

Gallifrey, The Long Way Round

Special Festive Issue  
Christmas 2019

**In This Issue:**

**Finding The Red Dalek**

**The Box of Delights**

**Doctor Who  
Christmas Specials**

**and much, much more...**





# **Gallifrey, The Long Way Round**

## **Issue #4.5: Christmas 2019**

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***Doctor Who: Red Dalek in the Snow***

**Artwork by Andrew Skilleter ©**

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# CHRISTMASSY CONTENTS

- 4: THE HOGFATHER—by Veerle Blajic-KiK
- 12: A VERY MERRY BLAKE'S SEVEN CHRISTMAS—by Annie Worrall
- 13: THE BOX OF DELIGHTS—by Craig Sanwell
- 17: THE SHOWMAN AND THE TIMELORD— Fanfic by The Ghost
- 20: THE DOCTOR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIALS—by Craig Sanwell
- 27: K9 AND COMPANY—By The Ghost
- 30: THE TREES OF DOOM—Fanfic by The Ghost
- 39: THE SEARCH FOR OL' RED—by Nick Mays
- 45: CHRISTMAS SCI-FI MOVIES- by Annie Worrall
- 47: OUT OF THE VORTEX—News , Reviews & Previews
- 49: THE BACK OF BEYOND

## FESTIVE EDITORIAL

### SURPRISE!!!

I bet you weren't expecting this, were you? When we left you at the end of Issue #4, we flagged up our next issue as being Issue #5, set for publication earlyish next year. Ah, but we Editors are a cunning lot... we decided to reward our loyal readers with a little seasonal treat in the form of this, our first Festive Issue. And for those of you who like to keep lists and accurate records (you're Sci-Fi geeks, like us... *of course* you do!) if you want to give this issue a number, let's call it Ish #4.5, ok?

Well anyway, it's a somewhat shorter issue than we usually produce, mainly because it had to be slotted in around that godawful "Real Life" thing... and there's been a *lot* of *that* around lately! But we pressed ahead to Get The 'Zine Done, Get It Over The Line and now here it is, it's a Great Deal and It's Oven Ready!

OK, so much for the satire. What we strived to do in this little Yuletide number is to keep the festive theme throughout, as you will see from the contents and the features themselves. Okay, I admit that my **Red Dalek** feature is the least festive of the lot, but so much happened with the Red Dalek at this time of year, in the comics, with toys and even on TV, so I think it fits in. But the Dalek is red and that's a pretty festive colour isn't it?

Which brings me to the front cover... I asked that brilliantly talented artist Andrew Skilleter if he could rustle me up a Red Dalek in the snow. Well, no surprise that he delivered that in spades and more! Far better than anything I could have imagined!

Anyway, there are some brilliant features in this issue, starting with Veerle Blajic-Kik's excellent *Hogfather*, which includes a very thought-provoking analysis of those old Winter Solstice gods that still exist today in the person of dear old Santa or, as on Discworld, the Hogfather. Then we have Craig Sanwell's brilliant analysis of that perennial festive favourite *The Box Of Delights* (again with stunning artwork by Andrew Skilleter!). Annie Worrall takes us back to Christmas 1981 with some very dark *Blake's 7* poetry, while The Ghost gives us K9 and Company also from Christmas '81, plus a lovely, spooky fanfic. After all, we all love a Ghost story at Christmas, don't we? And lots more besides!

So, all that remains now, Dear Readers, is to thank you for reading our humble offerings this past year and showing your support. And of course, to wish you and your families a...

Very Merry Christmas [or insert name of Midwinter Festival Here] and a Happy, FAN-tastic New Year!

*Nick and the Eds*



# HOGFEATHER

By Veerle Blajic-Kik

***"Let's see, now ... in Hogfather there are a number of stabbings, someone's killed by a man made of knives, someone's killed by the dark, and someone just been killed by a wardrobe. It's a book about the magic of childhood. You can tell." ~Terry Pratchett***



Allow me to take you to my favourite world: *Discworld*. This magical version of earth is not round, like a ball, but round, like a pancake, and rests on the backs of four elephants, which in turn stand on the shell of the giant turtle A'Tuin, that courses calmly through space. I promise it's going to be good! There's different ways to get there, mind. Obviously you get there through books, and I dare say that candle light might be a viable option, but today, I'll take you through a different route.

