, that's what Sue reckons and I'm not going to argue with her.

Sue: Seriously, Joseph Fritzl has nothing on this guy. He even has the

same accent.

Me: Joseph Fritzl was Austrian.

Sue: Exactly!

As the Doctor blacks-up in preparation for impersonating Salamander, Bruce walks in on him.

Sue: Wow. Yet another cliffhanger that doesn't even try to be exciting. This is really, really... odd.

Episode 5

Down in the underground shelter, Salamander is treated like a hero.

Sue: Troughton reminds me of Seve Ballesteros in this scene. Seve was always my favourite golfer. He had excellent wrists.

But not everyone is happy with the way things are, and one of Salamander's slaves – a man named Swann – begins to question the whole operation. It's only taken him five years.

Sue: Troughton's turned Italian now. "What's-a matter, you, huh? Got-a no respect! Hey!"

Swann thinks he's rumbled Salamander when he finds a newspaper, which suggests that the world isn't a radioactive husk after all and that people on the surface are enjoying themselves holidaying on cruise liners (until they sink, that is). Incredibly, Salamander decides to brazen it out.

Sue: I can't believe my ears. And I'm not just talking about his accent. Let me get this straight: Salamander is trying to make out that there are cruise

liners running holiday tours for monsters who have been affected by nuclear radiation? Cruise liners? Just how stupid are these people?

The Doctor uses his fake identity to rescue Jamie and Victoria from the sadistic clutches of Benik.

Sue: I like the way Troughton's accent keeps slipping when he's pretending to be Salamander. It suggests that his performance is a lot more subtle than I originally thought. Still funny, though.

And then Harold Steptoe is bludgeoned to death. For being terminally stupid, probably.

Sue: Oh look, another lame cliffhanger that was signposted to us several minutes ago. Nice.

Episode 6

Sue: So the mad dictator is toppled when he's caught falsifying his catering accounts. This is either years ahead of its time or a really clever spoof. I'm not sure which.

It turns out that Giles Kent was a bad guy, after all.

Sue: Well, he had me fooled. He lived in a caravan and everything. Still, I haven't been able to keep up with this story since episode three, so I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be surprised by this or not.

And then all hell breaks loose as Salamander and Giles battle for control of the underground base's volcano-igniting machines.

Sue: Wouldn't it be ironic if Giles Kent and Salamander end up trapped in that collapsed bunker, and it takes the authorities five years to get them out again? That's the ending I'd have written. They'll be lovers by the time they're rescued.

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD

Just when we think it's all over, not only does Salamander escape from the base, he also finds his way onto the TARDIS ("Villains don't normally get inside the TARDIS, do they?"). And then the Doctor turns up and the characters actually share a scene together!

Sue: How the hell did they do that? Why doesn't this exist? This is so frustrating.

And then, in the blink of an eye, it's all over. The TARDIS dematerialises and Salamander is sucked out into the space-time continuum (although it looks to us as if John Cura has sneezed on his camera lens).

Sue: Okay, here's a quick tip for the future: build a safety feature so you can't take-off when the TARDIS doors are open. It's common sense, really.

The Score

Sue: I have no idea what to say about that. It was nice to have a change of pace, but it wasn't *Doctor Who*. I have no idea what it was, but it wasn't *Doctor Who*. So I don't really know. The plot was either really clever or utterly bonkers, and while I liked the characters in this one – the acting was really good, incidentally – it didn't hang together for me. It was far too complicated for its own good. And a bit silly.

6/10

COMMENT: "Awhile back, I was researching cast appearances in other shows like *The Saint*, *Danger Man* and *The Avengers*. Anytime Troughton showed up in anything, he'd be doing *that* accent." – Garrett Gilchrist

NOTES: Our 'real episode dance' did exist and we performed it regularly (but not as regularly as Sue would have liked).

"Why doesn't this exist?" asked Sue during Episode 6. See if she wishes she'd kept her mouth shut in this book's *Extras*.

THE WEB OF FEAR

BLOGGED: 22 August 2011

We're going underground. Please mind the gaps. All five of them.

Me: This is the first story with a new producer, although he did get a trial run with *The Tomb of the Cybermen*.

Sue: That doesn't exactly fill me with confidence.

Me: His name is Peter Bryant. I forgot to mention that *The Enemy of the World* was Innes Lloyd's last story as producer. He was responsible for 16 stories. Is there anything you'd like to say about Innes before we move on? **Sue**: Not really, no.

Episode 1

Sue: This had better not be a sequel to *The Web Planet*, Neil. I'm serious.

Jamie teases the Doctor about his inability to fly the TARDIS properly (which is understandable given that they've just spent the last five minutes hanging on to it for dear life). The Doctor promises to show him otherwise.

Sue: Is this the story where he actually sits down and fixes the TARDIS? It's taken him long enough.

Meanwhile, in a spooky museum...

Sue: Oh no! Not the fucking Yeti again! It's too soon! They were only in it a few days ago. What have these writers got on the production team? It must be something really scandalous.

Back on the TARDIS, the crew are enjoying a light snack.

Sue: Where did they get the bread to make these sandwiches?

Me: Is that important? Really?

Sue: I like to know these things. They used to have a food machine, but I

THE WEB OF FEAR

don't remember seeing a setting for bread. And I can't imagine the Doctor popping into Sainsbury's or Tesco's to stock up on supplies when he just happens to land near a shop, either. But it's possible, I guess.

Me: It's a space-time machine, Sue. I'm pretty sure it can bake bread. **Sue**: And slice it too – that isn't homemade bread; it's thin-sliced Nimble

by the look of it.

Me: Jesus, even Andrew Pixley doesn't go into this kind of detail.

Deep inside some underground tunnels, the British army have more important things on their minds than bread (although they could murder a nice cup of tea).

Sue: It's UNIT! **Me**: It isn't.

Sue: Oh, that's disappointing. You'll be telling me that the Master isn't in this, next. The London Underground looks fantastic, by the way. It's a

great location to set a story in.

Me: It isn't the London Underground. It's a BBC set.

Sue: Piss off! That isn't a set.

Me: That's what London Underground said. They were convinced the BBC had sneaked in and filmed there without permission. They went mental, or so the story goes.

Sue: I'm not surprised they couldn't tell the difference. It looks amazing. Look at that carpentry!

Sue will keep banging on about how great the sets look throughout this story.

Sue: Such beautiful curvature...

In fact, Sue is full of praise today.

Sue: This episode is nicely directed. I don't think we've seen direction this good since Douglas Camfield. This isn't Douglas, is it?

Me: I don't believe it. Your 'Camfield Radar' is incredible. That's the second time you've spotted Camfield's involvement in a story. I'm

seriously impressed.

Sue: It's not that difficult. He's the only director who knows what he's doing.

She's far too engrossed in the action to say anything after that, and when the credits roll, she's very pleased indeed.

Sue: Well, that was a cracking start. They should have cut away before the explosion went off for that cliffhanger, but that's forgivable. It's a great start for the new producer. Yes, we like Peter. We like Peter a lot. In fact, if I had to score these episodes individually, I'd probably give that 10 out of 10.

Episode 2

And so it begins. Another epic run of recons. It'll be another 13 episodes before we reach Episode 3 of The Wheel in Space.

Sue: At least we've seen the first episode – it helps when I can see something tangible early on. At least I can get a feel for the characters and the locations. I suppose we should count ourselves lucky.

I remind Sue that Jack Watling is Deborah's father.

Sue: I like the way they're exploring the ramifications of time travel by visiting Travers again later in his life. You don't really see that in *Doctor Who*. The Doctor usually just buggers off.

Me: Not that he had a choice in the matter, of course.

Sue: I bet this scared children shitless. It's because it's set in a recognisable location, and those tunnels are scary enough at the best of times.

Me: Well, it certainly scared the crap out of Mike Gatting.

Sue: It's very atmospheric, and the Yeti are much more frightening in this one, too. The guns help, I think. And they have Orbital eyes. They look quite impressive.

THE WEB OF FEAR

As the web advances along the Circle Line, Sue suddenly realises that Patrick Troughton has been absent from this episode.

Sue: I've just worked out that he's on holiday this week. This must be a pretty good story if I've only just noticed that.

And then Driver Evans appears, singing in Welsh.

Sue: And now it's turned into Dad's Army.

Suddenly the web/fungus/mist/scary thing starts to advance on Evans and Jamie, trapping them in the tunnel.

Sue: I'm impressed. A classic cliffhanger. You can't really argue with that.

Episode 3

Sue: It's the Brigadier!

Me: Colonel, actually, he hasn't gone up in the world yet. **Sue**: I thought you said UNIT weren't in this story?

Me: They aren't, they're just the regular army.

Sue: Is this the event that brings UNIT about? Hang on a minute. The Doctor and the Brigadier met each other off-screen. How rubbish is that? Me: It's not as if they knew the character would go on to be so important. It's just another supporting role at this point. But yes, it is frustrating. Sue: They should remake this story. Well, they could put something scary in the London Underground. I'm not sure if Yeti would work today, but I really like the action taking place in a recognisable location. It makes a nice change from all those high-tech bases and stately homes.

As the Doctor explains what the Great Intelligence actually is, Sue sinks deeper into her chair.

Sue: People are just milling around, talking up the threat. It wouldn't be so bad if we could actually see them milling around. Please don't tell me

this story falls apart now.

When a journalist named Chorley demands that he be airlifted out of their current predicament, Lethbridge-Stewart gives him a right earful.

Sue: The Brigadier...

Me: Colonel.

Sue: The Colonel has a very commanding presence. You can see why they asked him to come back. He's quite strict, but he's likeable and charming with it.

Chorley ends up chatting to Victoria, who happily tells him where her time machine is parked.

Sue: What is Victoria's function in this story, exactly? She's just a pretty girl with a big mouth.

The episode ends with Travers menaced by a Yeti.

Sue: That was probably a really good cliffhanger. Bugger.

Episode 4

Sue: I like the way the Brigadier...

Me: Colonel.

Sue: I like the way the Colonel just accepts that the Doctor has a time and space machine in the shape of a police telephone box. He doesn't bat an eyelid – not that we can see his eyelids moving – but he sounds like he's fine with it. No wonder they asked him to run UNIT after this – he'll swallow practically anything.

Sue is a fan of Anne Travers, too.

Sue: Anne would be a good assistant. The Doctor needs someone with intelligence. I notice that he's sidelined Jamie and Victoria. They couldn't

THE WEB OF FEAR

hold a screwdriver steady if their lives depended on it. They're plucky and brave, but they're also completely fucking useless. Well, Victoria is. She dies in this one, doesn't she? I bet she does. And then Anne will take her place. I can see it coming a mile off.

The army enter the web on a trolley. After some agonising screams, the trolley comes back with a corpse on it.

Sue: This is a bit grim, isn't it?

Meanwhile, on the street above them, the Colonel and his men are attacked by marauding Yeti.

Sue: The Yeti have definitely slimmed down a bit. They've lost a lot of weight from their hips. I still don't understand why the Intelligence would use the Yeti in contemporary London, though. They just about make sense in Tibet, but here? Hmm...

Me: Maybe the Intelligence had to work with what he had lying around after his last invasion attempt. And what kind of monster would well work in the London Underground anyway? A dinosaur?

Sue: Don't be silly.

Me: Are you impressed by the Yeti-acting so far?

Sue: I beg your pardon?

Me: The Yeti-acting. How do you rate it?

Sue: I don't understand. They're Yeti. What do you want me to say? **Me**: So there isn't a particular Yeti that stands out, then? That's odd, I thought you'd recognise raw talent when you saw it. Camfield did.

Sue: What are you banging on about, Neil?

Me: I'll tell you later.

The army engage the Yeti.

Sue: Whoah! What the hell are they supposed to be?

I should explain that the reconstruction we're watching features copious

amounts of CGI Yeti.

Sue: They look like dancing chimps.

Luckily for us, the battle is intercut with snippets of real footage.

Sue: This really helps me get a handle on what it must have looked like. It's very exciting for an episode of *Doctor Who*. Non-stop action and another great cliffhanger. Douglas shows everyone how to do it.

Episode 5

Sue: Finally, the Intelli-whatsist has turned up to explain the plot to us. It's only taken him four episodes.

Travers, under the control of the Great Intelligence, rasps his way through a series of demented demands.

Sue: Poor Travers. His throat must be killing him.

The Intelligence threatens to kill Victoria if the Doctor doesn't succumb to a brain-drain.

Sue: The Doctor has exactly 20 minutes to make up his mind. How long is left in this episode?

Me: About 20 minutes.

Sue: What a surprise. Still, I suppose it's nice to see a villain working to a strict timetable that just happens to coincide with an episode's running time. I've noticed that the villains on 24 tend to do that as well. I hope he doesn't give in. The thought of the Doctor being brought up by Jamie and Victoria as a baby doesn't bear thinking about. I don't think they'd get through another season of the show to be honest. I'd probably get Anne to do it; she could teach him about science and stuff. Victoria would just teach him to be scared of things, and Jamie would be completely hopeless – he doesn't even know what a hovercraft is!

THE WEB OF FEAR

Evans wants to hand the Doctor over to the Intelligence so they can all go home. Sue doesn't like the cut of his jib.

Sue: Evans needs a bloody good court-martial if he gets out of here. You can't talk to the Brigadier like that!

Me: Colonel.

Sue: The programme missed another trick when it came to merchandising. These remote-controlled spheres with the bleeping noises would have sold like hot cakes. Cats would have loved them.

As paranoia sets in, no one is above suspicion.

Sue: I think we're supposed to believe that the Brigadier is the traitor, but of course that's impossible.

Me: Because the Brigadier isn't actually in this?

Sue: You know what I mean.

Evans continues to act, as Sue so delicately puts it, "like a complete twat".

Sue: This isn't a great day for the Welsh in *Doctor Who*.

Me: Oh it gets a lot worse than this. But the Welsh get their revenge.

Eventually.

Sue: I've just realised that Evans is played by Michael Crawford. He's in loads of *Doctor Who*, isn't he? Look! "Hmmm, Betty! The Yeti's done a whoopsie in the tunnel."

The episode concludes when a torrent of fungus begins to flood the lab.

Sue: Okay, who ordered the porridge?

Episode 6

Sue: Evans is really getting on my nerves, now. He actually said, "There's lovely" when the Yeti dragged him off. And why don't the Yeti just kill him? They'd be doing us all a favour. Plus, why does this recon keep

referring to a 'lead Yeti'? What makes the 'lead Yeti' so special? Has he got special markings on his fur or something?

Me: It's the Yeti played by the actor with raw, unharnessed talent.

Sue: And we haven't seen Chorley for *ages*. He's obviously the traitor. Plus, we're running out of suspects.

The action moves to the station platform.

Sue: There's an advert for *Blockbusters* on the wall over there. What year is

this set, Neil?

Me: Don't even go there, Sue.

The traitor turns out to be... Arnold. Who was dead all the time. Which means the Intelligence is a bloody good actor.

Sue: I never would have guessed that twist. Mainly because it doesn't make any sense.

The Doctor is hooked up to the Intelligence's brain-draining device, but Jamie and Evans smash the apparatus to bits. Hurrah!

Sue: I can't believe the Doctor is upset because somebody else saved the day in a less clever way. He's in a right strop.

The Doctor is furious because the Intelligence wasn't completely defeated.

Sue: I guess they're setting it up for the third part of the trilogy. I'm sure the Doctor will sort it out when they meet again. In a couple of weeks, probably.

The Score

Sue: That was very good. Watching it was frustrating, but I can see it for what it is, and it worked in small chunks. I still don't know what the bloody Yeti were doing in the Underground – I'd love to read Chorley's

THE WEB OF FEAR

newspaper report – but it was pretty scary, and it felt like proper *Doctor Who*. And you've got to love the Camfield.

8/10

COMMENT: "Is it too much to ask what Sue looks like? I'm getting visions of some fag ash Lil, with a cigarette hanging precariously from the side of her mouth... and fluffy pink slippers." - Jamie

NOTES: More evidence that Sue must have seen some of Jon Pertwee's episodes when she was a girl – if only subliminally – can be witnessed in her enthusiastic familiarity for the Brigadier. Sorry, Colonel.

Douglas Camfield's favourite Yeti was played by Harold Pinter.
And it isn't over Yeti! The final part of the trilogy is included in the *Extras* section of this book, along with the miraculous recovery of *The Web of Fear*. Seriously, if you're a fan of the Yeti, you've hit the motherlode with this book.

FURY FROM THE DEEP

BLOGGED: 29 August 2011

Episode 1

Me: This is the only Patrick Troughton story that doesn't begin with a 'The'

Sue: (Rolling her eyes) Remind me why I married you, again, Neil.

The TARDIS dematerialises in mid-air before landing gently on the North Sea.

Sue: I've seen this before. I definitely remember seeing this when I was a kid. It's very memorable. I was going to ask you if the TARDIS ever landed on the sea. I wish I had now; it would have freaked you out.

Me: Is this story any good, then?

Sue: I have no idea. I probably turned over to ITV. We were a very working class family.

The Doctor, Jamie and Victoria use a small dingy to reach the shoreline.

Sue: They must really want to get to that beach. Instead of, oh I don't know, taking off again and finding some dry land instead. I like the Doctor's bobble hat, though. It actually suits him.

The beach is covered in foam, and it isn't long before our heroes are rolling around in it like idiots.

Sue: Have they landed in Ibiza?

Our heroes notice a pipeline running into the sea.

Sue: It's Seaton Carew's sewage works. I think I can hear Seaton Carew's

fun fair in the background as well.

Me: That's Dudley Simpson.

FURY FROM THE DEEP

Sue: Really? I thought they'd got rid of him ages ago.

The Doctor pulls out his trusty sonic screwdriver.

Sue: The sonic! At last! Where has he been hiding it all this time?

Me: I don't know. Maybe he invented it between stories. There could be

loads of adventures between this one and the last one.

Sue: If it wasn't on the telly, it doesn't count.

The sonic screwdriver loosens some, er, screws.

Sue: Is that really the best it can do? It's not that impressive when you

compare it to the sonic in the new series.

Me: No, it doesn't have 18 billion settings yet.

Sue: This Doctor doesn't have much luck when it comes to beaches, does he? He's being shot at – again! This only happened a couple of weeks ago.

He should start wearing a bulletproof vest or something.

Our heroes are captured and taken to the Base of the Week.

Sue: Harris is very polite. If I'm ever arrested on suspicion of terrorism, I want Harris to be in charge of my interrogation.

Acting as a counterpoint to the exceedingly reasonable Harris is Chief Robson, a man who's managed to turn irritability into performance art.

Sue: Robson is a bit of a git, isn't he? I certainly wouldn't want an annual appraisal with him.

Our heroes are locked up on suspicion of being suspicious, but Jamie escapes through a ventilator shaft.

Sue: The Doctor is getting a bit of an eyeful here.

Once free, Victoria suggests they split up.

Sue: That's a good idea, Vic. You never know when one of you might feel like going on holiday in the middle of the story.

It also means Victoria can end the episode locked in a room that's about to be engulfed in foam.

Sue: Her moaning can still be heard over the credits. That's unsettling.

Episode 2

This episode begins the same way the previous one ended – with Victoria screaming her lungs out.

Sue: Turn the hysterics down a notch, Vic. You'll shatter someone's eardrums.

An echoing heartbeat reverberates through the gas pipes.

Sue: That thumping sound they can hear is the nightclub next door. It's Balearic Beats Night, by the sound of it.

Sue assumes that Robson is in cahoots with the monsters.

Sue: Nobody could be that much of a dick. He must be the bad guy.

Sue believes that Mr Oak and Mr Quill are a teensy-weensy bit camp.

Sue: Oooh, suits you, sir!

Although this doesn't last very long.

Sue: Death by dog breath! Eww, that was horrible! No wonder the Australians cut that. I feel a bit sick.

Pressure in the gas pipes is now fluctuating wildly.

FURY FROM THE DEEP

Sue: If you happen to be an expert on gas drilling and impellers, this is probably gripping stuff, but I'm struggling with it. The only reason I'm still interested is because my dad used to make the parts for the rigs that went out to sea. He never mentioned any foam, though.

Sue loves John Abineri ("He's got a face you can trust"), and the episode ends with him insisting that something terrible is waiting in the dark.

Sue: That was a low-key cliffhanger. More menacing than monstrous. But I liked it.

Episode 3

The episode begins with everyone staring at a large lump of weed on a carpet.

Sue: Don't just stand there! Smoke it!

Robson goes mental when he's told that the Doctor has escaped.

Sue: Robson is a vicious fucker, isn't he? I bet he's up in front of harassment boards every day of the week. They need to send him on a management course or something. All these Base Under Siege managers need some sort of counselling, if you ask me.

When Robson, Van Luytens and Harris have another blazing row (their third in five minutes), Sue comments on the clarity of their argument.

Sue: The soundtrack is very good. This may be hard to watch, but at least it's easy to listen to. We should have put this on in the car.

Victoria finds a picture of the weed creature in a book about legends and superstitions.

Sue: It's turned into Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

And then Robson goes completely mental. Well, even more mental than he was before.

Sue: Maybe he should try smoking some of that weed. He's seconds away from a fatal heart attack.

Victoria is sick of being in mortal danger every single week.

Sue: Does Victoria want to go home? Good. She's beginning to get on my nerves. Pull yourself together, woman.

The episode concludes with Harris' wife, Maggie, doing a Reginald Perrin.

Sue: Bloody hell, how grim was that? I'm surprised the Australians left that in. I bet there aren't many episodes of *Doctor Who* that end with somebody committing suicide.

Episode 4

Jamie and Victoria are sharing a room with a bunk bed.

Sue: Do you think Victoria or Jamie prefers to be the one on top?

But Victoria can't sleep. She's much too busy moaning.

Sue: I can almost see her point – being molested by monsters every day of the week would get on your nerves after a while. But I don't think I can be arsed with someone complaining about having all of time and space to explore. It also suggests the Doctor never really gets a day off, which proves he didn't have any free time in which to make his sonic screwdriver. So there!

Me: At least this story is making an effort to signal Victoria's departure in advance. We usually only get a few seconds notice when one of them decides to leave. I like it.

Sue: Banging on about it is almost as bad as not mentioning it at all.

FURY FROM THE DEEP

Thanks to the Australian censors, we are treated to a scene, which features the weed creature in all its moving glory.

Sue: That looked pretty good. I think. It's still just foam, though. It's hard to be frightened by foam, no matter how hard you try.

John Abineri's screams are horrific. They seem to go on for ages. And as if that wasn't bad enough, Ricky Gervais is the next to die. (You didn't know Ricky Gervais was in charge of one of the gas rigs? Well think again!) As the weed creature fills the inspection pipe, Sue appreciates the gravity of the situation.

Sue: They'll need some Mr Muscle to shift that.

Episode 5

Sue: I like Mrs Jones. She doesn't take any shit from anyone. She'd be an interesting companion, assuming she replaces Victoria. She'd give the Doctor a really hard time. Actually, on second thoughts, that would be a terrible idea.

As if to underline this point, Victoria is still complaining.

Sue: Here she goes again! Moan, moan, moan. The TARDIS should be like *Big Brother*. If you say you want to leave – even the once – they should kick you out. Bang, you're gone. Give her place to someone who might appreciate it. Oh look, that guard is played by the lead singer of Showaddywaddy.

Someone in the refinery is in cahoots with the weed.

Sue: Maybe it's Bill and Ben? **Me**: Or Cheech and Chong?

Mr Oak and Mr Quill attack Jamie with their Halitosis of Death.

Sue: I knew a girl at school like that, her name was ■■■■■ and she had green teeth. Christ, she stank...

Robson, now under the influence of the weed, kidnaps Victoria and steals a helicopter.

Sue: Why would the Australian censors cut a scene of Robson staring up at a helicopter? That makes no sense at all. Why were we allowed to see that?

You know, sometimes it's better if we don't see any surviving footage in the middle of a recon. Sue always seems to be fine until they suddenly burst into life for a few seconds – and then I have to endure the sound of her tutting, sighing, or sometimes even wailing, "Why doesn't this exist?" for several minutes. It's depressing.

Sue: It's been five episodes now, and the Doctor still hasn't come up with a solution to this mess. Matt Smith would have sorted this out in 30 minutes, tops.

Me: Oh, really? Do you remember how the TARDIS blew up in series five? Has the Eleventh Doctor worked that one out yet, in the middle of series six?

Sue: Well...

Me: Exactly. Troughton would have figured that out ages ago.

The Doctor and Jamie take a helicopter to the control rig where Robson is holding Victoria hostage.

Sue: This story must have had a massive budget. It's turning into *Apocalypse Now*. How many helicopters?

The Doctor and Jamie find Robson, who's surrounded by foam and weed.

Sue: That was a pretty good cliffhanger. I think that's the first time Robson hasn't shouted his lines. I was beginning to think the actor was deaf.

FURY FROM THE DEEP

Episode 6

Sue: Ah, there's a reassuring sight.

Me: What is?

Sue: 'Episode 6'. I love seeing those two words together when I'm watching *Doctor Who*. Don't get me wrong, I'm enjoying this, but I enjoy

the first and last episodes the most. I can't help it.

The Doctor, Jamie and Victoria escape in a stolen helicopter.

Sue: The Doctor's flying this helicopter the same way he flies the TARDIS. They'll crash into the sea any second now.

Flying a helicopter isn't as easy as it looks.

Sue: This probably looked really exciting, but they're just padding it out now.

The Doctor radios for assistance.

Sue: And now it's turned into *Some Mothers Do Have 'Em.*

And then the Doctor puts two and two together and comes up with the answer: Victoria has a very big mouth.

Sue: Does Victoria stay behind so they can employ her to scream down a gas pipe every few hours to keep the weed at bay?

The Doctor rigs up a device to record Victoria's screams, but when she has to deliver the goods, she suffers from performance anxiety.

Sue: Just slap her! Or show her a photo of a Yeti! Jamie – quick, flash her!

Victoria eventually screams her lungs out.

Sue: Why isn't the Doctor using his sonic screwdriver? All this talk of sonic waves and he doesn't even mention it!

Thanks to some Super 8 cine footage, short extracts from the final battle actually exist. And it looks amazing.

Sue: The weed looks pretty good, thrashing around like that. I'm impressed.

And then it's all over. Victoria's screams kill the weed creature and everybody lives (even John Abineri, although he doesn't get to say hello, which annoys Sue). Even Maggie seems fine.

Sue: Why did Maggie walk into the sea again?

Me: I haven't the faintest idea.

Sue: So is that it, then? That was a bit quick.

Me: That can't be right, there's still eight minutes left.

Sue: It's unusual for the Doctor to stay for a round of celebratory drinks

after he's defeated a monster. This can't be over yet.

Robson walks into the refinery's control room.

Sue: Robson is still under the influence of the weed. He's going to blow up the gas pipes or something. I knew this wasn't over yet.

But no, he's just popped in for a chat with the engineer. He's still a complete git, but at least he's toned it down a bit.

And then Victoria bids Jamie and the Doctor farewell.

Sue: It's just like Bad Wolf Bay. Poor Jamie. Don't be upset, love, there are still plenty of fish left in the sea. Although he'll probably want to avoid the sea after this.

FURY FROM THE DEEP

The Score

Sue: Good script, good performances, scary monsters. You can't really argue with that. Yes, I enjoyed it.

8/10

COMMENT: "I was worried that this might be the one to finish the experiment. Surely we're okay now until *Timelash*?" – Lawrence McIlhoney

NOTES: As we were watching *Fury from the Deep*, another anonymous email landed in my blog's inbox in the middle of the night. Only this one wasn't threatening to set my wife on fire.

Hello Neil and Sue,

I just wanted to drop you a line to say how much we are enjoying your blog and your struggle – both very funny. My wife and I have tried similar experiments and failed. We are with you every step of the way. I'm a Doctor Who fan. I'm also a writer and a freelance editor and I do some commissioning for Faber and Faber.

And that's all he wrote. He didn't even tell me his name. But he didn't call himself a Whovian either, so, you know, swings and roundabouts.

To be honest, when I read that email my first thought was: "What a nice email, but did he really need to blow his own trumpet like that? Why should I care that he has a terrific-sounding job?" There was no need to rub it in, mate.

Turns out he accidentally sent the message in the middle of a sentence and there was more to come. A lot more.

He called me the next day to check that I wasn't completely insane (he said he'd been avoiding our blog because he thought *Adventures with the Wife in Space* sounded like a fansite dedicated to Amy Pond's relationship with Rory Williams), and after I passed that test, we arranged to meet each other at the *Doctor Who Experience* in London to see if I could turn

this nonsense into a 'proper book'.
I'll tell you what happened next in *Volume 3*.

**** THE WHEEL IN SPACE**

BLOGGED: 9 September 2011

An anonymous benefactor has sent us another treat in the post – a brand new reconstruction of this story with impressive CGI effects.

Episode 1

Sue: The Wheel in Space. This must be good if you named our experiment

after it.

Me: Erm, yes, well...

When the TARDIS breaks down on a deserted spaceship called the Silver Carrier, the Doctor turns his time machine into a regular police telephone box.

Sue: That's a good anti-theft device.

Me: It's preposterous! You can't just turn the TARDIS into an empty box!

Where does the rest of it go? It's sounds like magic to me.

Sue: It's a police box that flies through time and space, Neil. Where do

you want to draw the line?

The Doctor offers Jamie a sweet to calm him down.

Sue: I used to have cravings for lemon sherbet when I was pregnant. Hang on a minute! I thought the Doctor ate jelly babies?

Large portions of this episode are spent watching a Servo Robot waddling up and down a corridor.

Sue: This CGI robot looks great. I can't imagine what it would have been like with the usual stills. Random bleeping and humming for minutes on end, probably. This is almost watchable.

The Doctor and Jamie are feeling a little peckish, but thankfully help is at

hand.

Sue: Oh, a food machine! I've missed them. Hang on... Cabbage? Who in their right mind asks for cabbage?

As Jamie and the Doctor chow down on some boiled vegetables, the Servo Robot releases some white spheres into outer space.

Sue: Oooh, Yeti spheres! Is this the final showdown between the Doctor and that Intelligence thingy?

When the Servo Robot starts acting up, Jamie disables it.

Sue: They should do that to all the villains – just throw a blanket over them. It works every time.

After being cooped up in claustrophobic spaceship for what feels like an eternity, our heroes suddenly find themselves in the middle of a busy space station.

Sue: It's the International Base of the Week. Are there any foreign accents they haven't tried yet?

The episode concludes with a vague threat, but it's too little too late.

Sue: Well, that was strange. Did anything actually happen?

Episode 2

Sue: Is the attractive blonde the next companion? I bet you'd be happy with that, Neil.

Me: She does have a very nice nose.

Sue: You know, if there's one thing that sums up 1960s *Doctor Who* more than anything else, it's the sound of people's feet clumping around on hard

board floors. It's annoying me now.

THE WHEEL IN SPACE

Jamie comes up with a new pseudonym for the Doctor to use.

Sue: Didn't David Tennant's Doctor call himself John Smith? Damn, did I sound like a fan just then?

Me: Yes. And yes.

Sue: Is it just me, or is this really boring? More boring than usual, I mean. **Me**: No, it isn't just you. I think I may have dozed off for a second back

there.

I'm definitely conscious when Wendy Padbury makes her first appearance.

Sue: So is Zoe the new assistant? Or is it Tanya? Or Gemma? The suspects are starting to stack up. Can the Doctor take all three? If not, I'd vote for Gemma. Not only does she look like Shirley from *EastEnders*, she doesn't take any shit like her, too. She'd be an interesting addition to the crew. Zoe is tiny. Pretty, though.

Me: She's lovely. In fact, Wendy Padbury is the only *Doctor Who* actor I've ever had the courage to speak to without sticking a microphone in their face. I spent a very pleasant morning chain-smoking with her outside a hotel in Los Angeles, and I never mentioned *Doctor Who*. Not once!

Sue gives me a suspicious look, and then the episode concludes with a Cyberman emerging from one of the spheres.

Sue: I didn't know that Cybermen were hatched from eggs. They must be really tiny. Like dolls.

Me: What?!

Sue: It's impossible to get a sense of scale. How big are these balls supposed to be? And how did they get through the hull in the first place? Still, at least it isn't the Yeti. That's something, I guess.

Episode 3

After performing our obligatory real episode dance, we settle back to watch our first moving episode after an unbroken run of 13 recons. And it feels

wonderful.

Sue: The Cyberman in that ball looks like he's trying to do the *Tales of the Unexpected* dance.

Meanwhile, two of the Wheel's crew, Leo and Tanya, are conducting an office romance.

Sue: Get a room! Compare the size of your noses somewhere more private!

When an engineer named Duggan encounters a Cybermat for the first time, his reaction to them is almost childlike.

Sue: Does he think it's a toy? Or a novelty hand-brush, perhaps? I don't blame him, though. Who'd be scared of *that*?

And Patrick Troughton is back after a week off, thank God.

Sue: I really miss Patrick Troughton when he's not around. He shouldn't be allowed to go on holiday – he's much too important.

Leo decides to berate Zoe for no readily apparent reason.

Sue: He doesn't like Zoe because she won't flirt with him. What a twat. Oh, hang on, this bloke is definitely famous.

Me: That's Kevork Malikyan. He played the Greek student in *Mind Your Language*.

Sue: Can I call that show racist, or will I get into trouble for that as well?

And then Nicol, who has been pretending to ignore this episode up to now, suddenly chips in when Zoe starts reeling off her CV.

Nicol: It is highly unlikely that an astrophysicist would have studied pure mathematics. Pure mathematics isn't what people assume it is. I think the

THE WHEEL IN SPACE

writer has made a mistake.

Me: What? David Whitaker? Never!

Sue and Nicol love the Doctor's line: "Logic merely enables one to be wrong with authority", but it's slim pickings.

Sue: It doesn't look right when the Cybermen sit on chairs. They shouldn't be that comfortable.

At least Sue can appreciate the Cybermats' practical applications.

Sue: Can we employ some Cybermats to clean our floors? They'd save so much time. And why is this guy scared of the Cybermats when the other bloke wanted to play with them? You can't have it both ways. Are they supposed to be scary or silly? Which is it? And why doesn't he just stamp on them?

Sue winces when the scene's dialogue is obscured by the sound of feet trampling across the wooden set.

Sue: Why don't they take their shoes off? You never see their feet anyway, and it would sound so much better.

Episode 4

Sue: The people who made these CGI astronauts are very keen on Health and Safety. It's good to see people lifting with their knees, even when they don't exist.

It's taken until her until the fourth episode, but Sue finally comments on Michael Turner's increasingly bizarre performance as the Wheel's controller, Iarvis Bennett.

Sue: He's the worst actor to appear in the series so far. He's definitely the worst base commander. He's useless. At least the women are coming out

of this story well. They are clever and capable, which is more than you can say for the men. The Doctor is pretty useless this week, too. What has he actually done so far? It's William Hartnell all over again.

Jamie walks in on Zoe as she records some computations. Jamie apologises profusely.

Sue: It's like that time I walked in on you when you were recording one of your stupid podcasts.

Me: But with less sexual tension.

Sue: I've just realised that these Cybermen look like they're crying. And what's the hole under its mouth for? Do they poke their tongues through it? Do they dribble out of it?

As Bennett's insanity increases ("His acting gets worse the crazier he gets, and that ain't easy!"), the Wheel's crew decide to monitor his brainwaves.

Sue: No wonder he's so paranoid. Does an alarm go off if he looks at pornography on an office computer?

The episode concludes with the Doctor rallying the Wheel's crew against the Cybermen.

Sue: Finally! Why couldn't he have done that three episodes ago?

Episode 5

Sue: (Sung to the tune of 'The Wheels on the Bus') And The Wheel in Space goes on and on, on and on, on and on. The Wheel in Space goes on and on, all night long!

I think I'm losing Sue.

Sue: I haven't got a clue what the heart-shaped Cybermen just said. Which is a shame because I bet it was the plot. Sometimes you can be too

THE WHEEL IN SPACE

experimental for your own good.

Zoe rues the fact that she has a mind like a machine.

Sue: She's like a pixie Spock.

And then, thanks to the Australian censors...

Sue: Bloody hell! They're repeatedly banging that poor bloke's head off a wall! That was bruta!! Where the hell did that come from?

The Wheel *is threatened by a meteorite storm.*

Sue: So, are these meteorites Cyber-eggs or what?

Me: What makes you say that?

Sue: They look like perfect spheres, so they must be the Cybermen. To be honest with you Neil, I haven't got a clue what's going on any more.

And then, accompanied by a very loud groan from Sue, Gemma is killed by a Cyberman.

Sue: Typical! Kill the strong woman, why don't you?! I really hate this show, sometimes.

Episode 6

As Jamie and Zoe are almost blasted to smithereens during an ill-timed spacewalk, the Doctor admits he's willing to sacrifice his companions for the greater good.

Sue: That's a bit shocking. Do you think Jamie is aware of this?

When Bennett attacks a Cyberman, Sue isn't impressed.

Sue: If he rugby tackled him, he'd stand a much better chance. Giving the

Cyberman a hug isn't going to work. Still, this Cyberman is just as bad. Why didn't he kill Bennett with his accordion, instead of throwing him around like that? It isn't very efficient.

The Cybermen check the Wheel's personnel records, just in case an arch-nemesis of theirs happens to be on board. And then a hypnotised crewmember struggles to remember the Doctor's name.

Sue: If Steven Moffat was writing this episode, he would have put in a "Doctor who?" joke, for sure. He wouldn't have been able to resist.

As the scene plays out for what seems like hours ("Are they going to go through everyone's employment records?"), Sue suddenly becomes distracted by the decor.

Sue: It looks like the cast of *Star Trek* have been replaced by a collection of lava lamps.

The Doctor confronts the Cybermen. It's only taken him six episodes.

Sue: Why don't they kill him? Why are they telling the Doctor their secret plans? They'll be sitting down to discuss it with him over coffee, next.

The Cybermen decide to take the Wheel by force. They do this by walking from their ship to the Wheel. And when I say walk, I do mean walk.

Sue: Oh dear. This is terrible. Look at them flapping their arms around like chickens. This is not good.

The Cybermen attempt to gain entry through the Wheel's loading bay, but Jamie ejects them back into the cold vacuum of space.

Sue: This is like the end of *Alien*. If the end of *Alien* was rubbish. Even the music is the same, and the spacesuits are similar, too.

Me: Well, it's entirely probable that Ridley Scott saw this.

THE WHEEL IN SPACE

Sue: It's an excellent template for how not to do it.

With the threat disposed of, things start getting back to normal on the Wheel (this mainly involves Leo and Tanya touching each other inappropriately).

Sue: There should be rules against that kind of thing. We work together and you don't see us carrying on like that.

Me: More's the pity.

Sue: Why don't they pick David Ginola as the new companion? He'd be

nice eye candy for the ladies.

Me: You do know that the actor who's playing Enrico is blacked up, don't

you?

Sue: Oh, on second thoughts, they should probably take Zoe instead.

The Doctor finds Zoe hiding inside his TARDIS, so he shows her what she'll be up against if she decides to join him on his adventures.

Sue: Oh, it's the Daleks. I knew it wouldn't be long before we saw them again. I bet the kids were pleased. Hang on a minute, haven't we seen this before?

Me: Yes, it's *The Evil of the Daleks*. The broadcast repeat is woven into the fabric of the programme, which means we really ought to watch it again.

Sue: What would Rob Shearman do?

Me: He skipped it.

Sue: We should probably watch it, then.

Me: In that case, you'll be watching it on your own.

Sue: Amateur.

The Score

Sue: That was dreadful. I'm sick of that type of story now. That was easily Patrick Troughton's worst story so far. Please tell me the next season does something a bit different. *Please?*

2/10

COMMENT: "You're horrible, the pair of you." – Dave Sanders

SEASON SIX

IS IT THE MASTER?



This illustration funded by Joe McIntyre



BLOGGED: 23 September 2011

Episode 1

Sue: Nice porno title. I bet the fans bought this DVD online. I can't imagine a *Doctor Who* fan walking into a shop and asking for a copy of *The Dominators*.

Me: Then you aren't mixing with the right Doctor Who fans, love.

The episode begins with a spaceship landing in a quarry.

Sue: This reminds me of *Lost in Space* a bit. A cheap version of *Lost in Space*, mind. When was this story broadcast?

Me: August 1968.

Sue: I'd have been playing cricket or tennis with my brother. Even if it was raining, I still would have been outside. There's no way I would have seen this when it was on.

Me: You should count yourself lucky. This is my third time. Anyway, it's time to play 'Spot the Soap Star' again. Come on, you haven't done this in weeks.

Sue: Oh, yes, it's whatshername from *Crossroads*. The posh manager with the fake tan. I'm getting good at this.

Me: The actor or character name will earn you extra points. **Sue**: Not a clue. Sorry. Oh my God, they're wearing curtains!

Sue's pointing at the Dulcians.

Sue: They've arrived in a giant lemon squeezer! This looks so amateurish. It's actually painful to watch. The direction is terrible as well. You know, this would probably be more bearable as a recon. At least I could imagine what it would have looked like with a good director.

A man named Cully is organising illegal adventure tours to a radioactive island. Sounds like fun.

Sue: So this guy is basically Richard Branson on this planet? He looks like a bank manager. In a dress.

The Dominators, on the other hand, are as butch as they come.

Sue: They must be from a planet where shoulder pads evolved into men. Was the costume designer on hallucinogenic drugs? How did this get off the drawing board? It looks so cheap. I thought they had money to spend at the start of a new season – this looks like they're scraping the bottom of the barrel already. And they should iron that cloth backdrop – look at the creases!

And then Sue spots another soap star.

Sue: The other Dominator is Mad Michael Moon from *EastEnders*.

The Doctor and his companions have arrived on Dulkis, but instead of frolicking on a beach, they've ended up in a Museum of Death.

Sue: This has to be the world's most dangerous museum – the exhibits include live firearms! This planet obviously hasn't heard of Health and Safety yet. And it's a very drafty museum, too. I bet they don't get many visitors.

The Doctor and Jamie leave Zoe with the Dulcians while they investigate a report their TARDIS is being threatened by the Dominators.

Sue: I love the way Zoe can't be bothered going back to the TARDIS with the Doctor and Jamie. The writers didn't even try to contrive a reason it. How lazy can you get?

And then the Quarks are revealed to us in all their, erm, glory.

Sue: It's a bedside cabinet! A bedside cabinet with yet another electronic voice I can't understand. Great.

THE DOMINATORS

Episode 2

Jamie and the Doctor are captured by the Dominators and taken to their spaceship.

Sue: Are they going to insert an anal probe into Jamie? No wonder he's terrified. Actually, this would be scary if it wasn't so funny.

The Dominators want to know if the Doctor is capable of building an atomic bomb, so they set him a simple puzzle. But the Doctor fails the test on purpose, even though it means being administered with a painful electric shock.

Sue: This is just like Camp X-Ray – with the emphasis on camp.

The Doctor convinces his captors he's a harmless idiot and they agree to let him go.

Sue: If the Dominators are so evil, without a shred of pity, why did they let Jamie and the Doctor go like that? The Daleks would have exterminated or enslaved them without a second thought.

Me: The Dominators literally haven't got the energy.

Sue: I know how they feel.

Zoe wants to know where she can get a Dulcian dress from.

Sue: Why, Constessa Curtains, of course.

We're still chuckling at that when the Dominators unleash their Quarks on a Dulcian survey unit.

Sue: That Quark isn't even pointing at the target! Look at it!

The resultant explosion is very nice though.

Sue: That was painful. I can't believe there are three episodes of this nonsense left.

Episode 3

Nicol: It's Mad Michael Moon.

Me: We've already done that gag, Nicol. Don't you have any homework

you should be doing?

Nicol: No, I just graduated with a first class Masters degree in

Mathematics from a red brick university. I'm unemployed, remember? **Me**: Well, why don't you make your mother a nice cup of tea? This isn't for

the fainthearted.

Nicol: But it's moving.

Sue: Trust me, love, this is much worse than any recon. It's *The*

Dominators.

Nicol: Right. In that case, if you need me, I'll be upstairs applying for a

job in Burger King.

Me: You know, it's hard to believe that *Crossroads* wasn't the worst thing to star Ronald Allen.

Sue: He looks older here than he does in *Crossroads*, but I don't think they had Botox back in the 1970s. So that's strange.

The Doctor tries to warn the Dulcians about the evil Dominators.

Sue: Stop calling them callous, pitiless monsters – THEY LET YOU GO! These so-called Dominators seem quite reasonable to me.

And as for the Quarks...

Sue: Just push them over!

The Doctor and Jamie are taking a capsule back to Zoe when they suddenly realise the Quarks will be waiting for them when they arrive. The Doctor attempts to override the capsule's automatic pilot.

THE DOMINATORS

Sue: We all know what his piloting skills are like when he tries to fly the TARDIS.

Me: Don't worry, this is much more primitive. He's basically hot-wiring a

Sue: Whatever he's doing, he's making a right meal of it.

Despite his best efforts, the Doctor is captured anyway. Meanwhile, Jamie and Cully escape to the Museum of Detritus, where the episode suddenly turns into a bizarre level of Call of Duty. Jamie fires one of the museum's laser gun exhibits and a Quark explodes magnificently.

Sue: I'm surprised it wasn't full of socks and underpants.

Mad Michael Moon takes this development very badly indeed, and he vows to bring total destruction to the Museum of Partial Destruction. The Quarks comply with his orders, but you can tell their hearts aren't in it.

Sue: That isn't total destruction! They just knocked a bit more of it over! That's pathetic!

Episode 4

It's one of those rare occasions where I have to coax Sue into continuing with the experiment. They don't come along very often (it's usually the other way around), and, to be fair, this is hard going. Plus, things are really busy for us at work, and finding enough quality time to squeeze in some hot Dominator action is proving difficult.

Sue: Can't we spice it up with the Spanish soundtrack?

Me: Well, we could watch this episode with the cast and crew

commentary. It might...

Sue: Whatever. Let's do it. Anything for a change of pace.

Sue immediately recognises the commentary's moderator.

Sue: It's Toby! Toby was kind enough to come to my birthday party a couple of weeks ago. He's lovely, although I think he was involved in some 'Dad dancing' at some point.

When Frazer Hines tells us the Quarks couldn't move "any quarker", Sue decides to go one better.

Sue: They're not exactly Quark Express!

Me: Oh, very funny.

Toby tells Frazer and Wendy he recently watched all the Patrick Troughton stories in order. He describes the experience as "hefty".

Sue: That's one word you could use.

When Cully looks up Jamie's skirt, the commentators make cheap jokes about Jamie's manhood.

Sue: Is this what I sound like every episode?

And then something awful happens.

Sue: What did she just say? There's a story with 10 episodes?! TEN

EPISODES!?

Me: Don't worry, it's a very good story and...

Sue: TEN EPISODES!!

The commentators lament the fact that people tend to dismiss black and white television programmes far too easily.

Sue: I'm sorry, Toby, but you can't compare *The Dominators* to *Citizen Kane*. You're being silly, now.

Me: Although, to be fair, they also mention *Some Like It Hot*, and you could definitely make a case for that.

THE DOMINATORS

And then, after a giant walnut crushes a Quark to death, Wendy and Frazer discuss their plans for leaving the series with Patrick Troughton.

Sue: So is this when Patrick Troughton decided to quit? That would explain a lot, actually.

Episode 5

We revert to the regular soundtrack for the final episode, and we're immediately treated to Rago and Tabo arguing again.

Sue: The easiest way to defeat a Dominator would be to tell him he's left his oven on. He'd be off like a shot.

When Nicol accidentally returns to the living room, she's flummoxed by the first line of dialogue she hears.

Nicol: How are they going to destroy a subatomic elementary particle?

Me: What?

Sue: Now it's Jamie's turn to look up Cully's dress. If there's one thing that sums up *The Dominators*, it's men looking up other men's skirts.

Nicol: I don't understand why they've called them Quarks. Hang on... Yes, according to *Wikipedia*, the particle was physically discovered in 1968.

When was this made?

Me: August 1968.

Nicol: Well, that explains it then. It could have been worse, they could have called them Bosons.

Me: Nicol, please go away – I don't want you to see this. It's embarrassing enough as it is.

Nicol isn't listening. She's too busy laughing at the Quarks.

Nicol: They look like they're hugging themselves.

Sue: Hang on a minute. Why can't that Quark see Jamie standing behind it? I thought the spikes on their heads were its eyes! I thought they could

see all around them. And now it turns out their peripheral vision is just as bad as everybody else's!

Another row breaks out between Toba and Rago.

Sue: He's going to start withholding sex from Mad Michael Moon if he doesn't buck his ideas up. And what makes this even more disturbing is the Dominator from *Crossroads* looks like Gary Glitter.

The Doctor knocks up some anti-Quark explosives, and Jamie and Cully begin lobbing them at the little fellas. As long as the Quarks don't climb up the hill after them, they'll be fine.

Sue: They can barely move on flat ground! Do me a favour!

The Dominators drop a bomb, the Doctor catches it, and then somebody else starts running with it like it's a rugby ball.

Sue: Who the hell is THAT?

Me: It looks like they got Paul McCartney in to double for Pat Troughton. That can't have been cheap.

The episode concludes with a very large explosion, which is then followed by an even larger sigh.

Sue: Bloody hell.

The Score

Sue: Well, that was dreadful. Just dreadful.

Nicol: It was pretty bad.

Me: Shut up, Nicol. This has nothing to do with you.

Sue: Leave her alone. It's not her fault we had to watch *The Dominators*. I'd give it a big fat zero, but since the Doctor was actually in that one, I'll give

it:

THE DOMINATORS

1/10

I wanted to show her a documentary that explained how they made The Dominators, but Sue remained adamant that she "couldn't give a fuck who Norman Ashby was". Oh well.

Sue: That's quite enough dominating for one night, thanks.

COMMENT: "I remember when Mad Michael Moon was Pretty Joe From *This Life*; a salutary lesson in relative youth versus shaggability in ageing." – Alex Wilcock

THE MIND ROBBER

BLOGGED: 29 September 2011

Because Sue's video commentary for the second Peter Cushing movie seemed to go down reasonably well (see Volume 1), I asked the blog's readers to choose a Patrick Troughton story for her to natter over as well. The Mind Robber was the clear winner with 44 per cent of the vote (or 143 real people), and while I strongly suggest that you watch the whole thing if you can – via www.wifeinspace.com/the-mind-robber – here are the edited highlights if you can't:

Episode 1

The TARDIS crew are choking to death...

Sue: Mercury vapour in the TARDIS. How come?