## **Discworld, the long way around...**

For this purpose, imagine a carriage, maybe even a sled. Whichever you choose, make it sturdy, it's going to be a long trip. In fact, make it warm too, for we will be traveling at the darkest and coldest time of year, for quite some distance. Let's add some thick blankets and comfortable pillows. Good. Now look in front of the vehicle. You can hear them before you see them, and they give off that warm, husky smell of animal strength. With an air of impatience they shuffle in their reins, anxious to go. Let's not keep them waiting: all aboard! Hold on tight, here we go!

'Twas the night before Hogswatch, and all through the house ... What? You don't know about Hogswatch? Oh well, I better tell you then, before we get there. Let's see. What do you know about December celebrations and echoes through the

multiverse? Don't worry if you don't know: it's probably some sort of Quantum anyway.

Even on Roundworld, (as improbable as that sounds: people living on a ball, holding on by nothing but *magnetism*), there's always the people that start counting down to Christmas the second the daffodils start to show their yellow trumpets. All through the year they keep the world around them posted on how many days there's still to go - almost as if they fear they'll be put on the naughty list if they lapse in their thorough management of the calendar.

Personally, I'm more of a summer type. I count down to beachy days. Or autumn, with its richness in colour and smell. Sure the lights are pretty, and the tree smells nice, but other than that, Christmas is nothing special to me. Still, it seems like I'm part of a minority in the western world, as most cultures celebrate a variation on the theme.

Ooer! Did you feel that? Yes, we just went up into the air! Now we are really on the way. If you look down quickly, you can see where I was born: The Netherlands.

I have to say, here, at home, Christmas was always reserved for just the birth of Christ, not Santa. A tree may have been decorated, but that was only because of something ancient about dark days and



and the new light, that our Saviour was supposed to bring. Presents and being naughty or nice had nothing to do with it.

We did, however, have **Sinterklaas**, whose birthday is on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Sint does not have elves, but Moorish helpers, all named *Piet* (Pete). The story goes, Saint Klaas (Nicolaas) was a rich clergyman, who freed black slaves, and paid them a wage instead. He also gave lots of money and food to charity, or would even anonymously drop it through the chimney of poor people. After he died he was pronounced a saint and we celebrate his memory each year by having someone dress up as him, surrounded by his dark skinned employees, and have him hand out presents and sweets. Kids leave their shoe by the fireplace with a letter to Sint and a carrot for his horse, Amerigo. The next morning it will have been exchanged for chocolate money and presents. This happens every day after he arrives in the Netherlands on his boat, halfway through November. The night of the 4<sup>th</sup> is Sinterklaas Evening, and he visits each house with his bag of presents. He looks up all the kids in his big book to see if they have been behaving themselves during the year. If not, then one of his Pieten will smack their bottoms with a chimney broom, and instead of chocolate they get a bag of salt. Sounds familiar, right?



### Sinterklaas & Black Peter in the Netherlands

Eventually the Magic of Childhood left me, and with the Disbelief came the act of Giving, and I joined the Adult Conspiracy. For a while I believed the story that the American Santa Claus, (don't worry, we're not flying there), was derived from Sinterklaas. That made Santa just a culture-shocked Sint - which later got imported into England, (yes we should fly over that soon), around the 19<sup>th</sup> century and merged with the pre-existing Father Christmas\*. And that is true. Sort of. But where did the elves come from then? They seem sort of Irish, don't they? And why are Sint's servants all black? Surely, if he was from Spain (or Turkey, depending on which iteration you hear), surely there would've been lighter coloured slaves to be freed too? The story just doesn't add up ... Now, this is why we must make a detour. Careful now, stay safely seated! There, in the distance, you can see the Alpine region, where **Krampus** may

visit your house in the darkest month of the year. Krampus is a black demon that accompanies Sint instead of the freed slaves (or chimney sweeps in some stories). Here's Austria now, and if you listen really closely, you can hear the Krampusses rattling their chains and bells and sticks in the street, scaring the people into good behaviour.