Me: Because it runs on mercury, perhaps?

Sue: Doesn't it get an MOT every year? This is the second time it's let out weird stuff like this. The TARDIS is a bit shit, really. It's not spaceworthy.

Me: Isn't that part of its charm?

Sue: Not when it puts the passengers at risk. Mercury vapour can't be

good for you.

Me: Look, the TARDIS is being swallowed by lava.

Sue: That isn't lava – it's cinder toffee.

Me: Well, yes, but it's very hot cinder toffee.

Sue: At least it's moving. Hey, we forgot to do our dance!

Jamie and Victoria are entranced by what they see on the TARDIS scanner.

Sue: Do they both see what they want to see?

Me: Yes.

Sue: (*Tutting*) How predictable.

Me: I asked people on *Facebook* if they had any questions for you, and someone called Jenny Rich wants to know what would tempt you out of

the TARDIS?

THE MIND ROBBER

Sue: Erm... Probably... Er... I don't know, actually.

Me: Well, when you think of something funny, let me know.

Sue: Maybe Michael Bublé. **Me**: What would he be singing?

Sue: Oh, I wouldn't care.

Of course, we couldn't go any further without mentioning Zoe's costume.

Me: I've got a question from Twitter - someone called Unexplode wants to

know: "Has Neil ever tried to put you in a glittery catsuit?"

Sue: No. But I would.

Me: (Astounded) You heard it here first!

Jamie and Zoe are lost in a white void, surrounded by White Robots (which Sue notices are made from flexible drainage pipe; she even offers to make me one).

Me: Do you not think this is the strangest episode of Doctor Who you've

seen so far, but in a good way?

Sue: I don't know about "in a good way".Me: It's pretty scary, don't you think?Sue: Not really. Why is it scary?

Me: It still freaks me out today. I mean, when have you ever seen the

TARDIS invaded like this? **Sue**: Quite recently, actually.

Me: Yeah, but, no... but.. barely audible sigh of resignation when I realise

she's talking about the new series.

The TARDIS explodes, and Jamie and Zoe are left hanging onto the console as it spins out of control.

Me: This is a favourite scene with fans. Do you know why?

Sue: Because the TARDIS blows up?

Me: No...

Sue: Because they're left in space?

Me: No...

Sue: Because... Oh. Is that the reason?

She's pointing at Zoe's arse, as if you couldn't guess.

Me: Isn't that the best cliffhanger we've ever had?

Sue: Well, it's different.

Cue credits.

Me: It's one of the best episodes of *Doctor Who* ever. And it was all out of

necessity because they had no money.

Sue: Hmm...

Me: Not convinced? **Sue**: Not really. Sorry.

Episode 2

Me: Okay, we're watching the second episode of *The Mind Robber*, and

you're not that impressed so far, are you, Sue?

Sue: I just think it looks a bit shit. The set looked shit, the monsters looked shit, the TARDIS looked shit. But that is a nice shot of Zoe's rear end.

Me: I couldn't possibly comment.

Sue: Of course you couldn't. I'm sitting next to you.

Jamie is shot by a Redcoat.

Sue: Eh? Has Jamie turned into a cardboard cutout of himself?

Me: Yeah, they're gonna sell him in Forbidden Planet.

Sue: You'd buy one. You've got a scary Angel in your study.

Me: Yeah, but that's a bit different from a full-scale Frazer Hines. You've

got to draw a line somewhere.

A man with his back to the camera is overseeing these strange events.

THE MIND ROBBER

Sue: Is it Davros?

Me: Who's the next obvious choice after Davros?

Sue: The Master. Is it the Master?

Me: Might be.

Sue: So the Master is capable of mind-robbing? **Me**: Let's just wait and see what happens. **Sue**: (*Raising her voice*) Is it the Master?

Me: Yes.

Sue: So the Master's capable of...

Me: Let's just wait and see. We'll talk about it later.

Sue: Why not now?

Me: Because it would be a complete waste of time.

The Doctor is left to wander through a forest.

Sue: So is this known as one of the better Doctor Whos?

Me: Yes.

Sue: I'm surprised. Who wrote this?

Me: Peter Ling. He was mainly off his head on drugs when he wrote this – that's well documented – and he was also famous for co-creating

Crossroads.

I don't know where I got that from. Anyway, back in The Mind Robber...

Sue: Is it the Master?

Me: Yes.

Sue: It's still the Master?

Me: Yes.

Sue: So the Master is speaking out of a well?

Me: (*Laughing*) Yes. Sue: Well, well, well...

Cardboard Jamie's face is missing, but the Doctor reconstructs it with a photofit.

Sue: Hang on a minute... Those aren't Jamie's eyes. (Quite irate) They're not!

Jamie returns to life, but with the wrong face.

Me: And that's the last we see of Frazer Hines.

Sue: (*Incredulous*) *Really?*

Me: Yeah, he had a big falling-out with the producer.

Sue: Liar.

Me: I'm not lying!

Sue: Do you know who he looks like? Jamie Cullum. I asked for Michael

Bublé but I got Jamie Cullum. Right genre, wrong face.

Me: I've got a question from Andrew T Smith: "Who would you rather

do, Jamie or Jigsaw Jamie?"

Sue: Probably Jigsaw Jamie. Jamie doesn't do it for me. I'd rather do the

Doctor.

Me: Okay, let's leave that there.

Sue still isn't sure about this story's villain.

Sue: Is that the Master? It is the Master, isn't it?

Me: Yes. Sue: It is? Me: Yes.

Sue: So what does he want? Because he's the archenemy of the Doctor –

that's his nemesis - so obviously he wants the Doctor.

Me: Clearly.

Sue: So what's Sailor Jim doing there?

Our heroes are rounded up by clockwork soldiers and taken to a black void.

Sue: They are pretty scary, actually. You know, I've seen this before, I know I have. This rings a bell. I've definitely seen this.

THE MIND ROBBER

Episode 3

Sue's déjà vu refuses to go away.

Me: So they ordered a white horse to play this unicorn, right, but when it

turned up, it wasn't white. **Sue**: Yeah, so they painted it.

Me: Well, they put talcum powder on it.

Sue: Yeah! Why do I know that?

Me: I don't know. They didn't have *Doctor Who Confidential* in 1968.

Sue: It must have been on one of your crappy DVD extras.

Me: I can't imagine you watching that... Unless you walked in on me. You're always walking in on me when I'm watching embarrassing stuff like that.

The Master of the Land of Fiction continues to monitor the Doctor's progress.

Sue: Has he got a big nail on his finger?Me: No, I think he's holding a pencil.Sue: A pencil? But it's stuck on his finger.

Me: It's a pencil. It's a clue.

Sue: It's a clue? The Master has a pencil for a finger...

Me: No, he's just holding a pencil.

Sue: Ah, right. So is he writing down what happens? That's been done before. A famous film where you write something down and that's how a

person dies. Do you remember that film?

Me: That's the Japanese manga series that Nicol's boyfriend made us

watch. (It's called Death Note, and it's pretty good, actually.)

Sue: Yeah!

Me: Anyway, I've got a question from Benjamin Francis Elliott. He's quite

big in the world of *Doctor Who* listings... **Sue**: And why would that bother me?

Me: Anyway, his question is: "If Sue accidentally gave you the wrong

face..."

Sue: Michael Bublé, before he asks.

Thanks to the Doctor, Jamie is eventually reunited with his real face.

Sue: So how long does chickenpox last?

Me: About an episode and a half.

The Doctor hands his friend a mirror.

Sue: (As Jamie) Don't touch me! You might get shingles.

And then Sue asks an important question:

Sue: So why are we recording this, instead of you writing it? Is it easier for

you?

Me: It's just to spice it up a bit.

Sue: Oh, it's like that now, is it, love? We've got to that point in our

relationship where we have to spice things up?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Okay, so do you want to get me that catsuit, then?

The Doctor and Zoe are lost in a labyrinth.

Me: Don't you think this is very Matt Smith? In the last series of *Doctor Who* we had an episode where they were in a white void. We had an episode where they were attacked by toys (the one in the dollhouse). And we've had a story set in a maze, where things don't really exist. In fact, you could say that Steven Moffat has based his version of *Doctor Who* on this story.

Sue: But that's what I like about the Moff. He gives you little clues, and you can actually follow the plot.

Me: There are clues in this! The Master was holding a pencil. **Sue**: It looked like a big nail to me. Not a fingernail – *a nail*.

Something roars in the distance.

THE MIND ROBBER

Sue: I hope that isn't a Yeti. It sounds like one.

Me: It might be a Nimon.

Sue: Hmm...

Me: Don't say "Hmm..." like you know what a Nimon is.

Sue: I don't know what a Nimon is.

Me: It was mentioned in the last Matt Smith episode we saw.

Sue: (Sighing) I don't notice those kind of things. I watch it on a different

level to you. I watch it for the action and the plot.

Me: It's a purer level, isn't it, Sue? **Sue**: I don't get hung up on the details.

If she did, she might know who Bernard Horsfall is playing.

Sue: Is it Dick Wittington?

Me: No. Although this is where things start to get very meta.

Sue: (*Slightly annoyed*) What do you actually mean by 'meta'?

Me: Well, the thing that's baffled some fans over the years – it's a philosophical question, really – is that they're in a world of fiction...

Sue: Like *Doctor Who* is a world of fiction.

Me: Exactly! So the question is: Is he in there because he's a fictional

character? That's what I mean by 'meta'.

Sue: You mean the Doctor?

Me: Yes, does it mean the Doctor only exists as a work of fiction?

Sue: Of course he doesn't exist. He *is* a work of fiction.

Me: Yes, but is he a work of fiction in the context of this story?

Sue: Will we find out?Me: No, it's just a debate.

Sue: (Gutted) Oh.

Rapunzel lets down her hair so Jamie can climb into her underwear.

Sue: Who's she?

Me: Her long hair is a massive clue. Let's see how literate you are.

Sue: Eh?

Me: Jamie climbed up there using her hair. So who is she?

Sue: Oh, what do they call her? From that famous fairy tale... She got

locked in a tower... What do they call her?

Me: She just said her name, but you were talking over it.

Episode 4

Sue: These episodes are very short. Maybe it's because they're moving,

and it's not a bad story, so... **Me**: Oh, it's not a bad story? **Sue**: Well, it's getting better.

The Doctor and Zoe reach the centre of the labyrinth, where they are confronted by Medusa.

Sue: So, if this is all in his head, you'd think the Doctor would make the

Daleks appear.

Me: (Exasperated) It's not in the Doctor's head!

Sue: Is it in the Master's head?

Me: Yes.

Sue: So the Master reads fiction?

Me: Yes.

Sue: (Confused) Right...

The Doctor defeats Medusa with his shingle-infected mirror.

Me: Steven Moffat pulled a similar trick in *Blink* when he got the Angels to look at each other. I'm not saying he's been inspired by this or anything, but...

And then I told Sue that the White Robots originally appeared in another BBC series called Out of the Unknown.

Me: You could argue, because they appeared in another TV show, they're actually a work of fiction. It's very meta.

Sue: (Taking the piss) Oooh... meta.

THE MIND ROBBER

The Karkus decides to lend a hand.

Sue: Who's he?

Me: He's a fictional character from the future, because Zoe's from the

future, remember?

Sue: Oh I see, it's getting complicated.

Me: We have a question from *Facebook*. Richard Ward wants to know whether the Karkus should have been given his own spin-off series?

Sue: If Russell T Davies was doing it, yes!

Zoe defeats the Karkus.

Sue: Look at that! Zoe's packing quite a punch. Go on, Zoe!

And then the Doctor finally encounters...

Sue: So that's the Master?

Me: Yes.

Sue: He doesn't look scary. But he's the Master, isn't he?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Well... he's a Time Lord.

Me: (Laughing) The Doctor hasn't told us he's a Time Lord yet!

The Master explains how he ended up in the Land of Fiction.

Sue: He can't be the Master if he left England. He's from Gallifrey. **Me**: I think I'd better explain that he's not *the* Master, he's just *a* Master.

Sue: What a cop out!

Me: It's not a cop out! How were they supposed to know?

I change the subject.

Me: I've got a question from Julian Jones: "Which characters from fiction

would you have in a modern remake of The Mind Robber?"

Sue: (Without any hesitation) The dog off The Thing.

Me: The dog off *The Thing*? What kind of answer is *that*?

Sue: It was scary.

Me: But kids today wouldn't know what the dog off *The Thing* was!

Sue: Okay, then... the Predator! **Me**: Yeah, okay, that could work.

The Master hopes that the Doctor will agree to lighten his load.

Sue: What does he want him to do?

Me: He wants him to take over the job of maintaining this world. **Sue**: So he doesn't want to do it any more? He's had enough?

Me: Yes, he's been there for years.

Sue: Do you think Russell T Davies had the same conversation with the

Moff?

The episode ends with Jamie and Zoe trapped in a book (Sue hopes it's a romantic novel).

Me: Good?

Sue: It's getting better.

Episode 5

Me: This is the shortest episode of *Doctor Who* ever.

Sue: Wa-hey!

Me: Hey, don't say it like that!

The Doctor can control the narrative if he types into a special machine.

Sue: So can anyone write the fiction?

Me: Yeah, and anything you write happens.

Sue: So I could say: 'Michael Bublé walks into the room and...'

Me: Let's just leave that there. **Sue**: But it would happen?

Me: Yes.

THE MIND ROBBER

Sue: It sounds like a good job. I could do that job.

The Master and the Doctor battle for control of the Land of Fiction.

Sue: All the Doctor has to do is say, "The End".

The Master sends Cyrano de Bergerac into the fray. The Doctor counters with the fearless swordsman D'Artagnan.

Me: So in the remake, the dog from *The Thing* turns up and bites

everyone.

Sue: Yeah, and infects them all.

Me: I think it would be funnier if the Doctor had got John Nettles as

Bergerac to fight Cyrano de Bergerac.

Sue isn't impressed with the Master's master plan.

Sue: If they'd said, "We have to keep fiction alive, because kids aren't reading any more", I could understand this. But taking over Earth... WHY?

The Doctor draws the White Robots into the Master's lair, and they end up destroying the place.

Sue: Why didn't he do that an hour ago?

Cue credits.

The Score

Sue: That was weird. Normally, I like the first episode and I like the last

one, but this time I didn't. I liked the three in between.

Me: Do you have a final mark?

Sue: Well, it was different, it was clever, it was very adventurous, and it was definitely pushing the envelope. I liked the way they dealt with the

idea they were fictional characters, and for that alone, I think I'll give it a seven or an eight.

Me: Which is it?

7/10

Sue: Now, if only the ending had been better. I didn't like the plot about

Earth. That was bollocks.

Me: Fair enough.

Sue: The Moff would have written a better ending than that.

COMMENT: "Of course, the correct response to 'the dog off *The Thing*' should have been 'You've got to be fucking kidding!' so lose three credibility points." – Matt Sharp



Because The Invasion is split across two DVDs, the menu screen leads my

Sue: Four episodes. Excellent.

wife down the garden path.

I know I'll pay for it later, but for now I decide not to correct her mistake.

Sue: Does it move?

Me: Yes.

Episode One

Sue: What the hell is this? You said it moved.

Me: It is moving! Look – their mouths are opening and closing and

everything!

Sue: You made me perform our real episode dance under false pretences.

I'll never trust you again.

Once she gets over the initial shock, Sue starts to appreciate the animated episode on its own terms.

Sue: This is pretty good, actually. It's very moody. Why couldn't they have done this for all the missing episodes?

Me: Well, they are animating a William Hartnell story as we speak.

Sue: And how's that supposed to help me, exactly?

The TARDIS' visual stabiliser is on the blink, so when it lands on Earth, it's completely invisible.

Sue: So the TARDIS has a cloaking device? Since when? Actually, if the TARDIS did what it was supposed to do, and it blended in with its surroundings, it wouldn't need a bloody cloaking device. He really needs

to get that fixed.

The Doctor takes Sue's advice and sets out to repair his dodgy circuits.

Sue: I really like the music in this story.

Me: Sadly, this is Don Harper's one and only score for the programme. Dudley Simpson was the *de facto* composer at this point, but the director fell out with him over a misunderstanding involving a bottle of champagne and refused to work with him.

Sue: I wish all the directors had fallen out with Dudley Simpson. This is a great soundtrack. You can almost hum along to it.

The Doctor and his companions arrive at Professor Travers' house.

Sue: So is Professor Travers the Doctor's bezzie-mate or something? **Me**: Yes, he was the James Corden of his time. The Doctor is always popping in for a chat.

However, Professor Travers and Anne are in America, and their house has been taken over by a dolly bird who's taking photos of herself.

Sue: She's doing a Scarlett Johansson.

The Doctor and Jamie arrive at International Electromatics in search of Isobel's scientist father. Unfortunately, their progress is hampered by a computerised receptionist.

Sue: This is exactly what it's like when you talk to BT today. When is this episode supposed to be set?

Me: Erm...

Before we can broach this thorny subject, Tobias Vaughn distracts Sue with his suave charm.

Sue: He's such a Bond villain. Where's his cat? And why does his office

THE INVASION

sound like a lift? What's with all the muzak? And is it just me or has he 'whited-up'?

Me: That's a new one.

Sue: He's like Steve Jobs. Look at him giving out iPods like they were

sweets. I bet IE have really sexy packaging as well.

The episode concludes with the revelation that Vaughn is working with – gasp – aliens.

Sue: I like the way the music blended into the credits. That was clever. I really enjoyed that. I wish all the recons were like that.

Episode Two

Sue: This is very gritty. It's a bit like *Get Carter*.

Me: But with slightly less pornography. **Sue**: You can almost see Isobel's knickers.

Me: I rest my case.

Sue: Is Packer looking through a hole in the door?

Me: No, that's early video conferencing.

Sue: Round-FaceTime?

Now that we're watching a real episode again, Sue can't wait to comment on its direction.

Sue: Douglas Camfield is great, isn't he? **Me**: Wow! You did it again! That is amaz...

Sue: I saw his name in the credits for the last one, you idiot. But seriously, you know you're in safe hands with Douglas. He's the best *Doctor Who* director by a mile.

director by a mile.

The Doctor and Jamie are abducted by two men ("No, I didn't know that one of them played a Yeti") and taken to... wait for it... the Brigadier.

Sue: It's UNIT! And about time, too! I feel safer already. All I need now is

for the Master to turn up and I'm all set.

Meanwhile, Vaughn is chatting to the alien machine that's hiding in his cupboard.

Sue: Oh great, another shit robot with an impossible-to-understand voice. Why did they have to ruin this story with *that*? I can't see that invading the building's foyer, let alone a planet. What a shame.

Zoe and Isobel find themselves up against IE's automated reception computer.

Sue: This computer isn't what you'd call user-friendly. Where's the button that says 'press here to start'? No wonder they don't get that many visitors.

Zoe bamboozles the computer with an unsolvable equation and it blows itself up.

Sue: She's even cleverer than the Doctor. That's interesting.

When Vaughn discovers that the Doctor might be an alien, he tells Packer to capture Zoe and Isobel so he can use them as bait.

Sue: These two make a great double act. I could watch these two all day. How long do you think Packer and Vaughn have been lovers? **Me**: "Packerrrrr".

I can do a pretty good impersonation of Tobias Vaughn, even if I do say so myself. Anyway, the episode concludes with Jamie trying – and failing – to escape from the henchman we love to hate.

Sue: I'm getting tired of Jamie. He's like a bull in a china shop.

THE INVASION

Episode Three

Sue: You've gotta love the Camfield. That moment where Jamie walked through the car – I bet it wasn't in the script – was such a great character moment. Everyone is pulling out the stops for this one. You know, I wouldn't be ashamed to show this to a normal person. It feels like proper telly.

Me: Do you like the way they've managed to save money by using the same set in two different locations?

Sue: Yes. And since all the Apple Stores look exactly the same, it makes perfect sense. Seriously, this story is years ahead of its time.

We enjoy watching Packer as he descends into madness (his nail-biting is a very neat touch), and even though the Doctor's escape is almost farcical at times, Sue still laps it up.

Sue: I'm surprised Jamie didn't go up the ladder first so the Doctor could peek up his skirt. He missed a trick, there.

As they ascend a lift shaft – "This reminds me of a Star Wars film" - Sue is distracted by some graffiti.

Sue: Whatever happened to Kilroy? You never see him any more. Or Chad. Whatever happened to Chad?

And then Vaughn completely loses his cool and it's fucking terrifying.

Sue: He's a brilliant actor. He was great in that Dalek story, but he's even better in this. You can't take your eyes off him.

The Doctor and Jamie are on the run from IE's goons when they take refuge in a nearby railway siding. They find some crates in an IE train and Jamie is forced to crawl inside one. But he isn't alone.

Sue: It's obviously Zoe in that trunk. Here's your chance, son.

Episode Four

Sue: I love four-parters – they zing along at just the right pace. No flab, no holidays for the Doctor, just a nice adventure that doesn't outstay its welcome. Every *Doctor Who* story should be four parts.

I am so dead.

Sue: Damn, it's animated again.

Me: I thought you said you liked the animation?

Sue: I do, but I was enjoying the real-life performances. It's a shame the final episode doesn't exist. Still, this is the next best thing, I suppose.

Dead, I tell you.

Sue: They are talking up the alien something rotten, but it isn't very convincing, is it? I mean, it's just a climbing frame made from plastic cups and bits of wheel trim, and it's sitting in a cupboard.

Sue fails to pick up the clues which point to the identity of the real enemy, and while I'm vaguely disappointed by that, I'm simultaneously thrilled by the thought that the cliffhanger will probably freak her out (and I'll need a distraction when we reach the end of this episode, let me tell you).

Sue: There's a lot of up-skirt action in this story. Camfield definitely had a pervy side. And these guards are terrible shots. But at least they admit it. I bet this looked great. They must have spent some cash on this one.

When the Brigadier announces that the crisis has been averted, Sue believes it's all over. She even starts to mark the story out of 10.

Sue: The ending was a bit rushed, and the alien was rubbish, but I enjoyed everything else about it.

But instead of wrapping up, the action shifts to an IE warehouse where

THE INVASION

someone – or something – is waking up.

Sue: They are trying to cram an awful lot into these last few minutes.

And then the cliffhanger hits her.

Sue: A Cyberman! EH?

Neil: Ouch!

I will carry that bruise for the rest of the week. But it was worth it.

Sue: Actually, I'm enjoying this so far, so I'm not that bothered. In fact, I'm actually pleased this is six parts.

Episode Five

Sue: Are you sure there are only eight episodes? **Me**: Yes, look at the menu screen – eight episodes.

Sue: I don't trust you any more. There could be another four episodes on a disc you're not telling me about. Is this the 10-part story I've heard so much about?

I think it's safe to say she's dreading it.

Sue: There isn't any muzak in Vaughn's office any more. It's been replaced by some spy music instead. That implies that Vaughn is actually playing scary spy music in his office. Which is a bit weird, even for him.

Cue Cybermen stomping about.

Sue: I'm glad the Cybermen keep updating themselves. I also love the way Vaughn knows that the Cybermen will betray him eventually, so he gets in there first. I like the way he plans ahead. He's a brilliant villain.

And then Isobel introduces feminism to the programme with the

unforgettable battle cry of: "You, man!"

Sue: I bloody love this episode.

Isobel wants to show a misogynist UNIT captain that she can look after herself by leading Jamie and Zoe into the sewers. As Zoe climbs down a ladder, Sue spits out her tea.

Sue: I can see what Zoe had for breakfast!

A police officer tries to intervene.

Sue: They're like the Scooby Gang, these pesky kids.

We bet they wished they'd listened to him when they end up in the path of a Cyberman that's been driven insane.

Sue: Seeing Cybermen in the sewers like this is actually very, very scary. This one keeps getting better and better.

Episode Six

Sue: The sound these Cybermen make is starting to freak me out. Actually, the Cybermen in this story sound like the Cybermen in the new series. In fact, didn't RTD do this story once? I'm sure the Cybermen did a similar thing with people's mobile phones. Does that make me a fan?

UNIT save the pesky kids, but they lose a man in the process.

Sue: Isobel is very cheerful considering some poor sod just got himself killed because of her blasé ineptitude. Still, why worry about dead soldiers when you can flirt shamelessly with live ones?

Professor Watkins shoots Tobias Vaughn's cybernetic chest at point-blank range, but it barely makes a scratch.

THE INVASION

Sue: It's a good job he didn't shoot Vaughn in the head. That would have been funny.

Sue is disappointed that we don't see UNIT rescue Watkins – the build-up sounded so impressive – but she's intrigued by Vaughn's plans for the Cybermen.

Sue: It's a nice idea to kill the Cybermen with emotions. It's a bit like when those Cybermen were killed by the 'Power of Love' in that Matt Smith episode a couple of weeks ago.

Me: I've told you never to mention that in my presence again. You know how I feel about that.

Sue: I don't see what your problem is. It's entirely consistent with this

story.

Me: SHUT UP!

The episode ends with an iconic scene, which still manages to send a shiver down my spine.

Sue: Well it doesn't get any better than that.

Episode Seven

Sue: Why do I recognise this? Did I see it when I was a kid? Have I seen it on a documentary? Have you made me watch this before, Neil? It's so familiar...

Me: *EastEnders*. **Sue**: What?

Me: There's an episode of *EastEnders* were Bradley takes Stacey to a reconstruction of the Cybermen mooching around outside St Paul's

Cathedral.

Sue: Oh yes, that definitely rings a bell.