### Ooo-er! It's the Krampus! Don't be naughty!

Did you hear them? They're getting fainter now; we're getting well up to speed. We must be close to Romania, where they know the December Saint as **Moș Nicolae**, based on the Bishop of Myra. No elves or slaves, this one. Does it all by himself. He's pretty forgiving though; even naughty children get a chance to redeem themselves. See, he gives them the branch of an apple tree, and if they behave really well it will bloom around Christmas, so they know their 'sins' have been forgiven. Isn't that nice?

Croatia, over there, has something similar again, where **Sveti Nikola** is sometimes seen to be accompanied by a crazy dark assistant named *Houseker*, or sometimes an angel or 'Christ child'. If he is alone, and there are naughty children in the house, they get a gold coloured branch with a red loop tied to it. It's not sweets like for the nice kids, but still, a golden branch sounds way better than the fear of getting your bottom smacked, like in my childhood!

If we go a bit south here, yes right over there, (we must be getting in a bit of a spiral it seems), we encounter the Turkish **Noel Baba** (roughly translated: Father Christmas), which is a relatively young tradition, stemming from the 1950s. Saint Nicholas was said to have originally been from Lycia, but was later renamed the Bishop of Myra. We've

**\*Which is a story in itself, as Father Christmas wasn't involved in gifts and children until Victorian times. Instead, he was more concerned with adult feasting and merry-making, which hints at his background in much older folkloric tradition, finding roots in the Yule celebration.**



heard that before over Romania! Myra, in its turn later renamed Demre, became a minor destination for pilgrimage because of it.

Proving the he really can't be everywhere at once, this version of children's best friend hands out gifts no sooner than New Year's Eve. Clearly he hasn't got the magic that we ourselves are currently employing for this trip!

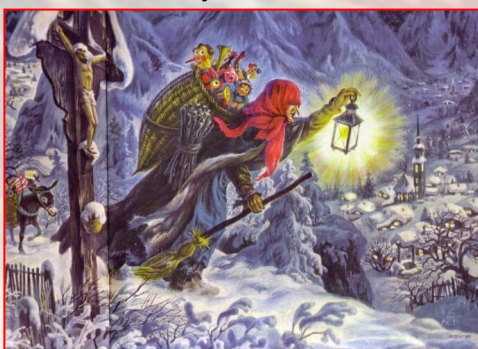
See, I told you we were spiralling, we're heading West again now, and down there in Luxembourg, **Klees'chen** (little Klaas) doesn't ride a white horse, like his Dutch cousin, but a donkey. Both Klees and donkey are getting thank you presents from the children in return for theirs, the donkey in the form of a box of cookies left under the table. Too bad we don't have time to look under those tables; I hear they have excellent spiced cookies in Luxembourg!



**Klees'chen & Houseker Père Fouettard**

Curving over France – and parts of Belgium – there is a true dualistic version: **La Père Fouettard** (the whipping father) works with Père Noel (Father Christmas), aka Santa, to reward or punish kids according to their behaviour during the year. Legend is, that Fouettard was a bad man that wanted to repent for his terrible ways by working for Santa and whipping the naughty children. Hmm, maybe those chimney brooms weren't so bad after all...

Italy has a rather unique version, as '**La Befana**' is a witch on a broomstick that drops presents through the chimney, which makes her the only female version. Like Baba Noel in Turkey, she waits for the new year to hand out sweets and presents, usually around the 5<sup>th</sup> of January.



**La Befana in Italy**

Picking up speed again now, I think we'll soon make the leap through L-space\*. In Scandinavia we may find another source of the Elves, as there, the **Tomte**, small gnomish creatures, got handed the duties of present delivering once Christianity began to spread out. Aww look at them! They look so cuddly! Maybe this is where the elf legend comes from ...



**Tomte in Scandinavia**

A bit more north yet, in Iceland, it's the 13 sons of mountain trolls known as **Jolasveinar** (Yule Lads). Folklore would have them to be of the mischievous sort, but again, modern influence has them morphed into a band of Santas leaving gifts.

Finally, there is **Ded Moroz** in Russia, over there. They do know the Holy Nikolaus, but he is considered to be an important national patron saint, instead of a mere gift bringer. Ded Moroz in turn is like a fairy tale character that looks somewhat like the American Santa, but he is, instead of elves, accompanied by his granddaughter **Snegurotschka**, the Snow Maiden. Together they counterbalance **Baba Yaga**, who steals presents. And yes, the echoes of this may well have eventually produced the Grinch.



*\*It is said that from a mathematical viewpoint, all libraries in existence must be connected, which is referred to as L(ibrary)-space. The principle of it revolves around the simple equation of 'Knowledge is Power'. You could argue therefore, that books=knowledge=power= (force x distance : time). The large quantity of magical and mundane books in the giant library of the Unseen University together produce so much power that time and distance are distorted. This also explains why small old bookshops always seem to hold way more books and shelves that should be possible for the limited physical space. Come to think of it, you also lose a suspicious amount of time in them.)*



I'm sure there are even more variations to be found if you really dive into it, but for my purpose I believe I have proven my point: there are many traditions involving gift giving and rich food during the winter months. And about time too, because we have arrived at the coldest part of the Globe, where the air is thin and the magic thick. See that shimmering over there? We're going straight through it, hold on!

Late author Sir Terry Pratchett, or STP, as his fans affectionately abbreviate him, is most famous for his **Discworld** series of books. This world, a mirror to our own "Roundworld", is inhabited by a plethora of sapient species, that are, for all their different sizes and shapes, remarkably, even embarrassingly, *human*. They dream, they cheat, they fight for justice, they have rich histories and traditions, they are prejudiced and lazy and kind and stern and loving and they can hate and be jealous. They even have religion, which, on the Disc, is as diverse as it is on the Roundworld. They do not, however, have a Christian tradition, and therefore no Christmas. Like other human cultures on Roundworld, where light, dark, and seasons matter, they have however developed their own mythical midwinter creature. The Disc is rich with anthropomorphic personifications in any case, so it should come as no surprise that echoes of Sint, Santa, Baba, Moş or Sveti reverberated through the space-time continuum and influenced the appearance of yet another winter solstice gift bringer.

On the main continent of this flat earth, with the biggest city **Ankh-Morpork** glittering right over there, on the night separating December 32<sup>th</sup> from 1<sup>st</sup>, the mid-winter and New Years' celebration is named **Hogswatch**. And knowing the author, it intentionally sounds like hogwash\*, as he was very outspokenly unreligious and regarded traditional festivities, although enjoyable, as such.

The Hogfather then, is best described as a scary version of the American Santa, with added big tusks protruding from his mouth. The red and white of his clothing are said to be a lingering reminder of blood on snow. Things are more in their raw form on the Disk. Indeed Rudolph stays far away from this dressed up version of an ancient pig-killing winter god. In his stead, the Hogfather's sled is drawn by wild boars\*\*. Children all over the Disc are invited to sit on his lap in shopping areas, and they will be visited at night to receive presents if they leave out a pork pie and some sherry.

There's a tale told by Sir Terry, where the Hogfather, like Santa in so many of our Roundworld versions, is in deadly peril, and the World Will Be Lost Unless Hogswatch Is Saved! Such is our thirst for December stories, that even though it is Not Santa, it made it from book to movie\*\*\* in Roundworld, (in two parts). During this

story, the Auditors of Reality, who detest Life because it refuses to stop wriggling around and, well, *living*, and is therefore hard to catalogue, try to assassinate the Hogfather. They reason that, while mainly known for presents and hogs, the original job of the Hogfather was to make sure the sun would rise each day, which is essential for Life. No Hogfather, no sunrise, no life, no hassle. Ironically, Death is the only one that can save life. Oh, and his granddaughter Susan of course. Ded Moroz is not the only one to play that game.