Me: I can't believe he didn't get Stacey to sit down and watch The Edge of

Destruction with him. What an amateur.

IE's goons attempt to recapture Watkins, and Jamie is brutally gunned down in the process.

Sue: They just shot Jamie! Is he okay?

Me: No, he's dead.

Sue: Really?
Me: Yes

Sue: I don't believe you.

Vaughn continues to plot against his so-called 'allies'.

Sue: I find it hard to believe that the Cyber-brain can't hear Vaughn plotting against it while it's sitting in his cupboard. Can't it eavesdrop on him? Seriously?

As UNIT prepare to tackle the Cybermen, Sue's affection for the soundtrack takes a sudden downturn.

Sue: The UNIT theme tune is a bit rubbish. It sounds like something from *Trumpton*. A Greek version of *Trumpton*.

Packer and Vaughn decide to plough on with their increasingly unlikely invasion plans.

Sue: These two can't even run a small office, so how do they expect to rule the world? And who would want that kind of responsibility, anyway? The hours must be terrible.

As the Cyberfleet approaches Earth, Zoe searches for a formula that will destroy the lot of them.

Sue: That soldier was checking out Zoe's arse back there. He didn't even try to hide it! The world is about to end and he's ogling her arse. Unbelievable.

Me: You can hardly blame him though – look at her!

THE INVASION

Sue: She's a child! You worry me sometimes, Neil.

And then, just when Sue thinks it's all over, the Cybermen pull out a megaton bomb in a fit of pique.

Sue: Everyone has a Plan B in this story. George Osborne should watch this

Episode Eight

Sue: I hope they don't fuck up the ending. I'll be really disappointed if they do. Even the extras are giving it their all in this episode. Just look at the way the soldiers are reacting to the news about the bomb. It's completely believable and quite tense.

I nearly jump out of my skin when a Cyberman's head suddenly appears on a view screen (I think I may have screamed). Sue, on the other hand, just laughed her head off.

Sue: You've seen this before and you still wet yourself. That's sweet, Neil.

And then a Cybermen kills Packer.

Sue: No! You can't kill Packer! PACKER!

The Doctor retaliates by blasting the Cyberman.

Sue: The Doctor just used a gun! That can't be right, can it?

Me: It was self-defence.

Sue: I suppose so, but it still doesn't feel right.

The Doctor and Vaughn join forces, and the Brigadier orders his troops to help them.

Sue: You know, the Brig was very handsome back in the day.

Me: Okay, steady on.

Sue: I can't wait for him to become a regular character.

And then, just when you think Vaughn will achieve redemption by successfully disabling the Cybermen's homing beacon, he's shot by his former allies

Sue: Is that it?

Me: That's it. Vaughn is dead.

Sue: That was an anti-climax. Am I supposed to feel bad about him

dying? Because I do.

But hold on! It ain't over yet. Now we have to wait for a Russian rocket to take out the Cybermen's mothership.

Sue: They are certainly getting their money's worth out of this stock footage.

Sadly, after all that excitement, the ending falls a little flat.

Sue: Damn, this is turning into a bit of a let down.

The episode concludes with Isobel bidding farewell to the Doctor and his companions, which now miraculously includes Jamie again.

Me: Did you miss Jamie?

Sue: Not at all. In fact, I'm annoyed he's back. Can you imagine how dramatic it would have been if they'd have killed him? A bit of a wasted opportunity, if you ask me. And why isn't Isobel taking any photos of the TARDIS? She says she wants to be a photo-journalist, but she's rubbish!

The Score

Sue: That was probably the most enjoyable story so far. It was heading for a 10 out of 10 at one point, but it's at least one episode too long, and the ending was vaguely disappointing. Still very, very good, though.

THE INVASION

9/10

COMMENT: "It still sounds to me as if the Cybermen plan to wipe out all life on Earth with a 'Cyber-Mega-Trombone." – Andrew Trowbridge



Episode One

Me: This is the first Patrick Troughton story I ever saw.

I tell Sue everything she needs to know about the BBC's fabled Five Faces repeat season. And then I keep going.

Me: And thanks to Simon Harries, we're watching the original off-air recordings! This is exactly how I would have seen this story in November 1981, when I'd just turned 12. Exciting, isn't it?

When the title card appears, Sue cracks the obligatory gag.

Sue: Are you sure they aren't called the Croutons? Geddit? Croutons?

Make sure you write that one down.

Me: Yes, dear. Very good, dear.

Sue: Aren't I the first person to crack that joke?

Me: Don't worry, love, Steve O'Brien published fanzines with thinner

material than that.

But forget that - it's time to meet the Gonds.

Sue: I don't care about these people straight away. I can tell it's going to be another one of those feckless alien planets where everyone rolls over for their alien overlords, until the Doctor strolls in and sorts it out for them. Again.

The TARDIS crew make their way towards what the model maker has optimistically decided to call a city.

Sue: A city? It looks like some discarded egg boxes. This is cheap, even by *Doctor Who*'s standards.

THE KROTONS

Me: They spent the money on a helicopter last week.

Sue: It isn't just the set – it's the acting, as well. The guy who's playing their leader is especially bad. He doesn't seem to know what programme he's in.

Thank God for the Madoc.

Sue: He looks familiar.

Me: You probably know him best as the German U-Boat captain in *Dad's Army* who wants Pike to tell him his name, and Captain Mainwaring cries: "Don't tell him, Pike!" He was also in *UFO* and *Space 1999*, but I'm

sure that won't ring any bells with you.

Sue: You know me so well.

Jamie picks a fight with an uptight local, and they engage in some vicious, no holds barred combat.

Sue: It's not exactly *Game of Thrones*, is it?

Me: You see that bloke fighting Jamie? That's Toby Hadoke's agent.

Sue: Is it really? What a bizarre coincidence.

Me: Oh, I doubt it. He probably scoured the country looking for an agent with an episode of *Doctor Who* on their CV. It was either him or Janet Fielding.

Sue: Who?

Neil: We named one of our cats after the character she played, but never

mind that now.

Sue: Just kick him in the nuts!

Me: Are you talking to Toby or Jamie?

The eponymous Krotons are known as the Silver Men in the Gond's ancient legends, which leads Sue to believe that we're watching episode nine of The Invasion.

Sue: Cybermen? What, again? Not that I'm complaining or anything.

When a bunch of students start smashing up the Krotons' learning machines

to, er, teach them a lesson, a booming voice orders them to disperse.

Sue: Well, at least I can understand them, so that's a bonus. But what is that accent? I can't quite place it.

The Doctor is attacked by a metallic snake-like object. Cue credits.

Sue: Well, that's not even remotely phallic. It reminds me of that scene in *The Abyss*. Only shitter.

Episode Two

Sue's brother Gary, and our daughter Nicol, joined us for the last three episodes. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Gary: I saw most of the William Hartnells, but I don't remember watching any of these. I think I'd grown out of *Doctor Who* by then.

I let that comment slide.

Me: Do you have any memories of watching *Doctor Who*, Gary?

Gary: Yes, every Saturday evening we all sat down to watch it with our

tea.

Sue: I don't remember that.

Gary: You were too young to remember. There was this one week when

you took a drug overdose...

Me: What? Nicol: What?

Sue: I accidentally swallowed a bottle of Junior Aspirin. I thought they

were sweets. They tasted of oranges.

Gary: We had to rush her to hospital so she could have her stomach pumped. She'd do anything to get out of watching *Doctor Who*.

Me: So you weren't a fan of Patrick Troughton, then?

Gary: No, I was probably watching *Lost in Space*. It was much better.

Sue: Why was that?

THE KROTONS

Gary: It had a robot in it called Robby the Robot. What more do you want?

I don't have the heart to tell him the robot in Lost in Space wasn't called Robby. In fact, the robot in Lost of Space wasn't called anything. How rubbish is that?

Anyway, back in The Krotons...

Sue: The Croutons seem to be powered by showerhead technology.

The scene where Zoe and the Doctor compete to be the best scholar – "I wish my students were this keen!" – goes down well with nearly every person in the room. Okay, Nicol snorted when they mentioned working in square roots, and Gary still has his doubts, but even so.

Gary: How can you watch this rubbish?

Sue: Leave it alone.

Yes, that was Sue leaping to the show's defence.

And then the Krotons turn themselves into, well, it's difficult to put into words...

Gary: The robots have the same arms as Robby the Robot.

Me: Are you sure you weren't watching this instead of Lost in Space, Gary?

Gary: The pain! The pain!

Nicol: Are the Krotons meant to be South African? Weren't they the bad

guys back then? **Me**: Yes, they were.

Sue: Are you sure they aren't from Birmingham? **Nicol**: They look like a salt and peppershakers. **Sue**: They look like a Moka pot espresso makers.

Gary: They look shit.

The episode concludes with Jamie rushing onto the Kroton ship so he can be captured and beaten up.

Sue: How has Jamie survived this long being this thick?

Me: He's brave. **Sue**: He's thick!

Gary: Ah, I definitely remember this 'BBC-2' logo...

Me: Oooh, shall we watch some Grange Hill for a bit? I think Simon kept

his VCR running for another 10 minutes.

Everyone Else: No!

Episode Three

Gary can't stop chortling as the Krotons boom their increasingly agitated instructions at each other. And who can blame him?

Sue: (In a very broad Brummie accent) Cup-a-Soup!

Me: (Ditto) Bostin'!

Nicol: They're supposed to be South African!

Thank God for Sir Philip of Madoc.

Sue: This guy is acting everybody else off the screen. He looks like he's having a great time. He's trying to out-Shakespeare the other bloke now – and the other bloke doesn't stand a chance.

Gary: The robot's hands are a pair of curling tongs and a nutcracker. I thought I should point that out.

Me: I'm waiting for one armed with a garlic press.

Sue: I thought they were hiding the Croutons so they could ramp up the suspense. It turns out they were hiding them because they look dreadful.

Me: They make the Quarks look like the War Machines.

When the Doctor examines the slurry that's being produced by the Krotons, he describes it as "Primeval soup".

Sue: You see! Croutons in the soup!

Sue and Nicol are distracted when one of our cats (Captain Jack) snuggles

THE KROTONS

up to our golden Labrador (Buffy) in front of the fire. Unfortunately, it means they miss the Doctor's explanation for the HADS.

Sue: Did I miss something important? What are the HADS?

Me: I'm sorry but you should have paid attention. You HADS your chance

Sue: Gary, what are the HADS?

Gary: Don't ask me, I'm barely awake.

Nicol: The Krotons' heads are spinning again. They must be grinding

more pepper.

And then the episode concludes with a familiar image.

Sue: It's the crack! It's Moffat's crack!

Episode Four

Sue: Dynatrope sounds like a branch of plumbers.

Me: I'm pretty sure it's listed in the latest Ann Summers catalogue.

When Zoe learns Jamie is stuck in the Dynatrope, she worries about his untrained mind.

Sue: Like I said - thick.

Nicol: How do the Krotons get around?

Gary: They have a skirt made of waffles and that hides their legs. How can

you watch this rubbish? The effects are terrible!

Me: It's 1969, Gary.

Gary: Lost in Space and Star Trek were out at the same time, and they

looked a lot better than this.

Sue: But *Doctor Who* didn't have their budget. And besides, it's part of

Doctor Who's charm.

It's at this point that the picture quality of Simon's off-air recording goes tits up. The final 10 minutes are a rollercoaster ride of flickering and ghosting, and I can feel Gary's eyes burrowing into me as the picture quality degrades.

Jamie cooks up some sulphuric acid so they can attack the Krotons. It seems ridiculously easy in retrospect.

Nicol: They signposted that solution two episodes ago! What took them so long?

The Krotons have been defeated and the Gonds are elated. "We're free at last!" they cry.

Gary: Tell me about it Sue: That wasn't too bad. Gary: Are you serious?

Sue: Look, it was only four episodes and it moved.

Nicol: You should see some of the stuff Neil makes my mam watch. **Sue**: That was a walk in the park compared to something like *The*

Toymaker or The Zarbi Planet (sic). Some of the episodes don't even exist,

and we still watch them! **Gary**: You're both mad.

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

Sue: Well, the script was good, but the plot was terrible, if that makes any sense. The acting was variable, and the monsters were comical, but there were some enjoyable moments. And it was only four parts. And it moved.

The Score

6/10

Nicol gave The Krotons three out of 10. Gary gave it a one. Feel free to boo.

COMMENT: "This blog is starting to resemble *Keeping Up Appearances.*" – Mike Sutton

NOTES: Poor Gary. The spectacular fallout from his appearance on the blog has already been documented elsewhere, but suffice to say it made *The Tomb of the Cybermen* backlash look like a polite misunderstanding.

THE KROTONS

With the benefit of hindsight, asking people to boo him was a probably a mistake.

THE SEEDS OF DEATH

BLOGGED: 18 October 2011

Episode One

Sue: It's just the two of us again, just the way it should be.

Me: You should probably tell Gary to avoid any Doctor Who conventions

for a while. Just until the fuss dies down.

The Seeds of Death takes place in the future. You can tell it's the future because the guest cast are wearing underpants over their plastic jumpsuits. And that includes Commander Radnor.

Sue: He's definitely shagging his colleague in the catsuit. Maybe I should

start going to work in a catsuit.

Me: What is it with you and catsuits all of a sudden?

Conflict rears its ugly head when Osgood chides Fewsham for pressing the wrong button on his giant console.

Sue: If they were any closer, they'd be snogging. Is this guy conducting an office romance, too? Is everybody permanently horny in the future?

Me: I bloody hope so.

Sue: I'm not sure about the direction. That was a focus pull, but without the pull. But at least some effort is being made to come up with some interesting compositions. The print looks gorgeous, too.

The Moonbase has been invaded!

Me: So which monster is it?

Sue: Is it the Silence?

Me: No. And besides, the Silence aren't a species (although you try telling

that to Character Options).

Sue: Is it the Master?

Me: Try again.

THE SEEDS OF DEATH

Sue: Is it the Yeti?

Me: The Yeti?! The Yeti don't even talk!

Sue: They could have evolved between stories. I'm still waiting for the

final part in the trilogy.

Me: I'm disappointed that you haven't recognised the aliens yet.

Sue: Good.

Meanwhile, the Doctor and his companions have arrived in a deserted museum.

Sue: Oh, it's a space museum. Haven't we been to a space museum before? Didn't the Moff have a space museum, once? What is it with this programme and fucking space museums?

The aliens turn out to be...

Sue: Oh look – it's the Ice Warriors!

Me: It's too late now!

Sue: That one looks different. Maybe they have evolved, after all.

The Ice Warriors murder another member of the Moonbase's staff, and Sue laps it up.

Sue: That was pretty good. Stick the next one on.

Episode Two

As Earth slides into chaos, Gia hopes the T-Mat fault will correct itself.

Sue: Has anyone tried turning it off and back on again? That usually works.

Even the TARDIS can't help them this time.

Sue: I like the way they keep dissing the TARDIS. The script is going to

great lengths to explain just how fucking useless it is.

But as luck would have it, the museum's crotchety curator has a rocket up his sleeve.

Sue: So this guy has been building a rocket in secret? A rocket that can actually carry people, not a tiny one that fits in his pocket? That seems unlikely. Where has he been building it? His back garden?

ZA-685 is primed and ready to go.

Sue: He really needs to work on his spaceship's name.

As Eldred and Radnor bicker over the rocket, the Ice Warriors are kicking arse on the Moon. With their big arses.

Sue: The Ice Warriors definitely have the biggest arses in *Doctor Who*, closely followed by the Yeti. I'm surprised they can get through half the doors on this base.

When an Ice Warrior fails to notice a Moonbase staffer named Phipps, even though he's hiding in plain sight, Sue lets rip.

Sue: How did he not see him?! That wasn't bad peripheral vision – it was bad vision *full-stop*! I'm sorry, but that was badly directed. The high-angle shot looked great, but he should have seen Peter Purves' brother hiding there, for heaven's sake.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention that Sue is convinced Phipps is played by a Purves, and his character is almost certainly a distant relation to Steven Taylor. Seriously.

Sue: I don't like the music. It's a racket. Is it that Dudley bloke again? He needs to tone it down a bit.

THE SEEDS OF DEATH

Eldred's rocket with the silly name takes off for the Moon with the Doctor and his companions on board.

Me: It's very Thunderbirds.

Sue: Yes, they do look like puppets, especially with their hands flailing around in the air like that. Is that supposed to be zero gravity, or are they just mucking about?

As the rocket heads for the Moon, its homing beacon is accidentally switched off when Phipps contacts Earth. In this version of the future, a single fault can result in catastrophe, so the episode ends with the Doctor and his companions floating aimlessly around in space.

Sue: Pretty much business as usual, then.

Episode Three

Sue: Stop chatting with them on the radio and put the bloody homing device back on! I mean, come on!

As soon as they arrive on the Moon, the Doctor and his friends are immediately thrust into danger.

Sue: The Doctor is jinxed in this story. Every time he tells someone they'll be okay as long as X doesn't happen, X happens almost immediately. He should keep his big mouth shut.

The Doctor and his companions split up to avoid being captured by the Ice Warriors.

Sue: I hate monsters you can run rings around. It doesn't matter how good they look if they can't move properly.

When the Doctor is captured by the Ice Warriors, he fears for his life. "Your leader will be angry if you kill me!" he cries. "I'm a genius!"

Sue: He can't be a genius if these lumbering idiots can catch him.

Jamie is becoming increasingly agitated by the Doctor's absence.

Sue: Jamie is a big moaning kid. Every single week he has a strop about something. When is he going to leave?

The Ice Warriors don't know how the Doctor arrived on the Moon.

Sue: How did they fail to notice the large rocket landing right next to them? What kind of invasion force is this? Are they blind?

The Ice Warriors reveal their secret weapon – seedpods. Of death. The Doctor examines one and, to Slaar's delight, it explodes in his face. The Doctor is overtaken by fumes and falls to the floor.

Sue: These seedpod bombs seem to have a range of about two feet. How long is it going to take the Ice Warriors to send a seed to every human on the planet? It'll them take years!

Fewsham is told to T-Mat a seedpod to Earth. It starts to expand...

Sue: It's all gone a bit ssssilly now.

Me: Stop it.

Episode Four

Sue: Like I said, it's going to take them forever to invade the planet like this. Please tell me this isn't their plan, Neil.

Another seedpod bursts and another poor bastard buys the farm.

Sue: Only another seven billion people to go.

Sue suddenly realises that the Moonbase has been turned into a large

THE SEEDS OF DEATH

Amazon depot. A large Amazon depot... of death!

Sue: Do they get an email receipt when they send a pod? "Your deadly order of death has just been dispatched."

As soon as someone who looks a bit like Patrick Troughton is taken away to recover, Sue knows exactly what to expect.

Sue: I wonder where Patrick went on holiday this week. I hope it was somewhere nice.

Back in London, the seeds have already reached the outer atmosphere.

Sue: You know, I'm pretty sure I've seen this before.

Me: Yes, I know. It was called *Fury from the Deep* and we watched it about a month ago.

Sue: It's good, though. This story has a lot going for it. The guy playing Fewsham is great – he's very intense and believable. And the direction is, on the whole, very good, bar the odd mistake. There's a definite sense of scale, and some wonderful shots. Does Michael Ferguson direct many more?

Me: Not nearly enough, sadly.

Sue: That should have been the cliffhanger when they transported the Doctor into space. That would have been a great place to end the episode.

Zoe and Phipps enter the Moonbase's control room.

Sue: They may as well have a setting on that thermostat wheel that says 'Kill Ice Warriors', it's so obvious.

An Ice Warrior starts butchering people left, right and centre, although he miraculously avoids injuring any of the guest cast.

Sue: I've just realised that Eldred looks a like a giant turtle with that body warmer of his. Maybe he's secretly working for the Ice Warriors, after all.

The Ice Warrior wanders off, killing even more personnel off-screen.

Sue: Clump, clump, clump. Bloody hardboard floors.

The Martians' deadly fungus now covers the entire world.

Sue: Are they trying to turn the planet into a big foam party?

Me: I think they're terraforming London into Ibiza.

Sue: This is great, but the music ruins it. It can't have been scored to the visuals because it doesn't fit the action at all. I wish we could turn it off; it's the only thing that spoils it.

And then, as Zoe turns up the heat, Phipps gets caught in the crossfire.

Sue: They've killed Peter Purves' brother! Noooooo!

Episode Five

Sue: Why doesn't Zoe move out of the way? Is she rooted to the spot with glue? Just run away! You know how rubbish they are when it comes to lumbering after you.

Meanwhile, the Doctor is waking from a dream...

Sue: Ooh, the Doctor just said Victoria's name in his sleep. I wonder how Zoe would feel about that. It's like David Tennant mooning after Rose in front of Martha all over again.

Me: Except this happened first.

Sue: I know!

Zoe is thrilled to see the Doctor back in action.

Sue: (*As Zoe*) Hello, Doctor! How are you? Did you go anywhere nice? My, don't you look nice and brown. And you've let your hair grow, too. Look at your sideburns – they're MASSIVE!

THE SEEDS OF DEATH

The Doctor, Zoe, Jamie and Gia T-Mat back to London, but Fewsham decides to stay.

Sue: He's worried about his annual appraisal. Suggested room for improvement: stop colluding with alien invaders. And grow some balls while you're at it.

An Ice Warrior has entered a Weather Control Station.

Sue: This series is obsessed with changing the weather, but given that it's made in England, I suppose that makes sense.

And then Fewsham redeems himself by broadcasting the next phase of the Ice Warriors' plan back to Earth.

Sue: Yay! Fewsham came good in the end! I knew he would.

He is promptly killed for his troubles.

Sue: Aww, that was a bit sad.

The Doctor heads for the Weather Control Station.

Sue: The director is pushing the boat out again, but sometimes he over-reaches himself. That scene with the Doctor running on the spot was terrible!

When the Doctor arrives at the weather station, he's overwhelmed by foam, and the episode ends with Patrick Troughton gurning at an expanding seedpod.

Sue: That was a great cliffhanger – funny and scary at the same time.

Episode Six

Sue: They are so proud of the last five minutes of episode five, they're playing it to us again. Oh, hang on... Wait a minute, this *is* interesting.

She's noticed that the recap includes Jamie and Zoe, who have been edited into the action we saw last week/five minutes ago.

Sue: Have we ever seen that before? The same scene played out from another character's perspective, I mean. That's very clever. It makes the whole thing feel fresh and different.

When Zoe nearly slips on the weather station's metal floor, Sue tuts.

Sue: Didn't the BBC have Health and Safety Compliance back in 1968? **Me**: What do you think?

As the Doctor tries to make it rain in England, Sue can't stop worrying about the rest of the world.

Sue: Who's sorting out this mess in Oslo? Maybe there's another version of the Doctor fixing things for them over there. That would be nice. I must say, though, Patrick Troughton is on top form this week. He gets all the best lines. He seems to be enjoying himself. He must be pleased that he's working his notice.

Me: Actually, if I'm not mistaken, it was during the transmission of this story that the public were told Troughton was going to hang up his hats and leave.

Yes, Sue knows we are nearing the end. You try avoiding the question, "How many are left?" every single night.

Sue: At least he chose to leave. It was his decision and they didn't do a Hartnell on him. So I'm happy about that.

THE SEEDS OF DEATH

The Doctor arrives on the Moon to foil the Ice Warriors' plans, but he's captured instead.

Sue: Do the Ice Warriors need the Doctor to work the T-Mat for them because their stupid hands can't flip the switches? They haven't thought this through.

The Doctor's plan finally bears fruit and the Martian fleet is sent on an unexpected detour into the sun. As the Grand Marshal gives Slaar a right earful (mirroring Osgood and Fewsham's sexual tension in the first episode) Sue can't help but laugh.

Sue: And by the way - you're fired!

The Doctor and Jamie overcome the remaining Ice Warrior in what turns out to be an action-packed finale.

Sue: Why does Jamie shout "Brigadoon!" when he attacks something?

Me: He doesn't. He's crying "Creag an tuire!" **Sue**: Oh. Well that makes perfect sense, then.

The Ice Warriors have been defeated, but the Doctor and his companions do a runner before the authorities can organise a ticker-tape parade in their honour.

Sue: (As the voice of the base's computer) And they all lived happily ever after.

The Score

7/10

Sue: The music spoilt it. Everything else was pretty good. Good plot, great acting, interesting direction, and Patrick Troughton was on top form. I think they've got this 'base under siege' thing down pat, now.

COMMENT: "I can't believe that Frazer Hines' dreadful accent hasn't been mentioned yet. It's a Celtic version of Dick Van Dyke's *Mary Poppins*' mockney. Scotney!" – AST

THE SPACE PIRATES

BLOGGED: 25 October 2011

Episode One

Me: I hate to break it to you, Sue, but we've got some more recons to watch.

Sue: You've been putting this story off for ages. That's always a bad sign. **Me**: It's got a terrible reputation, but this is still a big moment for me. Because once we get through *The Space Pirates*, I'll have seen every single episode of *Doctor Who*. Well, as far it's possible to see every episode of *Doctor Who* if you were born in 1969.

Sue: Don't look so depressed, then. You should be excited!

Me: But it's The Space Pirates! It's rubbish!

Sue: Don't be so pessimistic. And don't accept what the fans say about this

story. It might be really, really good.

And then the episode begins.

Sue: Okay, maybe not.

Astronauts are planting explosives on a space beacon.

Sue: So this is basically Firefly, then?

Me: I think *The Space Pirates* lasts a lot longer than *Firefly*. Or maybe it

just feels that way.

Sue: The music is very Hungarian. **Me**: What does that even mean?

And then, after what feels like an eternity, the title card appears.

Sue: Robert Holmes. Is there anything I should know about him?

Me: Well, he wrote *The Krotons*.

Sue: Oh joy.

Me: Robert Holmes is talked about a great deal in Doctor Who circles. Just

you wait and see.

Sue: The Doctor is taking his time getting involved in this story.

Me: Can you blame him?

When the Interstellar Space Corps arrive, I persuade Sue to play the famous Space Pirates drinking game with me. If you've never played it before, you take a shot of whisky every time General Hermack mentions the word 'argonite'. Six minutes into the first episode and we're as pissed as farts.

Sue: There are lots of porno moustaches in this one. I'm pretty sure that's Jason King over there.

Another beacon is destroyed and the fragments are stolen by the pirates.

Sue: I'm bored of this now. There are too many characters and too much yakking. And when people aren't yakking, we have to watch the same spaceships docking over and over again.

Me: It isn't exactly 2001.

Sue: It's barely 1951. The pirates' spaceship looks like a shoehorn.

Two pirates named Caven and Dervish enter the beacon a few minutes after the TARDIS plonks itself there.

Sue: Oh my word. It's Cannon and Ball. In space.

Me: Rock on.

Sue: Is his head really that misshapen, or is that just his helmet?

Caven polishes off the ISC security team before attaching some explosives to the beacon's exterior. In fact, the cliffhanger, where the Doctor and his companions are suddenly blown to smithereens, isn't bad at all.

Sue: I've seen worse.

THE SPACE PIRATES

Episode Two

Me: This is the last orphaned episode. **Sue**: Am I supposed to feel sorry for it?

Sue is drawn to the music of Dudley Simpson like a moth to a flame. If moths hated flames, that is.

Sue: The music is very weird again. That wailing voice would be all right if this was a ghost story, but I bet it bloody isn't.

ISC's uniforms are given a rough ride, too.

Sue: I bet Hermack constantly cuts his ear lobes on that stupid collar of his. What a terrible design. And those key rings dangling in front of their genitals – whose idea was *that*?

Technician Penn's face rings an extremely large bell.

Sue: Oh, it's whatshisface from EastEnders!

Me: Yes, it's George Layton. He's been in loads of stuff. You probably know him as Solly from *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*. Oh, and the *Doctor* sitcoms, of

course - Doctor at Large, Doctor in Charge etc.

Sue: He probably did *Doctor Who* so he could complete the set.

And then – and nothing can really prepare you for this – Milo Clancey turns up.

Sue: It's Stalin!

Me: It's Joseph Stalin meets Han Solo. It's an interesting amalgamation.

For the first three minutes.

Sue: Surely it's Stalin meets Elmer Fudd? What on earth is he doing

dressed like that?

Me: I didn't hear you complaining when Nathan Fillion dressed like that.

Sue: What is that fucking accent?

Me: His accent is 'Space'.

Sue: I refuse to accept that somebody actually wrote this dialogue. They're just making it up.

Sue breathes a huge sigh of relief when Milo finally leaves.

Sue: I don't mind a bit of light relief now and again, but that seemed to go on forever.

Me: Don't worry, it's not as if they're stupid enough to make him a lead character in this story, or anything.

In the remains of the exploded beacon, the Doctor and his companions seem to be doing just fine. But when a face suddenly appears on a monitor screen, Sue gasps in terror.

Sue: Oh no! It's the Ice Warriors! Oh, sorry, it's just his helmet.

And then, a few seconds later...

Sue: Oh no! It's the Cybermen! **Me**: That's Madeleine Issigri's hat. **Sue**: Oh. Is it made of argonite?

And the less said about Major Ian the better.

Sue: This story doesn't deserve a character called Ian. There's only one Ian in *Doctor Who* as far as I'm concerned, and it isn't him.

Despite the Doctor's best efforts, the beacon is still spinning out of control. Just as the oxygen is about to run out, Milo Clancey turns up and saves the day (although he does put a downer on things by shooting Jamie).

Me: That's Jamie dead, then.

Sue: Good. Although I don't believe you.

THE SPACE PIRATES

Episode Three

Sue: Whinge, whinge, whinge. Moan, moan, moan. Jamie is doing my head in now. Just kill him! Please!

Yes, Milo didn't kill Jamie, he just riled him a bit.

Sue: Milo's accent is impossible. I can't understand a word he's saying. He's talking way too fast. It's relentless.

Me: "Bluergh, blah, blurg, blah, baaaaaaa!" That's what it sounds like to me.

Our heroes end up running around a cave. And then, as they rush down a passageway, the floor drops away.

Sue: I wish the ground would open up and swallow me.Me: Remind me to buy some pipettes and rope tomorrow.

Sue: I don't need tying up just yet. It isn't that bad.

Me: No, you'll have to use them on me.

Episode Four

Unfortunately, we've got ourselves in a bit of a pickle – and it's all my fault. I'd completely forgotten that Sue was heading for London for a few days and now, the night before she's due to leave, I suddenly realise that we'll have to watch three recons of The Space Pirates in a row if I hope to update the blog before the month is out. Thankfully, she takes this news remarkably well.

Sue: For fuck's sake!

After she's finished hitting me, we settle down to watch tonight's entertainment/sadistic torture/masochistic torment (delete as appropriate), and, because we're bad parents, we made Nicol watch it with us.

Me: Can you tell Nicol what's she's missed so far, Sue?

Nicol: Don't worry about me. I don't care. I'll be browsing *Facebook* on my phone.

Sue carries on regardless.

Sue: Okay, so the first thing you need to know, Nicol, is the Doctor is hardly in this story. Secondly, there are these pirates, right, and they are blowing up these space stations made from argonite, which is the most precious metal in the universe.

Me: I'm impressed.

Sue: And the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe end up on one of these space stations when it's blown up into separate sections that miraculously survive. And then they land on this planet, but they can't find their TARDIS.

Me: This is better than Wikipedia.

Sue: And there's a cowboy in it who looks like Stalin. And that's about it. I'm warming to it, actually.

Me: Now I'm worried.

Nicol: It sounds amazing. So when can we watch University Challenge?

Sue points out all the characters to Nicol.

Sue: That's a pirate. That's Jamie. That's Robert Holmes' name. He isn't

very good. And that's Stalin. **Nicol**: No it's not. It's Wario.

Milo kills a guard as they make their escape.

Me: Milo definitely fired first. Loose Canon tried to edit that so the guard fired first, but the fans went crazy and they had to change it back.

Sue: Really? **Me**: No.

Nicol: (*Exasperated*) Oh, mother! Even *I* get that reference!

By the time we've explained it to Sue, all three of us are totally lost. So I find an online synopsis, hoping it will fill in the blanks.

THE SPACE PIRATES

Me: I don't believe it! Even the TARDIS Index File gave up on this story

after three episodes!

Sue: Can you understand a single word Stalin is saying, Nicol?

Nicol: He sounds like Jimmy Stewart.

Me: If Jimmy Stewart was having a stroke.

Episode Five

Nicol makes a swift exit when Sue and I decide to plough on.

Sue: I wonder if Sorba is supposed to be Greek...

After a fairly entertaining prison break (entertaining in the sense that we don't want to chew our own arms off), the Doctor and his companions find themselves in an old-fashioned study.

Sue: It's the old let's-use-some-old-set-dressing-and-pretend-we're-in-the-future scam. It was clever the first time they did it, but now it just looks cheap and desperate.

Me: Oh look, it's the Loose Canon candle! I've missed that candle. **Sue**: The dialogue is fairly amusing, but I'm finding it difficult to engage with the story. In fact, is there a story? I'm completely lost.

Huddled in the darkness is none other than Dom Issigri himself.

Me: It's Karl Marx!

Sue: Santa Claus, surely?

The old man has gone doolally, and Milo has to jog the poor sod's memory. Unfortunately, thanks to the impenetrable accents (which can sometimes change in the middle of a sentence), the scene is incomprehensible.

Sue: What's the deal with the snake charmer music all of a sudden? Did Dudley Simpson ever see the episodes he was writing the music for? He can't have done.

We pass the time impersonating Madeleine Issigri – she says the word 'people' with three syllables, and her, "Ha! Ha!" has us in stitches. And then the episode ends with the Doctor caught in Milo's backblast (not a euphemism).

Me: It's all gone a bit Moonraker.

Episode Six

Me: This is it, Sue. Our final recon. How do you feel about that?

Sue: Is that a trick question? How do you think I feel?

Me: Just think, 24 minutes from now, we'll be finished with the recons.

Sue: I still can't believe I've seen them all. **Me**: Yeah. (*Under mv breath*) Sort of.

Sue: What?

Me: You probably don't remember, but when we saw Marco Polo, we

watched a condensed version of a seven-part story.

Sue: So we haven't actually watched them all? Hmm, I'm not sure how I feel about that.

Me: Don't worry, I'm sure the blog's readers won't hold it against us. And I'll ban their fucking IP address if they mention the *M*-word in the comments. Plus, if anyone so much as alludes to *The Reign of Terror* or *The Ice Warriors*, I'll come to their house in the middle of the night and kill them.

Sue: Hang on a minute, how many recons have we skipped?

Me: Seven or eight. It's complicated.

Sue: We should go back and watch them. If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing right.

Me: Look, love, *Terror of the Zygons* will be released on DVD before we watch the *Marco Polo* reconstructions.

Sue: I don't even know what that means. So are we going to watch them or not?

Me: Let's get through this one first.

The Doctor recovers from almost being burnt to a crisp.

THE SPACE PIRATES

Sue: What would have happened if Patrick Troughton had regenerated at the end of *The Space Pirates*? Would this story suddenly be considered a classic?

Me: It would be an embarrassing way to end an era, with a turkey. **Sue**: Yeah, doing it to William Hartnell was bad enough. I mean, this is really bad. I had hoped we'd really like it, so we could confound everyone's expectations. But I can't. It's total shit. I've watched episodes of *Bill and Ben: The Flowerpot Men* that make more sense than this.

At one point Madeleine shouts (in that over-enunciated way of hers), "You've got about six minutes left!"

Sue: Six minutes! We are so close!

Me: Hang on in there, love. We can do it!

Nicol: Are you actually watching this, or are you just counting down the

seconds until it ends? **Me**: Go away, Nicol.

She's right, of course.

Me: It. Just. Won't. End.

Sue: What I don't understand is why, when the actor turned up to play Milo, nobody pulled him aside and told him that no one would understand a bloody word he was saying if he played the part like that.

That's bad directing, producing, and acting. Take your pick.

Me: They should have realised long before Gordon Gostelow reached the

set. They rehearsed this for a week.

Sue: This was never rehearsed! Now you're just taking the piss.

And then, several hours later, The Space Pirates ends.

Sue: Hallelujah!

I reach behind my cushion for a strategically placed party popper. Well I would have done if I'd bothered to plan ahead.

The Score

1/10

Sue: Well that was shit.

Me: And there you have it. I've seen them all.

Sue: Except for *Marco Polo*. **Me**: Yes, except for *Marco Polo*.

Sue: And the other two.

Me: Yes, I know!

COMMENT: "I've used Madeleine Issigri quite a bit in my fan fiction. I have written a *Doctor Who* 'girls in prison' series in which Madeleine shares a cell with Morgaine from *Battlefield...*" – Matthew C

NOTES: I was right about one thing: *The Terror of the Zygons* was released on DVD before we watched *Marco Polo* again (see *Volume 1*).

You'll be pleased to know that the *TARDIS Index File* website now includes a synopsis for the last three episodes of *The Space Pirates*. Thank fuck for that, eh?

THE WAR GAMES

BLOGGED: 4 November 2011

Episode One

Sue: Is this the fabled 10-parter I've heard so much about?

Me: It is, but don't get fixated on that. The bigger news is there's a new

producer at the helm – Derrick Sherwin.

Sue: Bit of a strange time to take over the reins, isn't it? That would be like

the Moff producing David Tennant's last story. How very odd.

The TARDIS crew are stumbling around a war-torn landscape.

Sue: They left the TARDIS as soon as it arrived – it's as if they were standing by the door waiting for it to land. They didn't have enough time to check whether it was safe outside, or if this planet has any oxygen or not. That was a bit reckless.

Jamie immediately pricks himself on some barbed wire.

Sue: What an idiot. That's typical Jamie, that is. However, I do like the

music. Who composed it?

Me: Dudley. Sue: Did he? Me: No, Dudley.

When our heroes come under fire from an artillery barrage, they are rescued by Lady Jennifer and her trusty ambulance.

Sue: It's Valerie Singleton. Well I wasn't expecting that.

Me: Actually, it's the producer's wife. **Sue**: Blimey, he didn't waste any time!

It becomes clear we're in the middle of the First World War.

Sue: We haven't had a good historical in ages. I like the historicals. The direction is really good so far, too. The whole thing looks amazing.

The Doctor and his companions are escorted to the officer commanding the British troops – the mysterious General Smythe.

Sue: This guy is very suspicious. I'm guessing he must be a German spy. Yes, I thought so – here he goes to report to his superiors in secret. Hang on a minute, that monitor looks a bit sci-fi. Is he in league with the Daleks or something?

Sue is gripped by the court-martial scene.

Sue: I'm really glad Troughton is going out on a high. Does it take them nine episodes to execute him? Is that the basic plot? And then he regenerates?

The Doctor is sent before a firing squad.

Sue: Maybe they'll shoot him in the wrong heart and it'll take him several hours to regenerate, just like David Tennant.

Me: That just felt like several hours, Sue.

The episode concludes with a gunshot.

Sue: That was a brilliant cliffhanger. We'll have to watch the next one straightaway.

Episode Two

Of course, the Doctor hasn't been shot. The gunshot came from a sniper's rifle, which allows the Doctor to make his escape.

Sue: That was a very clever resolution to the cliffhanger. Very nicely done.

THE WAR GAMES

General Smythe continues to act suspiciously, never more so than when he's telling his subordinates not to interrupt him if he's ensconced in his office.

Sue: Why doesn't he just put a bloody lock on the door? You'd think that would be the first thing he'd do.

And then a SIDRAT turns up.

Sue: Is that a TARDIS? It sounds like a TARDIS, although it looks like an IKEA flat pack wardrobe. But I guess that's possible for a TARDIS, isn't it?

Jamie is locked up with a Redcoat from 1745.

Sue: 1745? Eh? So are there lots of different time zones or something?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Okay, so can we please skip forward to episode 10 now that I've

worked that out?

Me: No, there's a bit more to it than that.

Sue: I like how the Doctor bluffs his way into a position of authority. He doesn't need any psychic paper. The other Doctors are complete amateurs compared to Patrick Troughton.

When his bluff fails, it's up to Zoe to save the day with some brute force (and a vase of flowers).

Sue: You go, girl! This is great stuff. I find it hard to believe that this is the same programme that gave us *The Space Pirates* last week.

Me: That's the trouble with *Doctor Who*: you're never quite sure what you're going to get.

Sue: Jamie can't wait to leg it back to the TARDIS – the Doctor has to convince him to stay and help these poor sods. What a cunt.

Sue is impressed with the SIDRAT's handling.

 $\pmb{Sue} :$ At least this bloke can steer his TARDIS (if that's what it is) – he can

park it on a sixpence. Why doesn't the Doctor just nick that one?

The Doctor and his friends make their getaway in an ambulance and they drive into some heavy mist. When they emerge on the other side, they find themselves in Roman times.

Sue: So it's a Stargate. But without the gate.

As the Romans advance, Sue nods appreciatively.

Sue: That was another great cliffhanger. So far, so good.

Episode Three

Our heroes manage to escape from the Roman centurions, only to be captured by German soldiers from the First World War instead.

Sue: I like the way this is in German but you still know what's going on. It isn't patronising at all. In fact, it's rather good.

General Smythe meets the War Chief.

Sue: Nice medallion. Very butch.

The War Chief isn't very happy when he's told that the Doctor and his companions might be time travellers. We even get to hear his innermost thoughts on the subject.

Sue: Is that the first time we've heard internal dialogue in *Doctor Who*? It's all go, isn't it? The new producer is definitely making his mark. It feels very different. Why couldn't all of Patrick Troughton's stories be as good as this one?

When Doctor and his friends arrive in the American Civil War Zone, they become embroiled in yet another action-packed set piece.

THE WAR GAMES

Sue: The choreography is excellent. Really exciting. I'm sure that bloke punched that other bloke in the face for real. David Maloney is even better than the Camfield.

Carstairs sacrifices himself so his friends can escape. Sue isn't pleased about this, to put it mildly.

Sue: Why are they leaving Carstairs behind? What the fuck are they playing at?

The Doctor and Zoe pop inside a SIDRAT to take a closer look.

Sue: Hey, it's bigger on the inside! It must be a TARDIS. Is the bloke with the beard the Master?

The door closes behind them and the machine dematerialises.

Sue: Another good cliffhanger. They're definitely on a roll.

Episode Four

Lady Jennifer and Jamie stumble into a battle between Union and Confederate soldiers.

Sue: The kids probably loved this story. It's one action-packed fight scene after another.

Meanwhile, back at Central Control, the War Chief is questioning his Chief Scientist.

Sue: What's the deal with the clown-eye sunglasses? What's that all about? They must play merry hell with your peripheral vision. Not that anyone in *Doctor Who* has any peripheral vision.

And then Sue became so engrossed in the story, she stopped talking for a

while. In fact, she doesn't say another word until the Doctor and the War Chief obviously recognise each other.

Sue: That confirms it, then. He is the Master. It's about time, too.

Me: What about the Monk?

Sue: Nah, this is too well-organised to be him.

Zoe runs into Carstairs, who has been processed by the aliens' machine. He pulls a pistol on her and cocks the hammer.

Sue: Another fabulous cliffhanger. Terrance Dicks and Malcolm Hulke can definitely come back again.

Episode Five

The War Chief interrupts Carstairs before he can shoot Zoe. But then he goes ahead and shoots her anyway. Luckily, his gun is out of bullets.

Sue: That was shocking. He would have shot her in the throat, given half the chance. That was very bleak. I didn't like that at all.

In the American Civil War Zone, the fisticuffs never end.

Sue: The fight scenes in this story are very realistic. Normally it takes one punch to sort the bad guy out, but here they have to pummel their opponent into the ground. Although I suspect they're trying to pad this story out a bit, as well.

Zoe is taken to see the Security Chief.

Sue: He sounds like a human Dalek. He must be working for them. I knew the Daleks were in this.

The Security Chief subjects Zoe to some intense questioning with a truth machine that fits snugly over his head.

THE WAR GAMES

Sue: Now he's working for the Cybermen! **Me**: He's wearing an evil 3D View-Master.

Sue: The background music sounds like Pink Floyd.

Me: You're right, it sounds like 'On the Run'. Funnily enough, it's

possible that Roger Waters was inspired by this. He was a big fan of the

Radiophonic Workshop.

Sue: I've decided that the Master looks like Khal Drogo from *Game of Thrones* crossed with George Michael and Engelbert Humperdinck.

Me: Not Mr Meaker from Rentaghost?

Sue: I was out drinking cider in the park when that was on, love.

The Doctor, Zoe and Carstairs end up in the aliens' landing bay.

Sue: It looks like Palitoy designed an Air Traffic Control centre.

When Jamie emerges from a SIDRAT, he is ambushed by a platoon of security guards.

Me: That's Jamie dead, then.

Sue: Fuck off. I don't believe you... Is he really?

Episode Six

The War Chief is a Time Lord.

Sue: Yes, we know that already. He's the Master. But I'm still confused. I thought the Time Lords were wiped out in the Time War, so how can they be around now?

Me: Well, the Time War hasn't actually happened yet.

Sue: Yes, but if it was a Time War then it must have happened in the past *and* the future at the same time. Or the Doctor could just go back to the past to save Gallifrey.

Me: Are you insane?

Sue: I thought he couldn't go back home because his home didn't exist

any more. Stop looking at me like that, Neil.

As much as it pains me to say this, I think Sue fancies the War Chief.

Sue: His sideburns are very cool. It must take him hours to trim them in the morning. Or does he get a minion to do that for him?

Jamie appears on an examination table, alive but unconscious.

Sue: Jamie isn't dead, you lying bastard! I knew it!

Me: Ouch! That really hurt!

The alien who's masquerading as Captain von Weich is imprisoned by a young British private named Moor.

Sue: This guy looks familiar.

Me: He should do.

When I finally put her out of her misery, she can't believe it.

Sue: It's nepotism gone mad in this story! First the producer's wife, and now the lead actor's son. Who's next? Zoe's second cousin twice removed? **Me**: He's the third frogman on the left in the next scene. He doesn't have any lines.

Carstairs duffs up an alien technician.

Sue: This is a rubbish fight. The other fights have been great but this one is a bit slapdash. Perhaps the stunt men are knackered? Or maybe they're all on holiday this week?

The episode concludes with the Doctor and Carstairs trapped in a SIDRAT as it rapidly becomes smaller on the inside.

Sue: Another great cliffhanger. We haven't had a duff one yet.

THE WAR GAMES

Episode Seven

The Doctor surrenders, but it turns out to be a ruse and he escapes in a SIDRAT. The War Chief and the Security Chief bicker over who gets to break this news to the War Lord.

Sue: They're really hyping up the War Lord. He'd better be good.

Philip Madoc doesn't disappoint. In fact, he's probably the most menacing character in Doctor Who so far.

Sue: Why are these aliens obsessed with glasses? They have this amazing technology but they still haven't invented laser eye surgery yet. The War Lord looks like he's wearing a pair of milk bottles. The music's gone a bit weird, too. That fanfare sounds like the theme to a completely different series. Like *Public Eye*, or something like that.

Me: Yes, the music is very Austo-Hungarian this week.

Sue: At least they're trying. There's an epic quality to this story that we've never seen before. It's a great way to end an era.

The War Chief and the Security Chief are still bickering ("Get a room!"), but the War Lord has heard enough.

Sue: The War Lord is the aliens' version of Alan Sugar. He'll fire the Security Chief if he's not careful.

Me: I love Philip Madoc. His performance in this story is incredible. I could watch him all day.

As luck would have it, Nicol walks in on us as the Doctor de-processes a French soldier.

Nicol: That's the worst French accent I've ever heard.

And she should know, what with her being half-French and everything. She leaves the room in disgust.

Sue: How can the Doctor not speak French? That's a bit shit.

A platoon of security guards emerge from a SIDRAT, their futuristic guns a-blazing.

Sue: The frogmen's guns look like fence posts. And they're top-heavy, too. They must be a bastard to aim.

The episode concludes with another fantastic cliffhanger as the Doctor is kidnapped by the Security Chief.

Sue: That was very nice. But I'm beginning to wonder how they can possibly drag this out for another three episodes.

Episode Eight

The War Chief claims to possess a unique method for getting information out of his compatriot, the Doctor.

Sue: A nice champagne dinner for two, I bet. I never knew the Master was so camp. Was he paid by the eyebrow?

When yet another fight breaks out (you can practically set your watch by them), Sue picks up on something that's been bugging her for ages.

Sue: There are some terrible extras in this. I thought learning how to die properly was the first thing you were taught at drama school. This guy was obviously off sick that day. It's a shame because everything else is so good. Normally I wouldn't notice stuff like that, but in a production this good, it sticks out like a sore thumb. In fact, all the non-speaking parts are pretty poor, especially the frogmen.

Me: That's Wendy Padbury's second cousin you're insulting now.

Finally, after several hours of foreplay, we are treated to a showdown between the Doctor and the War Chief.

THE WAR GAMES

Sue: That was epic. But now that they've revealed the plot, I can't say I'm convinced. It sounds okay on paper, but are foot soldiers from the year 1917 really worse than the Cybermen and the Daleks? I doubt it. I mean, does this plan actually make sense, or is it just me?

Me: Don't worry, their plan is completely bonkers. Just go with it. Sue: It would have been a lot better if the aliens were just doing this to get their kicks. If they were televising it back home, and making loads of money from spread betting, that would have made more sense. I mean, what's going to happen when the Redcoats take on the Daleks – it doesn't bear thinking about!

The episode ends as the Doctor appears to side with the War Chief.

Sue: Another great cliffhanger. That's eight for eight.Me: Do you think the Doctor has betrayed his friends?

Sue: Don't be stupid.

Episode Nine

The War Chief wants the Doctor's TARDIS (because SIDRATs have a sell-by date).

Sue: Could the Master fly the Doctor's TARDIS if he really wanted to? Properly fly it, I mean. I still can't tell if the Doctor's TARDIS is faulty, or he just didn't pass his driving test.

And another thing...

Sue: The War Lord looks like an advertising executive, or a graphic

designer. What's his real name?

Me: I have no idea. He's the War Lord. **Sue**: I'm going to call him Saatchi.

Things are so bad, the Doctor considers asking his own people for help. This prompts the War Chief to do a runner, but the War Lord's personal guards

shoot him down before he can get very far.

Sue: Regenerate then. Come on, regenerate!

The camera cuts away.

Sue: He'll be back later with a different face.

The Doctor tells the soldiers that he had to go along with the bad guys because they would have dropped a neutron bomb on them if he hadn't.

Sue: Surely they wouldn't know what a neutron bomb was. How is a Redcoat supposed to process that information?

And the less said about the Mexican soldier named Villar, the better.