**Hogfather on Discworld**



**\* He wouldn't be the great writer he was if there wasn't some solid underground to the name though, so the attentive onlooker may have found the relation to the Scottish celebration of the last day of the calendar year: Hogmanay.**

**\*\* That due to the mirror like qualities of the universe, are named Gouger, Rooter, Tusker and Snouter. They enjoy parsnips left for them next to the sherry.**

**\*\*\* Don't watch it. Read the book instead. The movie shows things that are not explained, so you won't see their significance. Read the book, check it twice. And then, if you really want, you can watch the movie. And then recover from your disappointment by reading the book again.**



In Ankh-Morpork, the largest city of what would on Roundworld be considered 'the West', life is organised by the Patrician into Guilds. Now, you may think this is pretty straight forward Fantasy Novel stuff, for everyone knows they tend to teem with guilds, and you'd be half right, too. Patrician Havelock Vetinari has taken this a few steps further in his city, though. Sure, there's a Bakers Guild, and an Alchemist Guild, but in Ankh-Morpork you'll also find, for example, the Thieves Guild. Or rather, they'll find you.

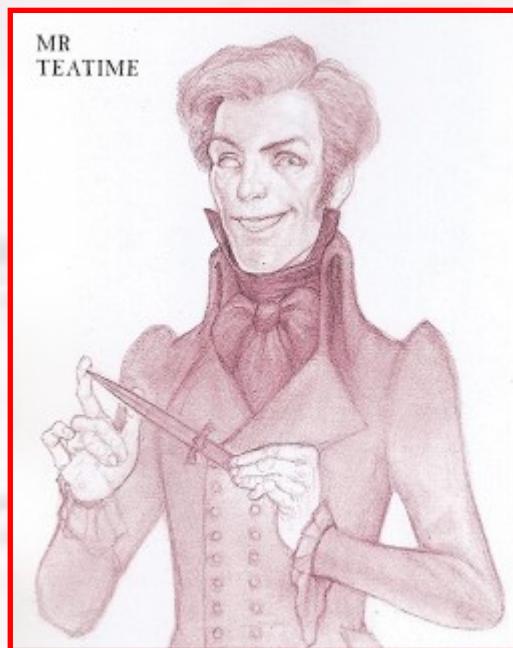
(This is not a problem, however, if you are sure to ask for and keep a receipt of your robbery, so it can be proved that it happens to people equally. This also ensures that there is virtually no unlicensed crime, as the Thieves Guild take great pride in their work and make quick work of any freelancers.)

But look over there! You see it? Over there, next to the Fools' Guild, the light and airy looking building. It gives off sort of a *sophisticated* vibe, doesn't it? And look at the weathervane, can you make it out? Yes, it does look like someone ready to stab someone, well done. We are looking at the Guild house of the Assassins. You can see their motto now, over the door: '*Nil Mortifi, Sine Lvcri*' - no killing without pay, that is. They are, after all, very scrupulous in their obeying of the rules. You can't go around killing without a contract, like a common murderer!

No, if you want to inhume someone, you have to be willing to pay for it. That will guarantee you that everything will be taken care of in an orderly, courteous fashion. The Victim will meet its end swiftly, right after they find out which Assassin will be doing them the honour, and on whose orders. They have a right to know, of course. The only Assassin really known to be killing just for the pleasure of it, is Jonathan Teatime, that is pronounced *Teh-ah-tim-eh*, thank you very much and that is exactly where this Hogwatch story began.

You see, the Auditors are forbidden from interfering directly in the universe, so they hired an Expert. The Guild had, at that point, long since felt that Teatime's brutal murders of not just the target, but also their families, servants, and very often their pets, lacks a certain ... elegance. And style, to them, is everything. Therefore they decided to give

this strange job to him, for no one else would be able to kill a being of Belief\*.



Mr Teatime, as illustrated by the brilliant Paul Kidby © (Above) and as portrayed by Marc Warren Hogfather movie (2006) (Below)

***\*Now that should interest you, from a philosophical viewpoint. Well, it interests me, anyway\*\*. If we are correct in the echo effect that created all these variations of Santa, then Santa and Hogfather are equals. They grew from the same roots in ancient gods and spirits, of which some remnants are still accepted as True by certain people. And of course the children all believe passionately in the current iterations. So let's call them Half Real. We, of course, are just plain Real. The folk of the Disc however, to our limited Roundworld knowledge, are Not Real. And that puts us in the awkward situation of having a Hogfather that is slightly more Real than his believers are. Unless we accept the people of the Disc as Real as well. Which could in turn mean that our own Realness is as debatable as the characters in a book series. I'll have a lie down for a bit now. \****