Sue: Didn't anyone tell him that we're in the middle of a serious drama, here? Look at him! He's shooting at the floor while he looks in the wrong direction, and still the guard drops down dead! What's that all about? Oh, and the aliens have bouncy tables. That's shoddy carpentry, that is.

The Doctor contacts his own people with a cube that he constructs out of thin air.

Sue: What the hell?

Me: Don't you remember a distress cube like this in a recent Matt Smith

episode?

Sue: Oh yeah. Now that you mention it, I do. Is there anything in Patrick

Troughton's era that doesn't appear in Matt Smith's?

Me: Well, I have heard rumours about the Krotons and the Quarks

appearing in the 50th anniversary story...

Sue: Oh no. The Doctor is going to do a runner and leave Jamie and Zoe

behind. That's a bit grim.

The Doctor's companions would rather stay with him to the bitter end,

THE WAR GAMES

and the episode ends with all three of them desperately trying to reach the TARDIS.

Sue: I didn't realise the Time Lords were so scary.

Episode Ten

The Doctor tells his companions why he abandoned his home planet. He wanted to explore the universe instead of watching it.

Sue: I like the Doctor's reason for leaving Gallifrey. It's simple, it's straight to the point, and it's completely understandable.

The Time Lords bring the Doctor home.

Sue: Oh dear, Gallifrey looks a bit shit. I was expecting something a lot more impressive that this. It looks like an NCP car park.

Me: To be fair, we're only seeing a tiny part of their civilisation.

Sue: Yeah, I suppose it'd be like judging New York City without leaving JFK Airport.

The Time Lords put the War Lord (no relation) on trial, and when the accused refuses to answer their questions, they torture him with their mental powers.

Sue: How come the Doctor doesn't have this superpower? Why can't he stare the villains into submission like this?

The War Lord responds with a blistering rant, which makes our blood run cold.

Me: Seriously, I think I love Philip Madoc.

Meanwhile, the Doctor's TARDIS is being examined by some technicians.

Sue: Oh look, they've sent in the techies to fix the Doctor's TARDIS. I

assume they must be fixing its navigation systems?

Me: They're probably doing the exact opposite.

Sue: What?!

And then, just when we think it's all over, some aliens try to rescue the War Lord.

Sue: Gallifrey's defences are terrible. If they're godlike super beings, how come these frogmen got in so easily?

They aliens are captured with ease and erased from history.

Sue: I didn't know the Time Lords could do that. Can the Doctor do that? **Me**: I don't think they did that with their minds. I think they used a

machine to do that.

Sue: Really? How can you tell?

It's the Doctor's turn to be put on trial, and he begins his defence by showing the Time Lords some of the monsters he's fought.

Sue: I wouldn't have started with the Quarks, mate. You've blown your case straight away.

As the Time Lords consider their verdict, Jamie and Zoe are returned to their own time zones. But there's a disturbing twist: their memories have been wiped and they'll only remember their first adventure with the Doctor.

Me: Don't you think that's cruel and tragic?

Sue: Not really.

Me: But Jamie will never remember Zoe! It's heartbreaking!

Sue: Yes, but look at it from the Time Lord's point of view – if they let Jamie keep his memories, he'd know about neutron bombs and hovercrafts, and stuff like that. He could fuck-up established history. The

Time Lords are being careful.

THE WAR GAMES

Me: So you aren't moved by this scene?

Sue: Not really. We should be pleased for them – they made it back home in one piece (although it looks as if Jamie will be killed by the end of the week).

The Time Lords deliver their verdict. The Doctor will be exiled to 20th century Earth ("That'll be cheap!") and he has to regenerate, too. In fact, I think it's fair to say that this episode concludes with the biggest cliffhanger in Doctor Who's history.

Sue: Well, that was weird. Was it supposed to be funny?

Me: Funny? What's so funny about it?

Sue: Well, it was a bit silly. Goofy. Daft. You know, funny.

Me: The Doctor is floating in space without a head! It's horrific! **Sue**: I wish I'd seen him turn into Jon Pertwee. I feel a bit cheated.

The Score

Sue: What can I say? It was epic. I was really impressed by the script, the direction and the acting. It was a really strong ending for Patrick Troughton as well, which I'm really pleased about. There was a point when it was on for a 10 out of 10 score, but it's definitely at least one episode too long, and I'll have to knock off a point for the bouncy tables, so:

9/10

Sue: I do have one question, though.

Me: What's that?

Sue: What happened to the Master?

COMMENT: "I'm a bit worried about your important announcement about the future direction of *Adventures with the Wife in Space*. When I was a kid and they said that, it usually meant two comics were merging to stop the other one from going out of business. 'Great news, folks! Now

there's even more fun when *Battle-ACTION!* and *Princess Tina and Girly Stories* join forces. Come back next week for *Girly-Battle-TV-ACTION!* comic!' You're not linking up with *Radio Free Skaro*, are you?" – Anton Binder

NOTES: The announcement that Anton refers to in the comment above was our decision to move the blog from *Tachyon TV* to its current URL (effectively killing a website I'd spent 10 years trying to build). Starting with *Spearhead from Space*, the blog would move to a new URL (wifeinspace.com) with a completely new design, a radical new colour scheme (pink, if you can believe it), and, for the very first time, its own unique identity. But that's another story for another book...

THE TROUGHTON YEARS

BLOGGED: 6 November 2011

I invited the blog's readers to quiz Sue about the Troughton era, and this is what they came up with.

Me: The first question was asked by quite a few readers (Lewis Christian, Bryan Simcott and Rob Ritchie included): If you could magically turn a recon into a moving story, which story would it be?

Sue: *The Power of the Daleks*. It's the recon with the highest score. It isn't that hard to work out.

Me: Huw Davies asks: If you had to re-watch a Troughton story, which one would you choose and why?

Sue: *The War Games*. Because it's the best story. Hang on, would I have to watch all 10 episodes back to back? I could probably do one a night. **Me**: Joel Davies asks: Do you ever find yourself dreaming *Doctor Who*

dreams?

Sue: No. I wouldn't mind some, though.

Me: Lisa Parker is next...

Sue: A woman? **Me**: I think so.

Sue: Wow. Okay, go on then.

Me: She wants to know which guest actors have given the best and worst

performances.

Sue: Milo Clancey. He was dreadful. I don't want to know the name of the man who played him. And the best was (*after she spends several hours chewing it over*) Peter Barkworth in *The Ice Warriors*. He was brilliant. **Me**: Another popular question was asked by Thomas Boyer, among others: Which Troughton story would you remake today with Matt Smith?

Sue: *The War Games*. Actually, forget I said that. That would mean he'd have to die at the end. Okay, *The Faceless Ones* – Shirley Valentine and David Cameron could have cameos. You could set it at Heathrow Terminal 5. Everything goes missing there.

Me: Toby Hadoke wants to know: If Neil was a Doctor Who story that

you've seen so far, which one would he be?

Sue: The War Games, because it's long and satisfying.

Me: Ben Goudie asks: In all your travels through time and space, you have never rated a story higher than Nine out of 10. What would it take for a story to get the full 10 points, and do you think you will ever reach a story that will satisfy you sufficiently?

Sue: It's a bit like *Moonlighting*. As soon I give a story 10 out of 10, everything will go downhill. But seriously, every single story starts with a 10 out of 10 score, and then I chip away marks for things I can't forgive. So it is entirely possible that I will give a 10 out of 10 one day. Especially if it's short. *The War Games* came close. If we gave half-marks, I would have scored it nine-and-a-half out of 10. Maybe we should give out half-marks, Neil.

Me: That's never going to happen. People would have to re-design their graphs. Mark Faulkner has a very interesting question: Given that you don't see who the Doctor regenerates into at the end of *The War Games*, who would you like to see play the role of the Doctor?

Sue: Peter Gordeno. **Me**: Are you serious?

Sue: Okay, then – Anthony Newley.

Me: Better. Okay, next up is our very dear friend Simon Harries, and he's coming out of leftfield with this: It's believed that the Troughton guest stars Peter Barkworth and Joseph Furst used to compete against Philip Madoc and Wolfe Morris in backstage kabaddi contests. Does Sue have any thoughts about who would have won?

Sue: Yes.

Me: Mike Zeidler has the perennial 'snog, marry, avoid': A Yeti, the War Lord and Dudley Simpson.

Sue: Terrible choices. Terrible! Well, I'd avoid the Yeti, obviously. I'd probably marry Dudley; I'd help him to write some tunes with actual melodies. And I could snog the other guy, no worries.

Me: Okay, Richard Lyth and planetpex on *Twitter* both want to know: Which TV series would you most like to make Neil watch every episode of, from beginning to end?

Sue: Norm Abram's The New Yankee Workshop.

THE TROUGHTON YEARS

Me: Google it. It ran for 20 years! Next we have 'unexplode' from *Twitter*: If Sue was forced at gunpoint to go to a *Doctor Who* black-and-white-era themed fancy dress party, who or what would she go as?

Sue: I'd go as Barbara. In a cardigan.

Me: I was hoping for Zoe in a catsuit myself. Okay, and finally, Malcolm Y wants to know: Is Tesco Tony single? And if he is, can I have his phone number?

Sue: Didn't we have that question in the William Hartnell retrospective?

Me: Yes, he sent it in again. **Sue**: Give him the same answer.

Me: Before we go, Sue, did you prefer Troughton to Hartnell?

Sue: Yes. Without a doubt. **Me**: Will you miss him?

Sue: Ask me that question again next week.

Me: Can you sum up Patrick Troughton in three words?

Sue: Scruffy, charming and mischievous.

Me: Are you pleased we're finished with the 1960s stories?

Sue: I can't believe we don't have to watch any more black and white

episodes or bloody recons. It's such a relief.

Me: We've definitely seen the back of the recons.

Sue: So when do we start the next lot? **Me**: I was going to give you a week off.

Sue: We could make a start tonight, if you like.

Me: Really? Are you actually looking forward to the Pertwee stories? **Sue**: No, I'm dreading it. I have very vivid memories of him driving around in a stupid yellow sports car, and it was difficult to take him seriously.

Me: Why?

Sue: Because he looked like my mam.

COMMENT: "Damn! I asked a closed question! I've made a fool of myself yet again." – Simon Harries

NOTES: Tesco Tony *isn't* single. Just in case the tension was becoming unbearable.

EXTRAS HE'S GOT BIGGER BALLS THAN THE GREAT INTELLIGENCE





Note: The blogs in this section of the book were published after we'd finished the classic series. They are presented here in the order that we tackled them, beginning with Downtime, which we watched between Survival and the TV Movie.

Sue: So what are you putting me through tonight?

Me: I'm going to give you a taste of just how desperate Doctor Who fans

were in 1995.

Sue: A desperate Doctor Who fan. Sounds wonderful.

Me: I'm going to show you a fan film.

Sue: Haven't I suffered enough?

Me: The fans grew tired of waiting for the BBC to bring Doctor Who back,

so they did it themselves. Fans are like that.

Sue: But how could they afford it? Kickstarter didn't exist back then. They

must have had more money than sense.

Downtime's pre-title sequence takes place in a monastery in Tibet, where Victoria Waterfield has apparently gone on holiday.

Sue: Is that really Victoria, or is it somebody who just looks like her? They couldn't possibly afford her, could they?

Incredibly, Sue also recognises James Bree, who's playing a Lama.

Sue: He was in *All Creatures Great and Small* last night. He was a very nice man who kept a stray dog. I like him already.

Sue and I are currently making our way through All Creatures... (Adventures with the Wife in Darrowby) in an attempt to cushion the comedown when this experiment finishes in a few weeks time. Although I am getting a little tired of her crying every time an animal injures itself, which is practically every five minutes.

Sue: It's very nicely lit. There's plenty of atmosphere, I'll give it that.

A disembodied voice demands to be set free.

Sue: Is it the Master?

Me: No.

Sue: Is it the Doctor? **Me**: Definitely not.

Sue: Is it the Great Intelligence?

Me: Might be.

And then Sue spots Ian Levine's associate producer credit.

Sue: So that's how they could afford to make this. Ian Levine. It all makes sense now. Good old Ian. At least he was trying, bless him.

Fifteen years later, on a houseboat...

Sue: Oh dear, this looks cheap. Is it shot on SVHS? It looks like we're watching somebody's home movie.

Kate Stewart is being hassled by Chillies.

Sue: What's she got against them? **Me**: They're deranged students.

Sue: In that case I know how she feels.

And then...

Sue: Is that...? It can't be... It's the Brig!

The Brigadier is visiting a beach on the astral plane.

Sue: Is it supposed to look like that, or is this a really bad copy, Neil?

DOWNTIME

The Brigadier finds a footprint in the sand.

Sue: Ooh, it's the Yeti again. Excellent.

Meanwhile, a DJ is spouting nonsense in East Anglia.

Me: I bet you can't guess who that is.

Sue: Mark Ayres? **Me**: No, it's K9.

Sue: And how the hell was I supposed to know that? You idiot.

A student named Daniel Hinton logs onto the university server.

Sue: This is you in the university language labs in 1995, Neil. He's probably on some *Doctor Who* forum complaining about there not being any new *Doctor Who* for him to complain about.

And then...

Sue: It's Sarah Jane! Bloody hell, is *everybody* in this? Ian Levine must have been loaded. Oh no. Benton isn't in this. is he?

Sarah Jane is met by the university's Marketing Facilitator, Christopher Rice.

Sue: It's Ian Levine! He's cast himself in it!

Sue has some serious issues with Downtime's sound.

Sue: They can afford all these guest stars, but they can't afford a boom.

Victoria keeps a large silver sphere in a box on her desk.

Sue: Either that's a really big worry ball, or it's the Yeti. Their balls were well scary.

Daniel Hinton is browsing the university's computer network when something rather strange happens.

Sue: One minute he's on the internet, the next minute there's white sticky stuff all over his fingers. This is definitely you in 1995, Neil.

Victoria tells Sarah that the university's chancellor is currently off-site while he takes the path of truth.

Sue: Why can't she just say he's on sabbatical?

A Yeti sphere is sent after Daniel.

Sue: Balls that can move by themselves terrify me. **Me**: Remind me never to show you *Phantasm*.

Sue begins to struggle with Marc Platt's multi-layered script.

Sue: I haven't got a clue what's going on, but God bless them, they're giving it a bloody good go.

The Brig is still teaching.

Sue: Did Doris chuck him out of his big house? Was he playing away from

home again?

Me: That hasn't happened yet.

Sue: Eh?

The Brig checks his answer phone messages. Trap Six wants Greyhound to call him.

Sue: Does Benton want a chat? Is he lonely?

Kate Stewart is the Brigadier's daughter.

DOWNTIME

Sue: Haven't we met his daughter before?

Me: Yes, quite recently, in fact. She's played by Jemma Redgrave now, and

she works for UNIT. She's in the 50th anniversary special.

Sue: So does this count, then?

Me: It counts as much as you want it to, love.

When Victoria walks into the university's computer lab, the students stand up and applaud.

Me: Is this what happens when you walk into your lectures, love? **Sue**: (*Ignoring me*) I don't like this Christopher person. He isn't played by a great actor. He must have put loads of money into this. It's the only explanation I can think of for him being in it.

Daniel befriends a tramp.

Me: (Pointing at Geoffrey Beevers) That's the Master.

Sue: Is it?

Me: He played the Master when he was a decaying mess, and his TARDIS was a statue that could sit down and fire laser bolts from its eyes. Do you

remember that?

Sue: Yes, I do, actually. So is he the Master?

Me: No.

Victoria visits the Brigadier on the astral plane again.

Sue: Did Scottish Widows put some money into this? Is this early product placement?

And then the Brigadier shoots an imaginary Yeti in the face.

Sue: EH?

Back in East Anglia, the real Victoria is having to deal with Christopher.

Sue: You can't have a villain in a fucking jumper! If you're going to take over the world, you can't wear a crap jumper from Primark. Make an effort, man.

Professor Travers has returned from the dead.

Me: He was in *The Abominable Snowmen* and *The Web of Fear*.

Remember?

Sue: Not really. Oh, look – people queuing for a phone box. You never see

that any more.

Sarah Jane doesn't understand what the Yeti have to do with this.

Sue: Sarah Jane never met a Yeti, did she?

Me: Maybe the Doctor told her about them over tea and crumpets one

night.

Sue: Or maybe the Brigadier kept banging on about them. I bet he did, you know.

The Brigadier is accosted by some Chillies, and when Geoffrey Beevers' tramp comes to the rescue, there's a case of mistaken identity.

Sue: Does he think that tramp is the Doctor?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Is he the Doctor?

Me: No.

Sue: So where is the Doctor? **Me**: He's not allowed to appear.

Sue: Have the Time Lords stopped him? **Me**: No. BBC copyright stopped him.

Sue: I keep expecting Sylvester McCoy to turn up.

If I showed her the version of Downtime where Sylvester McCoy does turn up, she'd probably kill me. That's if Ian Levine didn't get to me first.

DOWNTIME

Sue: Kate's houseboat is lovely - very cosy. Could you live on a boat like

that, Neil?

Me: You've made me live in worse places.

Sue: Wrong answer.

Me: I'd live anywhere with you, love.

Sue: Better.

A Yeti appears on the boat and all hell breaks loose.

Sue: This must have been a nightmare to direct. The Brigadier's head is

practically touching the ceiling!

The Yeti leaves with the Locus.

Sue: Aww. He just wanted his toy back.

Kate tells the Brigadier that he's a grandfather.

Sue: This is basically an episode of *The Jeremy Kyle Show* set on a barge.

Christopher stamps on the Locus.

Sue: He's not even wearing decent shoes, for fuck's sake. So is the Great

Intelligence free now? **Me**: I don't know.

Sue: What do you mean, you don't know?

Me: I'm completely lost. Sorry.

Sue: You will be.

Kate reluctantly picks up her father's gun.

Sue: It's odd that she seems to resent her dad for working for UNIT, and yet she ends up working for them herself. How does that happen? And does this mean she'll end up doing to her son what he did to her?

The university's computer lab is overrun with cobwebs and comatose students.

Sue: This is what it used to look like when you finished one of your lectures, love.

The Brigadier and Daniel reach the bowels of the university.

Sue: Why hasn't the Brigadier said, "I wish the Doctor would pull his

finger out and help us" yet?

Me: I don't think they're even allowed to say his name.

Sue: He could say, "I could do with a madman in a blue box right now".

You can't copyright that, surely.

UNIT engage the Yeti on the university's lawn.

Sue: Is that Benton?

Me: No.

A UNIT solider is killed.

Sue: I'm going to pretend it's Benton.

The Brigadier is captured by the Great Intelligence, but he still manages to give Sarah the instructions she needs to save the day.

Sue: The Brig is basically playing the part of the Doctor in this. I can live with that. You know, I'm quite impressed with the direction. There are loads of extras, and these camera moves are very nice. It's just a shame about the plot.

Kate shoots the Great Intelligence at point-blank range.

Sue: So this is where she gets her taste for guns. Okay.

DOWNTIME

Christopher is killed by a Yeti, who is actually Daniel. (Oh do keep up.)

Sue: Don't wear a suit to his funeral. Go in a crap jumper.

The Great Intelligence has been defeated.

Sue: See you in 2013, you dick!

The Brigadier and Sarah are reunited.

Sue: Aww, how sweet.

And Victoria returns to her university.

Me: She's got a Quality Assurance Exercise next week, poor cow.

The film ends with the Brigadier meeting his grandson, Gordon.

Sue: That kid is going to be fucked up, you mark my words.

Downtime is dedicated to Douglas Camfield.

Sue: Poor Douglas. God knows what he would have made of that.

The Score

Sue: That wasn't too bad. It was a good effort. If I was marking that as a student film, I'd probably give it a high 2:1. I'd have to knock some marks off for the bad sound, the terrible acting and the awful script, but it was a bloody good attempt. And it was lovely – if a bit sad – to see the Brig and Sarah Jane again.

Me: Are you going to give it a mark?

Sue: Does it count?

Me: Sort of.

Sue: In that case I'll sort of give it:

6/10

COMMENT: "Forcing Sue to suffer through the entirety of classic *Doctor Who* is understandable in purely commercial terms (the soon-to-be-released book would absolutely require it)... but to expect her to sit through the spin-offs, or toss-offs as they should be called, goes beyond psychopathy and stomps into the realms of abuse." – Anonymous

NOTES: Sue's antipathy towards Benton is covered – in agonising detail – in our book *Adventures with the Wife in Space: Living with Doctor Who*. And if you want to see Sue fawn over Benton instead, don't forget to buy *The Pompous Tory: The Wife in Space Volume 3*.

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

BLOGGED: 21 October 2013

Sue: It's almost as if they were waiting for our book to go to print before they announced it!

This was Sue's reaction to the news that an undisclosed number of missing episodes of Doctor Who had miraculously turned up out of the blue. It was incredible. Nobody had suspected a thing.

Sue: Neil? Why are you crying? Are you all right, Neil?

And that was my reaction to the very same news.

Sue: Oh no. If they've found 100 missing episodes, we're completely screwed.

Nine episodes were safely back in the archives.

Sue: Phew! It's only nine!

Me: Not only that, we can watch them all on iTunes straight away!

Sue: Oh fuck.

Episode 1

Sue: So what score did I give to *The Enemy of the World* the first time you made me sit through it?

Me: I'm not telling you. I want you to watch this as if you're seeing it for the first time, which shouldn't be too difficult with your memory.

Sue: The title definitely doesn't ring a bell. *The Enemy of the World*. Which

monster is in this one again?

The theme music kicks in.

Sue: Aww, this is just like old times. Here, give us a cuddle.

This is actually the second time I've seen this episode; I watched it five minutes after it was released on iTunes in the middle of the night. Yes, I cried. And no, Sue was fast asleep in bed. And yes, it felt wrong somehow.

Sue: Has this episode been VidFIREd?

Me: Is that all you have to say? Look, woman! MOVING TROUGHTON! **Sue**: Yes, Neil. It's nice to have him back. He was definitely my favourite Doctor. If this was a Hartnell story, it would be a lot more onerous, believe you me.

The Doctor skips across a beach.

Sue: Oh look, he's doing the Morecambe and Wise dance.

Me: When you watched this episode as a recon, you said you were relieved that you didn't have to watch Patrick Troughton frolicking on a beach in his long johns. What do you think now?

Sue: Oh I don't know. He's quite cute when you can see him move.

A woman named Astrid is monitoring the beach from her futuristic office.

Sue: It's Mildred from George and Mildred. When Mildred was fit.

Astrid contacts her boss, Giles Kent, via a video-link.

Sue: It wouldn't have been easy to do that in the mid-'60s. That means the director is pushing the boat out and he cares about the show. So that's good.

The Doctor and his companions are pursued by some gun-toting Australians in a hovercraft.

Me: You didn't think much of that hovercraft last time.

Sue: It looks like a converted VW Campervan, but it does the trick, I

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

suppose, even if it is a bit on the slow side. I bet it looked hi-tech when this episode was first shown.

Astrid comes to the rescue in a helicopter.

Sue: The vehicles in this episode probably cost more than the cast. I bet I thought that helicopter was a model in the recon. This is quite impressive, actually.

We are provided with definite proof that The Enemy of the World takes place in the year 2018. So at least Lance Parkin will get another book out of this.

Sue: This is basically a really cramped episode of *Treasure Hunt*.

Me: You said that last time.

Sue: It's not my fault I've seen this before. Just cut and paste what I said

last time. I'm sure nobody will notice.

Astrid takes our heroes to a nearby bungalow.

Me: Is this ringing any bells yet?

Sue: None whatsoever.

Astrid tells us why the Doctor is being chased – it's because he looks like someone else.

Sue: These two are very flirty. I definitely don't remember that! Look at the sly old dog.

However, before the Doctor can work his magic, some burly Australians burst into the bungalow, their guns blazing.

Sue: Strewth! They're really overdoing the macho posturing. They look like they're auditioning for a menswear catalogue.

The male models take off in Astrid's helicopter, which promptly blows up.

Sue: This is much better than the recon, just so you know.

Me: Yeah, just a bit.

Astrid introduces the Doctor to Giles Kent, who, in turn, introduces the Doctor to his double, Salamander.

Sue: Ah yes! I remember this now. Something about a mad Mexican controlling the world's weather or something. I didn't like it very much.

Salamander is giving an important speech about corn.

Sue: Oh God, that accent! How could I possibly forget that accent? Did I compare Patrick Troughton to Seve Ballesteros last time?

Me: Not until Episode 5.

Sue: Did I also say Patrick Troughton is remarkably handsome when his hair is parted like that? Because he is, you know.

When she finishes acclimatising to Patrick's accent, Sue settles down and begins to enjoy the story.

Sue: I think I was probably way off beam when I scored the recons. This is actually pretty good. What score did I give this? I bet it was something like a four or five out of 10. But this isn't bad at all.

The cliffhanger involves Salamander's head of security, Bruce, coming face to face with the Doctor as he pretends to be the evil Mexican dictator.

Sue: That was brilliant. I really enjoyed that. It makes such a big difference when you can actually see the episode; don't look at me like I'm stating the obvious, Neil. I didn't even mind the silly accent that much. It's not so bad when you see the whole performance. No wonder you're pleased this has been found. Oh Neil, please stop crying. It isn't very attractive.

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

Episode 2

Sue: Patrick Troughton is getting off on this. Just look at him go.

She's referring to the actor's bravura performance as Salamander.