***\*Most footnotes in this piece are gladly copied from STP himself, or at least based on his writings and interpretations thereof from all over the web. This existential conundrum however, is a rabbit hole completely of my own digging.***



And Teatime didn't disappoint. He figured out how to get rid of the Hogfather quickly enough and things started to fall apart. What he didn't anticipate however, is the surplus of belief that would be floating around without a place to go anymore. And all this spare belief was doing some strange things. Ever wondered where all those missing socks go, for example? One might dream up a God of lost Socks to pray to in despair. *Glinggle-gling!* Or did your mum warn you to always thoroughly dry your feet, even – *especially* - between the toes, after going to a public pool? 'The verruca gnome will get you!' she'd say. *Glinggle-gling!* With every glinggle a new container for the spare belief is called into existence. Imaginary beings popping into existence everywhere! See, we people simply *have* to believe, it's sign of our humanity. As Death says to his granddaughter, Susan\*, 'people must start out to believe the small lies, as practice for the big lies later on in life'.

"All right," said Susan. "I'm not stupid. You're saying humans need...*fantasies* to make life bearable."

REALLY? AS IF IT WAS SOME KIND OF PINK PILL? NO. HUMANS NEED FANTASY TO BE HUMAN. TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE FALLING ANGEL MEETS THE RISING APE.

"Tooth fairies? Hogfathers? Little—"

YES. AS PRACTICE. YOU HAVE TO START OUT LEARNING TO BELIEVE THE *LITTLE LIES*.

"So we can believe the big ones?"

YES. JUSTICE. MERCY. DUTY. THAT SORT OF THING.

"They're not the same at all!"

YOU THINK SO? THEN TAKE THE UNIVERSE AND GRIND IT DOWN TO THE FINEST POWDER AND SIEVE IT THROUGH THE FINEST SIEVE AND THEN *SHOW ME ONE ATOM OF JUSTICE, ONE MOLECULE OF MERCY. AND YET—* Death waved a hand. *AND YET YOU ACT AS IF THERE IS SOME IDEAL ORDER IN THE WORLD, AS IF THERE IS SOME...SOME RIGHTNESS IN THE UNIVERSE BY WHICH IT MAY BE JUDGED.*

"Yes, but people have *got* to believe that, or what's the *point—*"  
MY POINT EXACTLY.

Herein lies the solution to the apparent ending of the world. With the Hogfather missing, and having a soft spot for mankind, Death\*\* takes over the role of the Hogfather in order to keep the belief in the Hogfather up. His granddaughter meanwhile, is to travel to the land of the Tooth Fairy to rescue the real one.

What? Why are we at the Tooth Fairy, you ask? Oh, well, on the Disc, instead of science, they have magic. You can see it still in the skyline of the City, the high Tower of Arts of the Unseen

**\*Who is, to say the least, rather reluctant about the job, as she is currently working in a real job as a governess to two children who need regular saving from monsters. With echoes of her London counterpart, known for flying with an umbrella and stepping into drawings, she hits the monsters with a cast iron poker and drags them out the house while the adults aren't looking. 'Don't' get scared,' she teaches them, 'get angry!' She is, after all, Death's granddaughter and can see the things that are really there, contrary to most adults, who just see what they expect to be there.**

**\*\* There's a Lifetimer for each creature on the Disc in Death's study, even the made-up creatures. It's very unusual for one of their clocks to run out however, which alerted Death to the current crisis.**



**Susan Sto Helit, Death's Granddaughter**

University, where the wizards live. And because magic has been around forever, it has a lot of strength in this world. Well, since the Hogfather is based on old beliefs of hunting and the matter of the sun coming up, it stands to reason that Old Magik is still the driving force behind the more modern versions. It may have become sleeker and shinier and easier to use, but the basic principle never changed. Even in our own world we know of its existence, and still suspect something sinister when people collect toenails, or hairs, or ... teeth. In Roundworld it may just generate a lingering feeling of discomfort and get called Voodoo, but it's still very powerful magic on the Disc. *All magic started with blood and bones.*



Where was I? Oh yes, the Tooth Fairy. Teatime has kidnapped her, or one of them named Violet at least, so he can get into the magical Tooth Fairy land. With help of a few cronies and a failed wizard student, he collects all the teeth and performs some ancient magic to gain control over all the children in the world. The reason Susan has to undertake this mission and not Death himself, is simple yet crucial. And this is where the Creator, as Pratchett is dubbed sometimes, casually delivers one of his insightful observations of mankind, for which he is famed.

The story in the book, even though made into a - if not a children's movie, then at least a family friendly one, is very much like the story of Santa itself. The natural concentration of *narrativium*, the substance that makes stories go, works a double shift here. Built atop pre-existing beliefs, now dressed in a jolly red suit, handing out sweets- this is Hogfather, Santa, Sint. But underneath it is about blood and power and controlling the darkness by pleasing the gods. It's like that with the story in the book. It is an easy story, about a Bad Man doing Something Horrible, but in the end the Good Ones win. Yet its undercurrent is darker, constantly lurking to pull you in unexpected directions. It's not just a funny excuse to put the skeletal figure in a red robe and blunder around trying to get the hang of acting alive and saying, "Ho! Ho! Ho!" with the correct amount of jolly. It is also showing us how strong the belief of a child is, and what humanity is capable of.

Death can't go to the Castle of Bones where the Hogfather usually resides, nor can he go to the land of the Tooth Fairy. Both are kept in existence by the innocent belief of children, and death does not exist there. Indeed, when one of the tooth guards gets stabbed and shoved down the stairs by Teatime, no dead body remains. It just vanishes, falling instead out of the sky above Unseen University, where reality is thinnest, and it drops to the ground. Death happens only in the real world, where the city Watch has a right job trying to find out where all those bodies falling from the skies came from.

But his granddaughter Susan is half human, thus perfectly capable of going there. She's not alone though, as she encounters Biliious at the Castle of Bones. The elf usually helping the Hogfather, had been drinking a lot, celebrating his first day off at Hogswatchnight in a thousand years, seeing as his boss had disappeared, and all. Upon waking, he accidentally called into existence the Oh God\* of Hangovers, Biliious, who is picked up from the ground by Susan and accompanies her from there on. Together they find out what Teatime is plotting and they have to race against time to prevent it.



**An Auditor of Reality**



**Susan (Michelle Dockery) and Biliious Rhodri Melier In Hogfather (2006)**



**The Death of Rats—he's in the story too!**

**(\*If you can't figure out why Biliious is an Oh God and not just a God, you've clearly never experienced a hangover.)**



In the end Susan does manage to save the Hogfather, fortunately. Also Biliious gets a moment of happiness where he's not tormented by a hangover he didn't deserve, and Death resumes his regular day job. Perfectly synchronous with all other happy ends to all other December Saint stories. Meanwhile, we are fast approaching midnight, and any minute now we are going to miss what I brought you here for! Oh, I think it is happening ... yes, see the way the snowflakes have sort of frozen in one place, over there? Just hanging in mid-air, not a single inclination to fall down? Keep your eye on the spot. It's right there where those sled tracks are on the roof. Yes, you heard that correctly, sled tracks on the roof. If we'd get closer, you'd be able to see the four sets of hoof prints, too. But never mind that now, just keep your eyes on the snow ...

He freezes time, you see. Very localised of course. There! Did you catch it? For only a moment, there was the suggestion of red fabric, radiating the feeling of ... well, of light, and happiness, and a touch of sherry. You have to be really looking, mind: you have to see with the eyes of your inner child. It's about time for us to get back now, but remember, magic is real, as long as you're willing to believe ...

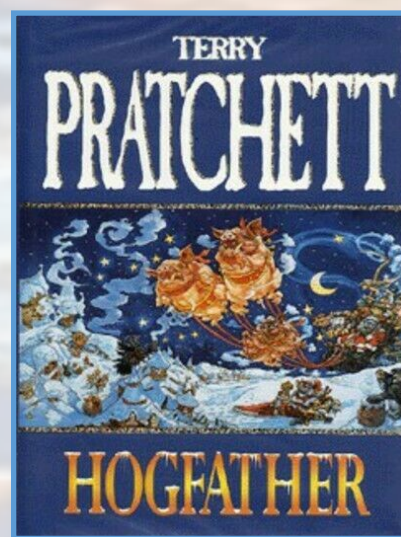
So you'd best believe the good stuff, and be kind to each other. Happy Hogswatch everyone!