Sue: He's very handsome in this, too. He reminds me of the man in the

advert where...

Me: The Milk Tray advert. Yes, we know.

Sue: You're just jealous. At least he can part his hair.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for Milton Johns as Benik!

Sue: He's got a James Blunt thing going on. With a bit of Chris de Burgh thrown in for good measure.

There's no love lost between Bruce and Benik.

Sue: There was a lot of tension in that scene. I think something happened at the last Christmas Party and they haven't cleared the air yet.

Meanwhile, in an opulent palace somewhere in Hungary, Salamander meets with Denes, Controller of the Central European Zone.

Sue: The bad accents are coming thick and fast now.

Me: That's George Pravda's real accent, love.

Sue: Oh. Sorry.

Astrid accidentally puts her foot in her mouth when she tells Giles that the Doctor and his companions are "an odd lot".

Sue: It's much funnier when you can see Troughton's reaction to that. I bet that was rubbish in the recon, not that I can remember it. Was it rubbish, Neil?

As if I can remember. Ha!

And then we meet Salamander's food taster, Fariah.

Sue: She's a slave. That's shocking.

Me: It's even more shocking if you believe she's a sex slave.

Sue: Oh, I thought his sex slave was the guy with the beard in the gimp

costume.

Salamander explains that Fariah agreed to work under him (quite literally) because she was hungry. Only now that she has all the food she needs, she seems to have lost her appetite.

Sue: That was definitely code for sex. I bet he wasn't just putting food in her mouth.

Me: Sue!

When Jamie saves Salamander from an exploding intercom, the dictator chastises his security guards for failing to see that coming.

Sue: It's not exactly Blofeld feeding his henchmen to the piranhas, is it? He just tells them off. He'll never take over the world with an attitude like that.

After securing a job in Salamander's palace, Jamie meets with Victoria to share the good news.

Sue: Is this back projection?

Me: Barry Letts was in love with CSO long before CSO was invented. **Sue**: Actually, I take it all back. It's really clever, this. It shows ambition.

The episode concludes with Salamander setting off some earthquakes.

Sue: I really have missed this, you know.

Me: Really?

Sue: Yes, it's the only time you listen to anything I have to I say.

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

Episode 3

The next day...

Sue: What are you doing? **Me**: I'm putting a DVD on.

Sue: But I thought we were streaming the episodes via *iTunes*.

Me: I didn't buy Episode 3. I've already got it on DVD.

Sue: Tight arse.

Me: Give me a break, I've already pre-ordered the new DVD, as well. **Sue**: So you're buying it TWICE? You haven't got a job, Neil. You do know that, don't you? Worrying about reviews of your book isn't a full-time job ("A book without precedent in *Doctor Who* publishing" – *Doctor Who Magazine*). And neither is making me watch old episodes of *Doctor Who* again!

I ignore her as I insert the Lost in Time DVD into our ailing PS3.

Sue: So I must have seen this episode before. This episode wasn't thrown away, right?

Me: Yes.

Sue: And I have to watch it again because...?

Me: I thought you'd want to watch it again. You seem to be enjoying *The Enemy of the World* this time, and I bet you can't remember what happens next.

Sue: That is very true. And yes, I am enjoying it. But if I talk over it, I'll probably just say the same things I said last time. And that will be even more boring than usual.

Me: I've already thought of that. Just sit back, relax, and soak up the episode. You don't have to say a word. And then, when it's over, I'll tell you what you thought about it a couple of years ago, and you can tell me if you still agree with yourself or not. Okay?

And that's what we did.

Sue: I enjoyed that. So what did I say about it last time?

Me: Well, you complained about the security corridor, and you thought all the money must have been spent on the helicopter in the first episode. **Sue**: That sounds like the sort of thing I'd say. It didn't bother me this time. I thought they were taking the piss. This is definitely a comedy. A very black comedy.

Me: Then you made some topical references to *Hell's Kitchen* and *MasterChef*.

Sue: The chef was a great character. Very funny.

Me: You reckoned Jamie looked kinky in his leather uniform.

Sue: I still do. At one point, I thought I was having a hot flush, but it was just Jamie unzipping his jacket. I've never really thought about Jamie that way before. Isn't that odd?

Me: Giles Kent's caravan reminded you of the *Lyndhurst 2000*, obviously. **Sue**: Yes, it was very cosy. I bet it doesn't take him long to clean it. I miss our caravan. I miss our caravan a lot.

Me: You were insane two years ago, and you're still insane now. **Sue**: Don't be surprised if we end up in a *Lyndhurst 3000* one day. **Me**: You weren't that impressed with the plate smashing last time.

Sue: This time I thought it was funny.

Me: Oh, and you thought Jamie and Victoria were an item because they were wearing matching outfits.

Sue: Well that goes without saying. Although matching leather uniforms would take it to a whole new level.

Me: And last, but not least, you thought it was a bit racist.

Sue screws up her face.

Sue: Did I? Yes, well...

Me: You didn't understand why the villain was Mexican. You thought it

would have been better if the bad guy was German.

Sue: Oh no. That would have been even worse!

Me: You're arguing with yourself, love. Although you did make an interesting point. Why he is Mexican? Why choose a nationality that requires Troughton to black-up? Why not play him as a... I dunno... a

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

Hungarian?

Sue: Maybe Troughton couldn't do a Hungarian accent. **Me**: And he can do a Mexican accent? Are you mad?

Sue: It's supposed to be funny! **Me**: Doesn't that make it worse?

Sue: It does now that you've pointed it out to me. I was enjoying this until

you opened your big mouth. Let me think about it.

Me: You take all the time you need. We can discuss it while we watch

Curry and Chips on DVD later tonight.

Episode 4

Benik sends his men after Astrid.

Sue: What I want to know is this: Who cut Benik's hair? He looks a right clip. I bet he does it himself; I can't believe he'd let somebody to do that to him. The Lady in Red will not be impressed.

Fariah and Astrid join forces.

Sue: See! This story can't be racist. Fariah is a great character. Oh why did you have to point out the racist bits?!

The Doctor correctly surmises that Giles Kent wants him to assassinate Salamander.

Sue: Even if Salamander was evil, this Doctor wouldn't kill him. One of the other Doctors might, but not this one. Now, if Salamander looked like Sylvester McCoy, all bets would be off. But not him. No. Never.

Benik's men surround the apartment block that's currently occupied by our heroes.

Sue: Did an old lady with a pram accidentally walk into the shot just then?

Me: This reminds me of Brazil.

Sue: We're in Brazil now? I thought this was supposed to be Hungary?

Astrid holds off Benik's men while the Doctor and Giles escape through the apartment's air vents. Which, you have to admit, is a bit like Brazil too.

Me: Barry isn't very good when it comes to directing the fight scenes, but at least he's trying. This is basically *The Avengers* meets James Bond meets absolutely no money whatsoever.

Benik really loves his job.

Sue: Chris de Burgh is hilarious. I could watch him camp it up all day. If you treat this as a comedy, it's great.

Fariah is shot and killed.

Sue: Oh. That wasn't very funny. That wasn't very funny at all.

Salamander locks himself in a room and refuses to come out.

Me: This infuriated us when we saw the recon. The only thing we had to go on was that bloody ringing noise.

Sue: I hate to break it to you but it's *still* infuriating. I still don't know what's going on!

Salamander climbs into a capsule, which takes him into the bowels of the Earth.

Sue: This is impressive. It's even more like a James Bond film now.

As soon as he reaches his destination, Salamander changes into something a little more tatty.

Me: Do you remember the big twist, Sue?

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

Sue: I have no idea.

Me: Really? You don't remember?

Sue: Something about earthquakes. Or volcanoes. I don't know.

A crowd has gathered to celebrate Salamander's glorious return.

Sue: I know! This lot think they're on a spaceship, but they are actually in a shed somewhere.

I think she's misremembering Invasion of the Dinosaurs.

Sue: Is he running his own subscription-based version of *Big Brother* in his basement?

Salamander pretends to be riddled with radiation.

Sue: Oh, I remember this now. He's conned this lot into believing there's been a nuclear war, and they're too fucking stupid to realise that he's lying. Yes, I definitely remember this. It's fucking mental.

Salamander has been leading a double life.

Sue: This is like Patrick Troughton's real life, isn't it? You know, when he had more than one family to take care of, and he kept running backwards and forwards between them. It must have been exhausting.

Sue can remember tittle-tattle like that, but she wouldn't know a Macra if it jumped up and pinched her on the arse.

Anyway, not only has Salamander kept these people underground for five years, he's also persuaded them to wage a fake war against humanity by setting off earthquakes and other natural disasters.

Sue: He thinks big, I'll give him that.

Back on the surface, the Doctor has just finished blacking-up when an

uninvited guest turns up...

Sue: It's good, innit?

Me: You slagged off that cliffhanger last time.

Sue: Did I? Then I must have been mad, because this is great.

Episode 5

The feet in the last episode belonged to... Bruce!

Sue: Who else was it going to be? I wouldn't have lost any sleep over that.

Bruce throws a tracking device at Giles, who promptly drops it.

Sue: He'd be hopeless at cricket. I thought he was supposed to be

Australian?

Me: That reminds me, Sue - is this story racist?

Sue: Fuck off, Neil.

The Doctor persuades Bruce that his boss isn't who he seems.

Sue: Bruce is my favourite character. He's got a face you can trust. And he isn't trying to put on a funny voice, either. He doesn't sound Australian at all.

Me: Firstly, just because his name is Bruce doesn't mean he's Australian.

And secondly...

Sue: You'd think Salamander's henchmen would be Mexican, wouldn't you? You'd think he'd surround himself with his evil Mexican friends. It doesn't make sense when you stop to think about it.

It's business as usual for the inhabitants of Salamander's underground bunker – either they're setting off volcanoes or stocking up on milk.

Sue: What are they wearing? Is Salamander trying to take over the world with Judo?

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

A 'survivor' named Swann is unpacking Salamander's supplies of meat and milk...

Sue: I hope he hasn't forgotten Colin's monthly supply of Valium.

... when he comes across a scrap of newspaper. It looks like Salamander's game is up, but – and this is incredible – the dictator decides to front it out. He starts by asking Swann what he thinks happens to people who have been in a nuclear war.

Sue: I'm pretty sure they don't go on cruises around the Mediterranean, mate.

Swann finds the whole thing hard to swallow. But not that hard.

Sue: I know Salamander had to make that up on the spot, but was that really the best story he could come up with? I bet he was mentally kicking himself as he said it. And yet this moron is going along with it. Unbelievable!

Meanwhile, Benik is toying with Jamie and Victoria in a prison cell.

Sue: This has to be one of the most over-the-top performances I've ever seen in *Doctor Who*. And I've seen them all.

Benik threatens to put a bullet through Victoria's leg.

Sue: This is horrific. One minute it's a comedy, the next minute it's a gritty thriller, which doesn't pull its punches. God knows what the kids who saw it in the 1960s must have thought. Actually, they were probably bored. There aren't any monsters in this.

The Doctor convinces his companions that he's an evil Mexican dictator.

Sue: His accent keeps slipping. Either Troughton was flagging when they

shot this scene or it's a clever performance and he's supposed to sound a bit shit. I'm going with the latter. It is Patrick Troughton, after all.

And then the Doctor convinces his companions that he isn't Salamander by playing an invisible recorder for them. They celebrate with a group hug.

Sue: Aww, even I thought that was sweet, and I hate it when he plays that bloody recorder.

Salamander leads Swann back to the surface of the planet.

Sue: He is so dead. And he won't be taking any cruises as a zombie, either.

At least Astrid still impresses Sue.

Sue: She would have been an interesting companion, and a good contrast to Victoria. They could have had a love quadrangle in the TARDIS.

Me: Eh?

The episode concludes when Astrid finds Swann above ground, nursing a nasty head wound.

Sue: They missed a trick there. Instead of Astrid wandering around an indoor garden centre, they should have had a scene where that poor guy saw daylight for the first time in five years, and then Salamander nobbled him from behind. That would have been more dramatic. Actually, why not kill him underground where no one would find him? Did Salamander feel sorry for him? Did he want to give the poor man one last taste of freedom? Maybe he felt bad about it. He looked as if he was looking for an excuse not to kill him earlier. And, finally, if you're going to kill someone, make sure you actually kill them! If he's supposed to be the enemy of the world, he isn't a very good one.

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

Episode 6

We settle down with a nice cup of tea ("Warm and enjoyable" – Doctor Who Magazine) to watch the final episode, when Nicol decides to join us.

Nicol: Is this one of those 'missing episodes' you keep going on about?

I hit pause so Sue can bring Nicol up to speed.

Sue: So there's this man called Salamander, right, and he's supposed to be Mexican.

Me: He is Mexican.

Sue: It's complicated, Nicol. Anyway, Salamander has trapped all these people underground because they think the surface has been taken over by mutated zombies sailing around on cruise ships.

Nicol: Right...

Sue: And he's tricked them into setting off earthquakes and volcanoes. How they actually do this isn't clear, but they can definitely do it. Anyway, one of them has discovered that he's the victim of an elaborate practical joke, and the last episode ended when he almost got killed.

Me: Now tell her about the Doctor.

Sue: Oh yes, the Doctor just happens to look like Salamander, and some other people want the Doctor to impersonate him so they can prove he's the one who's killing the world.

Me: So the Doctor has to black-up.

Nicol rolls her eyes.

Sue: Look. This is what actually happened: the writer said, "Which accents can you do, Patrick?" and Patrick said, "Spanish!" and that was it. End of story.

Nicol: But you wouldn't need to black-up if you wanted to be Spanish.

Sue: I suppose some fake tan would probably do it.

Nicol: It doesn't sound like a normal *Doctor Who* story to me.

Sue: That's because it isn't.

The episode picks up with the "man who found out about the cruise liners" dying in the arms of "I'm not exactly sure what her job is". Sue is deeply saddened by this turn of events.

Sue: I wanted him to survive. I wanted the episode to end with him going off on a cruise liner

The Doctor impersonates Salamander one last time.

Nicol: His accent is terrible!

Me: Yes, that's his terrible Mexican accent. His other Mexican accent is merely bad. There's a subtle difference.

Bruce starts asking questions about the Doctor's TARDIS.

Sue: Buenos TARDIS. I'm surprised they didn't use that joke.

Sue is shocked when she discovers that Giles Kent was the bad guy all along. Even though she's seen this before.

Sue: I didn't see that coming. I know he was highly-strung and everything, but I honestly thought he was one of the good guys. Does that mean Astrid is a baddie, too?

Salamander peppers Giles with bullets.

Sue: That was a bit grim. This definitely isn't for kids.

Nicol: I bet the younger ones were terrified because they thought the Doctor was doing that. I thought he was doing it, and I'm 25.

Giles' final act is to blow the place up. Thankfully, Bruce rescues the Doctor and Astrid from the explosion just in time. And as if that wasn't enough, he makes sure that Benik gets his just deserts, too.

Sue: Bruce is great. He should have been a regular character. He could

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD REDUX

have been the TARDIS bouncer. And good riddance to that creepy twat with the bad hair. He was horrible.

Jamie and Victoria welcome Salamander into the TARDIS with open arms, and he didn't have to play an invisible recorder to gain their trust either. Thankfully, just when it looks as if the TARDIS will take off with the wrong crew, the Doctor strolls into the console room.

Sue: How brilliant is this?

The Doctor and Salamander slug it out in the console room. It's very exciting.

Sue: Ooh, how good was that?

Salamander is sucked into the time vortex.

Sue: Wait! Was that the Doctor?

Nicol: Mother!

And then the episode just... ends.

Sue: Is that it? Can we watch the last scene again?

Me: No.

Sue: But I want to watch it again.

Nicol: Yeah, even I wouldn't mind seeing that again.

Me: We can't. I'm steaming this episode from iTunes to our PS3 so we can

watch it on our telly.

Sue: And?

Me: I can't rewind it. If you want to watch the last scene, you'll have to sit

through the first 20 minutes again.

Sue: Maybe some other time.

Me: It could be worse. If you saw that episode in 1968, it'd be another 45 years before you saw it again. Twenty minutes doesn't seem that bad.

Sue: Let's leave it for 20 years and see how we get on.

Nicol: If anyone is interested, I thought that was pretty good. It was more like James Bond than *Doctor Who*, but there's nothing wrong with that.

The Score

Sue: What did I give it last time?

Me: I'm not telling. And if you're that bothered, you could have gone on

the internet and found out.

Sue: I've got more important things to worry about. By the time the theme music has finished, I'm already thinking about something else. Anyway, I bet I gave it something like five out of 10. It's definitely worth

more than five out of 10.

8/10

Sue: Does that mess up the graphs?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Oh well, it was probably worth it. I really enjoyed that. **Me**: Does that mean you'll watch *The Web of Fear* with me?

Sue: Well, I never said that.

Me: It's got Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart in it. And some Yeti.

Sue: Oh go on then.

COMMENT: "I'm glad this blog has been rediscovered in a dusty archive. Whilst some fans will always claim that the memory cheats, and observing the blog with modern eyes can never recapture the innocent joy of experiencing the postings when they first went out, personally I have to say that this entry is more than a match for anything in the more recent series." – Frankymole

NOTES: The person who reviewed our book for *Doctor Who Magazine* ("Is it laugh-out-loud hilarious? In truth, not often.") now spends his spare time drawing pictures of me that make me look like a cross-dresser. It's the strangest thing that's ever happened to me as a result of the blog, and that includes my inexplicable appearance on *Al Jazerra*.

BLOGGED: 7 November 2013

Episode 1

I drop the first bombshell 30 seconds into the episode.

Sue: What do you mean, I've seen this before? What are you trying to do to me. Neil?

I offer to let her watch the first episode in silence, like we did when we re-watched The Enemy of the World Episode 3. She agrees. And then she doesn't stop talking.

Sue: This is a bit random. What's going on here?

The episode begins with the Doctor and Victoria rolling around on the TARDIS floor as Jamie struggles to regain control of the ship.

Me: This story picks up from the end of *The Enemy of the World*. Salamander has just been sucked off. We only saw it a few days ago. **Sue**: So they found the story that follows the last one. That's handy. It must have been sitting on the same shelf.

Once the TARDIS is back under his control, the Doctor prepares to take his companions on yet another adventure. And then Sue throws a cushion at me, just for the sheer hell of it.

Meanwhile, in a museum on Earth, Professor Travers and a man named Silverstein are arguing about a very special exhibit.

Sue: I like the Yeti. They're a completely ridiculous monster, but there's something appealing about them. I just want to cuddle them.

Sue is immediately seduced by the episode's moody lighting and tight closeups.

Sue: This is very spooky. We should have saved this for Halloween.

After Travers leaves the museum empty-handed, a silver sphere smashes through a window and reactivates the dormant Yeti. It advances on Silverstein with an unholy roar.

Sue: Why does this Yeti have gaffer tape stuck over its mouth? Are they trying to sex it up a bit? Actually, when you shoot the Yeti from a low angle like that, they're pretty scary. You definitely wouldn't want to cuddle this one. It's a good start, this. I almost remember it.

Back on the TARDIS, Jamie and the Doctor are enjoying a nice plate of sandwiches.

Sue: Why hasn't Vicki...

Me: Victoria.

Sue: Why hasn't Victoria got a sandwich? What is it with this show depriving women of sandwiches all the time? You should write a PhD about that, Neil.

The TARDIS is immobilised by a mysterious web floating in space.

Sue: Remind me – what do the Yeti have to do with the giant spiders again? And did I like *The Web Planet* the last time I saw it?

Me: No, you despised it. But this is *The Web of Fear*, so don't worry about it.

Sue: The stuff on the TARDIS reminds me of Wonderweb hemming tape. You know, for your trousers. It never stayed stuck for long.

The Doctor rigs up a device that will extricate him from the web's grip when it suddenly begins to disperse of its own accord.

Sue: Yep, that lasted about as long as Wonderweb.

Meanwhile, in the London Underground...

Sue: Is this the one where the people who run the tube got annoyed with

the BBC for filming in a station without their permission?

Me: Yes. Even though this is a BBC set, and they never went anywhere near a real tube station.

Sue: That's right! Oh yes. I remember this now. It looks amazing.

The Doctor says it's funny how they keep landing on Earth all the time.

Sue: Yeah, it's almost as if it's cheaper or something.

Our heroes make their way to Covent Garden's ticket hall.

Sue: I was at that station only the other day. The lifts weren't working and I had to climb the stairs. 300 steps. With a bag. It was murder.

Meanwhile, in Goodge Street station, Professor Travers' daughter, Anne, is fixing a blast recorder.

Sue: She wants to be the new Barbara. Either Barbara or Valerie Singleton.

Because Jamie and Victoria decide to keep the Doctor's presence in the tunnels a secret, the daft old fool almost gets himself blown up.

Sue: And that's why you should always tell the truth, boys and girls.

Fortunately for him, the explosives were encased in a protective web.

Sue: I thought it was supposed to be a web of fear, not a web of safety.

Cue credits.

Sue: What did I say about that episode the first time?

Me: You enjoyed it. You thought the sets were amazing, and you loved

Douglas Camfield's direction.

Sue: Nothing's changed, then. So that was a complete waste of time.

Episode 2

Jamie thinks he knows who's controlling the Yeti in the Underground.

Sue: Yeah, it's Richard E Grant. It's as if Steven Moffat knew they were going to find this episode when he wrote his episodes with the Great Intelligence in them. He must be psychic or something.

Sue loves it when Travers recognises Jamie and Victoria. It's been decades since he last saw them, whereas it's only been a few weeks for them.

Sue: They should do that sort of thing in *Doctor Who* more often. That was really sweet.

But something is missing...

Sue: Oh no. Patrick's on holiday this week. He is, isn't he? You wait all this time for a Patrick Troughton story to turn up and then he isn't even in the episode! Can we skip to the next one?

Me: Er, no.

Anne and Chorley have a very spiky argument about ethics.

Sue: For a minute there, I thought I was watching a kitchen sink drama. It's good this, isn't it?

The army prepare to engage the Yeti in the tunnels.

Sue: Er, hang on. Why would you use crates of explosives as a protective barrier? That's just asking for trouble, surely?

The Yeti march into a hail of bullets.

Sue: They are lousy shots. You can see this is where they got the idea for UNIT from.

Me: They aren't missing their targets. The bullets are bouncing off the Yeti.

Sue: If you say so, Neil. This is *Doctor Who*, remember.

The British Army struggle against the furry robots.

Sue: I can't take my eyes off the giant map that's swinging in and out of shot. I'm not sure if it's supposed to be swinging in and out of shot like that, or if it's a wobbly set. To be honest, I'm just killing time until the Doctor shows up again. Come on, get a bloody move on!

Captain Knight and Jamie encounter a Welsh soldier named Evans.

Sue: Oh yes, I definitely remember this. This is the story with the comedy Welshman in it.

Me: Well, that narrows it down a bit.

Sue: I remember liking it when I saw the recon. I think it's because it's set in a real location, so you believe it's happening. I'm sorry, I can't think of anything else to say. I'm enjoying it too much.

The episode concludes with Jamie and Evans confronting a torrent of white foam as it pours out of a tunnel.

Sue: The Great Intelligence has a serious problem with his washing machine.

Cue credits.

Sue: That's obviously harmless foam, but it still works. If I'd seen that at the time, I would have been terrified.

Episode 3

I drop my second bombshell a few seconds into the title sequence.

Sue: You must be fucking joking! If there's anything missing, we shouldn't

watch it. We should have waited until he'd found the missing bit. This is ridiculous!

Me: It's only one recon. It'll be just like old times.

Sue: Fuck off. I'm not doing it and that's final.

Me: Oh, come on, Sue! This recon was number one on *iTunes* a few weeks ago. Just think about that for a moment. A recon was number one on *iTunes*!

Sue: So was Michael Bublé, but you don't listen to him. Seriously, Neil. I don't want to do it. That part of my life is behind me now.

So we compromised and I read out a synopsis of the episode instead.

Me: "Out of the web advances a Yeti carrying a pyramid. Jamie gets Evans to shoot the pyramid, causing the Yeti to become immobile, but the web continues to advance. They make a dash for an archway and escape. Meanwhile, Victoria finds the Doctor in the tunnels, accompanied by a Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart..."

Sue: So they still haven't found the first episode with the Brig in it? How shit is that?

Episode 4

Sue finally gets to see Nicholas Courtney move in ways she's never seen before.

Sue: The Brig!

Me: Colonel. We've been through this before. And before you start, no, UNIT aren't in this one.

Sue: He was very handsome when he was young. And I can't get over how nicely lit this is. It's very *film noir*. In fact, this is a master class on how to light a studio set.

The Doctor and Evans find some fungus in a tunnel. The Doctor takes the soldier's tobacco box from him so he can place a sample in it, pouring its contents into the soldier's hand without a second thought.

Sue: He should have poured that tobacco on the floor. That would have sent a strong message to the kids about not smoking.

She says this as she lights her second cigarette of the episode. And then the web pulsates and screams as the Doctor slices some of it off.

Sue: That was vicious. The Doctor hacked at a living creature.

Me: Are you serious?

Sue: It was in pain. There was no need for that.

And there's another problem.

Sue: I don't understand why the Great Intelligence would use the Yeti here. I understand that they might scare people in Tibet, but they look a bit weird in the London Underground, spraying Wonderweb everywhere. I mean, what's that all about? Why didn't the Great Intelligence make some robots that looked like giant spiders? That would have been so much better.

Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart offers to recover the Doctor's TARDIS.

Sue: He's been in loads of episodes of *Doctor Who*, hasn't he? Wasn't he in more episodes than Colin Baker?

Me: He was in more episodes than Colin and Sylvester combined. **Sue**: And yet he never got his own show. That doesn't seem fair.

Sue still believes that Evans is basically the Welsh version of Frank Spencer.

Sue: (*As Evans/Frank*) "Hmmmm, Yeti!" Do you get it? "Hmmmmm, Yeti!" You know, instead of Betty.

Me: Yes, that's even better than the Frank Spencer Yeti joke you came up with the last time we saw this. Well done, love.

Lethbridge-Stewart approaches Covent Garden via Neal Street.

Sue: I walked up Neal Street the other day to see if our book was in Waterstones.

When she couldn't find it, she asked for help at the counter. "It's called Adventures with the Wife in Space," said Sue. "Do you know the author?" asked the assistant. "Yes," said Sue. "I live with him".

Sue: Camfield loves his close-ups. He's practically shooting up this Welshman's nostrils.

Staff Sergeant Arnold pushes a trolley through the web, with disastrous results.

Sue: Wow. That was a bit grim. At least it was quick.

And then we reach the most exciting part of the episode – the Yeti versus the British Army.

Sue: Oh dear. The Yeti don't look great when you can see them in daylight. They look like the Honey Monster from the Sugar Puffs ads. I keep expecting a man to start chasing them in his pyjamas.

And then...

Sue: Oh look! It's whatshisname from *EastEnders*!

The army's weapons are completely useless against the Yeti.

Sue: Use your bloody grenades, you idiots!

The Brigadier hides on top of a truck, but this doesn't fool the abominable robots.

Sue: A monster with fairly decent eyesight. Wow. That almost makes up for them being too cuddly.

The Yeti murder a solider as the Colonel slips away.

Sue: Oh no. I liked him. Hey! The Brig just legged it. He didn't even try to save his friend. What the hell is going on?

Episode 5

The Great Intelligence uses Travers' vocal chords to issue its demands.

Sue: Richard E Grant should have played the Great Intelligence like this. It would have been scarier. You know, I'm sure the Moff must have known this story was coming back. It's too much of a coincidence.

Coincidence or not, Sue gives this episode the thumbs up.

Sue: I can't fault this. I like the acting, I like the story, I like the direction, and, most of all, I love the sets. I'm really glad they found this one. Ian Levine deserves a medal.

Me: I think you mean Philip Morris.

Sue: Yes, him as well.

Anne Travers and the Doctor make a wonderful team.

Sue: I bet the Doctor secretly wants to adopt Anne as his new companion. She's really enthusiastic and helpful. All he gets from Victoria is earache.

The fungus starts to take over the station.

Sue: That's the biggest bubble wrap I've ever seen. I wouldn't like to deliver a parcel wrapped in that.

Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart holds the door shut while Jamie makes his escape.

Sue: Finally! This is the Brigadier I know and love. He's got bigger balls

than the Great Intelligence.

Jamie chastises the Doctor for not doing enough to get them out of this mess.

Sue: Peter Capaldi wouldn't stand for shit like this, especially not from a companion. He'd just twat him.

Me: I'm pretty sure Peter Capaldi won't play the Doctor like that.

Sue: It'd be brilliant if he did, though.

Evans believes the Colonel is a traitor.

Sue: That takes the biscuit. It can't be him! He's the Brig!

Me: Yes, but when this first went out he was just another guest actor. No one knew he would become one of the most important characters in the show.

Sue: And that's why watching these episodes in the wrong order is a complete waste of time, Neil.

The Great Intelligence releases Travers.

Sue: I knew Travers wasn't dead because he returns in another story. **Me**: No he doesn't. They wanted him to return in *The Invasion*, but it didn't happen in the end.

Sue: Oh yes he did. Victoria was in it too. She was really old.

Me: Oh God, you're talking about Downtime.

Sue: Yes, that's the one. How could you forget that? And you call yourself a fan?!

When the Doctor modifies a Yeti sphere so he can control it with his voice, Evans can't believe his eyes.

Sue: He'll have kittens when he sees Bernie the Bolt. Assuming he isn't the traitor, of course, WHICH HE OBVIOUSLY IS!

Evans hides behind a giant Underground map.

Sue: This reminds me of the time a debt collector came to our house and my mam hid behind the clotheshorse. And the debt collector said...

Me: You've already told this story on the blog. (*Please see* The Mark of the Rani *in Volume 6*.)

Sue: So what? If I have to watch this story twice, you can listen to my story twice. And then the debt collector said, "The next time your mam goes out, tell her to take her feet with her!"

When the Doctor places the modified sphere in a Yeti, it responds to his voice commands.

Sue: It isn't exactly Iron Man, but it'll have to do.

The episode ends as a torrent of gushing white liquid threatens to flood Army HQ.

Sue: That reminds me, I must get some de-icer for the car.

Episode 6

The last time we finished this experiment, we did so with some ice-cold champagne and freshly baked cake. This time, we decide to make do with a tepid cup of tea and a plate of stale Jammie Dodgers.

Sue: What's the point? They'll only find some more episodes next week. I feel like I'm trapped in this experiment. There's no escape. It will never end!

Sue doesn't have a great deal to say about this episode until the Doctor pulls out his recorder.

Sue: Oh no. And it was going so well.

Me: I don't understand what you've got against his recorder.

Sue: It reminds me of bad school concerts. And all those times Nicol made us listen to her practicing for those bad school concerts. Do you

remember? It was pure torture. Sorry, Nic.

Chorley suddenly reappears out of the blue, and he seems to be losing the plot.

Sue: It's a great performance, actually. I don't think I would have picked up on the emotion in that scene in the reconstruction. The performances are really, really good. They're believable.

Jamie finds himself in a tunnel with a microphone in his hand.

Sue: I hope he doesn't start singing one of his B-sides. Then they really will have to evacuate London.

Iamie tussles with a Yeti.

Sue: I never used to rate Jamie all that much, but watching these stories again makes me appreciate him a lot more. He was harmless, and he definitely meant well. He was the Doctor's faithful dog before K-9 came along.

Me: A Highland Terrier.

Sue: Exactly.

A mysterious mist descends over the Great Intelligence's lair.

Sue: I think the studio is on fire. I should show this to my students as an example of bad health and safety.

Staff Sergeant Arnold was the Great Intelligence all along!

Sue: Eh? They managed to keep that quiet. How the hell were we

supposed to guess that?

Me: I barely understood a single word he said.

Sue: You soft lad. You can tell that you're not from the North. It doesn't matter how long you've lived up here, you'll never be a proper

Northerner.

The Doctor surrenders to the Great Intelligence, who tells him to sit in a glass pyramid.

Sue: It's a good job the Great Intelligence caught one of the smaller Doctors. Tom Baker's head would have gone straight through that roof.

Just as the Intelligence is about to suck the Doctor's brains out, Jamie makes the Yeti fight among themselves.

Sue: Good for you, Jamie!

This annoys the Doctor no end.

Sue: He was only trying to help, bless him.

When the Yeti fall down and explode, the Doctor still isn't happy. He even calls Evans a blithering Welsh imbecile.

Sue: The Welsh don't come out of this story very well. And neither do the Scots. You wouldn't get away with crap like this in the new series.

Speaking of which...

Sue: So the Intelligence is still out there. And that's why he comes back as Richard E Grant.

Me: Actually, I think this is a sequel to Matt Smith's encounter with the Great Intelligence. At least *I think* it's a sequel; I've lost the flow chart that explains it all.

The Doctor is thanked for his efforts, anyway.

Sue: He's so loveable. Every time I see him, I love him a little bit more.

Cue titles.

Sue: I really enjoyed that. Do you think Evans will get a dishonourable discharge? Because there's no fucking way the Brig will hire him when he starts UNIT. He was a bloody liability.

A caption appears: NEXT TIME - FURY FROM THE DEEP.

Sue: Have they found that one yet?

Me: Not yet. No.

Sue: Did they check the same shelf?

Me: Probably.

The Score

Sue: What score did I give it last time?

Me: I'm not telling you.

Sue: Well, it was very, very good. It sagged a little towards the end, and giant robotic spiders would have been much better than the Yeti, but it was really tense and quite frightening. The story was very simple, and it was all about the atmosphere, but I can't fault it for that. And the sets were fucking amazing.

9/10

COMMENT: "Come on, Philip Morris, find some more. Not for fandom but for Sue!" – Gavin Noble

NOTES: A few days after we revisited *The Web of Fear*, we appeared at a book festival to promote *Adventures with the Wife in Space*: *Living with Doctor Who* (still available at all good branches of The Works – keep your eyes peeled for a rare unsigned copy).

I don't remember very much about the talk we gave to a small group of bemused book-lovers that cold, wet November afternoon in Folkestone, although being an ex-lecturer it definitely included an overly

complicated PowerPoint presentation with too many embedded video clips. What I *do* remember is being assaulted by an elderly woman as soon as the talk was over. After she'd hit me, she demanded that I sign her copy of our book 'from a truly evil man'. And then she tried to kiss me. In her defence, I had just subjected her to the opening credits to *K-9 and Company*.

THE UNDERWATER MENACE REDUX

BLOGGED: 19 July 2015

Episode 1

Sue: Fuck off, Neil. I'm not doing it and that's final.

Me: Oh come on, Sue. For old times' sake. **Sue**: You must be fucking joking. No.

For some inexplicable reason, Sue doesn't want to watch a reconstruction that she's already seen before. And all because a missing episode turned up in an old man's shed several years ago.

Me: You can't say you've seen them all until you've actually seen them all. And you haven't seen the second episode of this story, because it hasn't been released yet.

Sue: Why don't we wait until they've found the first episode? Go on, it'll be fun.

Me: We've also got a book about Patrick Troughton's Doctor coming out next month, so it makes sense for us to watch it now. It's either that or we ram it into the back of a book about Peter Davison, and that would be silly, even for us.

Sue: (Sighing) Okay, I guess. So what are we watching?

Me: The Underwater Menace.

Sue: Is that the one with the giant crab?

Me: No.

Sue: Has it got seaweed in it?

Me: Probably. But it isn't that one, either.

Sue: Oh, I don't care. But I'm not watching any more recons, especially if

I've seen them before. Fuck that. Just tell me what happens.

Me: All I remember is that the Doctor, Jamie, Ben and Polly end up on Atlantis, and there's this mad professor who's turning people into fish.

Sue: (Sighing) That rings a bell. Anything else I should know?

THE UNDERWATER MENACE REDUX

Me: The first episode ends as Polly is about to be turned into a fish.

Sue: Any particular reason for that? **Me**: That makes any sense? No.

Sue: Okay, so now what?

Episode 2

Sue's reaction to seeing new 'old' Doctor Who for the first time in nearly two years isn't exactly what I'd hoped for.

Sue: The picture quality is dreadful. What state was the old man's shed in when they found this?

She isn't joking. She really wants to know.

Sue: I bet it was filthy. And how come you've got this episode if it hasn't

been released yet? Who did you have to sleep with, Neil? **Me**: It's all over the internet if you know where to look.

Sue: Did you find it on the Dark Web? I saw a documentary about that

recently. It's a very disturbing place.

Me: Are you sure you're not confusing the Dark Web with Gallifrey Base?

Polly begins the episode tied to a hospital bed.

Sue: You can see what Polly had for breakfast in this shot.

The chief surgeon, Damon, seems to relish this part of his job.

Sue: They can't be his real eyebrows, can they? He makes Denis Healey look groomed.

As the Doctor wanders around Professor Zaroff's laboratory, he accidentally breaks an expensive piece of equipment.

Sue: He's so cheeky. Just look at his face. He obviously did that on

purpose.

Me: We would have missed that in the recon.

Sue: That's another good reason for not watching them.

Professor Zaroff intends to raise the lost continent of Atlantis with a giant man-made plughole.

Sue: Is he having a laugh? And what would be the point, anyway? Just move the locals up to the surface. Atlantis looks like a dump.

The professor doesn't seem to mind that his crazy scheme to drain an ocean will threaten all life on Earth. He'd rather spend some quality time with his pet fish.

Sue: Couldn't he afford a piranha?

Me: Before this turned up again, fans thought he was feeding an octopus in this scene, because he refers to his pet octopus in the previous episode. It's very disappointing.

Sue: You're never satisfied, are you? And did you really think the BBC would source a bloody octopus for a 10-second shot? Are you mad?

Meanwhile, Ben and Jamie are trying to come to terms with the fact they've been deposited in a subterranean drama that feels like it was conceived by Alan Bleasdale.

Sue: I wish they'd lost the soundtrack. What a din! These miners aren't wearing any ear protectors, either. How do they stand it?

Damon's job is to convert shipwreck survivors into fish so they can be used as manual labour.

Sue: I'd like to see a fish working in a mine. They haven't thought this through.

Jamie and Ben enjoy a much-needed lunch break.

THE UNDERWATER MENACE REDUX

Sue: I'm on a seafood diet. If I...

Me: Don't.

Sue: So if they're eating fish, does that mean they're really eating humans

who've been converted into fish? That's horrible.

Ben, Jamie, Jacko, Sean and Yosser Hughes escape from the mine.

Sue: What do you get if you drop a piano down a mineshaft?

Me: Please, Sue, don't.

Sue: How did we follow this when we saw it as a recon? It's just people shuffling around in a tunnel. And I barely remember Ben at all. Is my

memory playing up, or was he always this boring?

The Doctor warns an Atlantean priest that Zaroff is a couple of coupons short of a toaster.

Sue: This guy looks like he's about to get on a carnival float. Even the Doctor wouldn't be seen dead in a hat like that.

The Doctor pulls out his trusty recorder.

Sue: Give us a shout if you ever get close to a melody, mate.

Back in the mine, Jamie slips over the edge of a massive cliff.

Sue: And now I can see what Jamie had for breakfast.

Me: It's swings and roundabouts, love.

The action then shifts to a temple where the Atlanteans worship a goddess named Amdo.

Sue: That giant face in the background is the closest this episode will ever get to a BAFTA.

The Doctor tells the supreme ruler of Atlantis that Zaroff is as mad as a

hatter.

Sue: This is shit, Neil, but Patrick Troughton is amazing, there's no denying that. Even in rubbish like this, he's brilliant.

Unfortunately, the Atlanteans' leader sides with Zaroff, and the episode concludes with the Doctor in the professor's bad books.

Sue: They should have ended the episode with Jamie hanging off the edge of that cliff. It isn't rocket science, you know.

Me: Congratulations, Sue. You've now seen more episodes of Doctor Who

than fans who don't know how to use the internet. Well done.

Sue: Is that it, then? Am I free to go?

Episode 3

Five minutes later...

Sue: So I saw this episode four years ago?

Me: Yes. Sorry about that.

Sue: You will be.

Her observations broadly mirror what she said the first time she saw it. She hates Dudley's incidental music, she thinks Zaroff is a hugely entertaining panto villain who should have brought some fridge freezers with him, and she gets a little hot under the collar when Jamie and Ben turn up wearing tight-fitting rubber.

Sue: If Jamie had worn that outfit throughout the series, I think I would have taken to him a lot more than I did. Just saying.

Her reaction to the Fish People is basically the same, too.

Sue: Oh God, it's all coming back to me now. Of all the episodes I had to watch twice, why did it have to be this one? Stop laughing, Neil.

THE UNDERWATER MENACE REDUX

Me: I still can't believe this happened. And that they actually broadcast it. **Sue**: I'd forgotten that old *Doctor Who* could be this shit. So thanks for that.

The episode ends with Professor Zaroff proudly boasting that nothing in ze world will stop him now.

Sue: I give him 25 minutes, tops.

Episode 4

I offer to fire up YouTube *one last time*.

Sue: Now I know why the BBC haven't released this story on DVD. It's rubbish when you can't see the ending.

Me: I think they were going to animate the missing episodes, but they cancelled it.

Sue: Well, in that case, I blame the Tories. It's always the Tories' fault. So what happened at the end?

Me: Are you sure you don't want to watch one more recon with me?

Sue: Quite sure, thanks.

Me: Is that your final answer?

Sue: If you won't tell me, I'll just have to guess what happens. Okay, the Doctor defeats the mad Italian professor and they all live happily ever

after. Even the fish. Am I right?

Me: Pretty much.

Sue: Good.

The Score

Sue: It doesn't seem fair to score it again. It's obviously slightly better with the extra episode. Oh, I don't know. Just double what I gave it last time. I bet it wasn't very much.

4/10

Sue: That feels about right. Patrick Troughton was wonderful, as usual, but the story was absurd. Of all the episodes they had to find... What a shame.

Me: And that's it. That's the last time I'll ever ask you to watch any classic *Doctor Who* with me.

Sue: Until they find some more, of course.

Me: Yeah, obviously.

AN INTERVIEW WITH SUE

CONDUCTED VIA SKYPE: 19 July 2015

A couple of hours before we settled down to watch The Underwater Menace for a second time, Sue took a Skype call from Derek Handley in Düsseldorf. Derek, a long-time supporter of the blog, had been tasked with quizzing my wife about the Troughton years for this book, and while it's true that Sue made me sit next to her throughout the interview, just in case Derek turned out to be a nutter, she needn't have worried because Derek turned out to be lovely.

Derek: Was Patrick Troughton your favourite old series Doctor? Or does

Peter Davison take that title?

Sue: Well, I remember more about Peter Davison than I do Patrick Troughton. So, yeah, I think Peter was probably my favourite.

Me: Well, you fancied him the most.

Sue: Yeah, I can't get that image of his black underpants out of my head, but I'm only human, I guess. However, I liked Patrick Troughton a lot. He was a great actor.

Derek: What was it about him that made him such a compelling performer? Because you said you couldn't take your eyes off him. **Sue**: Do you know Tyrion off *Game of Thrones*? He's got a face that looks like it's lived for a thousand years, and I think Patrick Troughton's face was a bit like that. Patrick could say a lot with just a twitch, and I think that's a real art. I loved his mannerisms – he reminded me of Matt Smith.

He was wasted on the small screen. **Derek**: He's my favourite Doctor.

Sue: Good. He was magical. He always put a smile on my face.

Derek: There's a Patrick Troughton story called *The Faceless Ones* that's set

in Gatwick airport...

Sue: Right...

Me: Shirley Valentine was in it. **Sue**: Oh yes, that rings a bell.

Derek: And during that story, you said it finally felt like you were watching *Doctor Who* because the Doctor tried to find a peaceful solution

to the problem.

Sue: Yeah, he was a bit more sympathetic, I think. He was more like David Tennant and Matt Smith in that one. You know, the peacemaker who just wants to bring harmony to the galaxy, instead of blowing things up. That's what I got from the new series, so that's how I judged the old series, I guess. That was my benchmark. And I didn't get a sense of that until that story came along, and when it did, I thought to myself, yes, I can see him developing into the Doctor now.

Derek: A lot of Patrick Troughton's stories were what you'd call 'base under siege' stories.

Sue: There were loads of them, weren't there?

Derek: Yes. Loads. Did they ever become boring, or did they manage to keep them fresh?

Sue: I was frustrated because I wanted to see Patrick Troughton in situations that tested his character a bit more, as well as him as an actor. There were far too many bases. It was the same-old same-old every week, only the monsters were slightly different. To be honest with you, Derek, I was bored.

Derek: Your brother joined you for *The Krotons* – you called it *The Croutons* – and he hated it. Do you think there's a *Doctor Who* story from that era that Gary would have liked?

Sue: I don't know. What's the name of that really camp one, Neil?

Me: You'll have to narrow it down a bit. **Sue**: Isn't there one called *The Dominators*?

Derek: You hated The Dominators!

Sue: Yes, but if I hate something, Gary always seems to like it. And who

cares what he thinks, anyway? He wants to get rid of the BBC. **Derek**: Maybe Gary would have liked *The Happiness Patrol*.

Sue: Oh yes, probably.

Me: Do you remember The Happiness Patrol, Sue?

Sue: Of course I do. Bertie Bassett was in it.

Derek: The Kandyman.

Sue: The Kandyman. Yeah, that's it, the Kandyman. **Me**: Whatever you do, don't say his name five times.

Sue: It's three times, you idiot.

AN INTERVIEW WITH SUF

Me: I think you'll find it's five. Derek: I'm pretty sure it's three. Sue: Exactly. Thanks, Derek.

Derek: Moving swiftly on, at the end of their final story, Jamie (the brave Scotsman) and Zoe (the hyper-intelligent girl from the future) are sent home after their memories are erased, so in their minds they never adventured with the Doctor

Sue: I remember feeling sad when they did that to Donna. **Derek**: How would you have written them out instead?

Sue: Oh, I don't know. Maybe it would have been nicer if Jamie and Zoe had stayed together, got it on, and had some brave, intelligent kids. The problem is, I never really liked Jamie. He never really did it for me. He was a bit... thick.

Me: What about Zoe? Do you remember her?

Sue: Vaguely.

Derek: I bet Neil remembers Zoe.

Sue: Yeah, I bet he does. Is she the one who climbs over the...

Me: Yes.

Sue: With her leg in the air, and her backside...

Me: Yes.

Sue: It's all coming back to me now. Thanks for that, Derek.

Derek: Is it true you were the driving force in getting through the recons,

or was Neil exaggerating for the blog?

Sue: No, that's true. I knew we had to get it done whereas Neil tends to procrastinate. If it's something he likes, he'll do it straightaway, but if it's something he doesn't like, he'll put it off as long as possible. But some of the stories were so good, I made him show me more. Sometimes we even watched two or three episodes a night. And I made him do that. Even when he said, "Not tonight, love, I've got a headache."

Derek: Neil told me to ask you something about the omnirumour. I have to confess that I didn't know what he was talking about, and I had to look it up.

Sue: You shouldn't have. You should have stayed well away.

Derek: Does it seem believable to you that all these episodes of *Doctor*

Who have been found? Why do you think people believe it?

Sue: It's because they want to believe it. They want to believe that their favourite episode has been found so they'll get to see it one day. It's that simple, Derek. And it's fascinating, don't you think? Even I got involved at one point. I've got a friend called Kiwi Alan who's got this place I call his *Emporium of Tat*; it's like a prop house, full of everything and anything. Anyway, I went there one day and I bought a film projector and some cans, and as I was going through these old reels of film, I thought to myself, there could be some missing episodes of *Doctor Who* here. Now, I'm not a fan, but even I was excited. Because I think they do exist somewhere. They must do. And if there's red tape involved in getting them back, they should put them on *Kickstarter*. Let the fans sort it out. Look, whoever's got them, how much do you want for them? Name your price, put them on *Kickstarter* and just do it. Or better still, give them back to the BBC.

Derek: Definitely.

Sue: I'd love to make a documentary about that Philip guy. It would be amazing. Somebody has to do it.

Derek: I have one more question for you, Sue. Do you have a favourite moment featuring Patrick's Doctor?

Sue: That's a terrible question to finish on, Derek, because I haven't got a bloody clue.

Derek: Tell Neil to edit this question out.

Me: Don't worry, I will.

Sue: It was such a long time ago... There isn't anything in particular that sticks out. Just his face. Yeah, I just remember that interesting face of his. Of all the old series Doctors, he's the one I'd most like to go for a pint with.

Me: Not Tom Baker?

Sue: Tom Baker's too intellectual for me. I wouldn't be able to keep up with him. I know I'd have a nice time with Patrick, though. Yeah, he'd be a fun person to share a pint with.

She later joked with me that she didn't choose Peter Davison because a pint with Peter Davison could potentially destroy our marriage. At least I think she was joking.

AN INTERVIEW WITH SUE

Anyway, Sue and Derek continued to talk about cats, Margaret Thatcher, our plans to emigrate to Uruguay, and a lot more besides. In fact, I think it's safe to say that they became firm friends during that Skype call, even if Derek's data roaming charges almost bankrupted him in the process (he had to conduct the interview from a hotel room in Amsterdam – it's a long story).

SUE'S SCORES

The Power of the Daleks: The best Dalek story so far. 8/10

The Highlanders: I've seen worse. 5/10

The Underwater Menace: *Bonkers. And a little bit shit.* 2/10 **The Moonbase:** *The Doctor needs to buck his ideas up.* 6/10

The Macra Terror: I enjoyed it. 7/10

The Faceless Ones: *I finally feel like I'm watching Doctor Who.* 9/10

The Evil of the Daleks: The recon ruined it for me. 6/10

The Tomb of the Cybermen: Racist. 4/10

The Abominable Snowmen: *I feel sorry for the Yeti.* 7/10

The Ice Warriors: Fairly enjoyable. 7/10 The Enemy of the World: A bit silly. 6/10

The Web of Fear: You've got to love the Camfield. 8/10

Fury from the Deep: *Good performances and scary monsters.* 8/10

The Wheel in Space: Flabby, drawn-out rubbish. 2/10

The Dominators: Dreadful. 1/10

The Mind Robber: The Dog off The Thing! 7/10
The Invasion: The most enjoyable story so far. 9/10
The Krotons: It was only four episodes and it moved. 6/10
The Seeds of Death: Troughton was on top form. 7/10

The Space Pirates: Shit. 1/10 The War Games: Epic. 9/10

NEXT TIME

DALEKS
GIANT INSECTS
THE MASTER (ALL THE BLOODY TIME)
and A PLATE OF SANDWICHES

in

THE POMPOUS TORY: THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 3

Spearhead from Space to Planet of the Spiders

Foreword by Paul Cornell

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