Fantasy is an exercise bicycle for the mind. It might not take you anywhere, but it tones up the muscles that can.

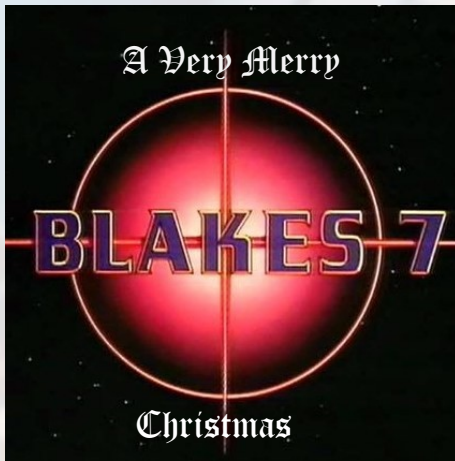
— Terry Pratchett —

AZ QUOTES



The original Hogfather book cover illustration by Josh Kirby ©





### **Four nights before Christmas**

Four nights before Christmas, and throughout the land  
Fans settled to watch Blake's return to his band;  
The snacks were set out, each selected with care,  
As we argued the ways he might well appear.  
Many kids were allowed to stay up for a treat,  
To discover how Avon and Blake would meet.  
The story was ending, excitement was great,  
We predicted that Sleer would at last meet her fate!

I turned on the telly: they've blown up their base!  
Are they doomed now forever to wander in space?  
No, Avon's a plan, Blake's in the vicinity  
(Orac has tracked him through lines of infinity).

And now Blake appears in a guise that is new.  
He's battered and bitter and heavier too.  
His face badly scarred, he is dirty and rough,  
More villain than hero and acting all tough.  
A girl creeps up on him: pulls out a gun.  
Her name is Arlen and she's on the run  
From bounty hunters. Blake isn't impressed.  
He offers her rabbit. A chance to rest.

Back on the ship, we learn from Avon  
That he's planning a rather special liaison  
With Blake, at a place known as Gauda Prime,  
A lawless planet, and not worth a dime  
According to Soolin, who grew up there,  
(Where her family was murdered, a sorry affair.)  
But Avon insists, with his most creepy grin:  
They need Blake as a figurehead if they're to win.  
Orac warns that this could be a mistake  
As Bounty hunters rule there, and one of them's Blake!

Vila insists that this cannot be true,  
But we cut back to Blake and out of the blue  
He's killed a hunter and captured Arlen,  
And told her, he too is one of them!

Ah but wait, it's a front ... Back at his base  
We learn that he's just been assuming a face.  
He explains its his plan: test newbies he must.  
He's learned through hard knocks he can't take them on  
trust.  
But adopting this way of recruiting an army,  
As Deva tells Blake, is just a bit barmy!

On Scorpio now, things start to look black:  
Slave regrets to inform them they're under attack.  
When the ship takes a hit, and goes into free fall  
Tarrant, at the controls, says farewell to them all.  
They teleport off, leaving Tarrant to die.  
Avon watches the ship as it falls from the sky,  
And brusquely tells Orac to keep on with the scans:  
Betraying his crew mates? Or has he a plan?

The night on Gauda falls quickly and black  
Vila sleeps while on guard and they're under attack  
But who in the door of their hut should appear,  
But Avon with gun. Bang. The goons disappear.  
And, typical Avon, he stands there quite bored  
And asks them if staying alive is too hard.

Now quicker than bullets, plot actions arrive:  
Tarrant is hurt but looks set to survive,  
But Slave says he's had it - not that I care  
He's too servile for me, but I guess it's unfair!  
Tarrant's rescued by Blake, but it doesn't go well.  
They both have suspicions from what I can tell;

And then Blake let's drop as he pilots the flyer  
That Jenna has joined the celestial choir.  
What, Jenna is dead? Surely that's a mistake.  
We thought she was fighting the good fight with Blake.

But no time to mourn: Avon, Soo, Dayn and Vila,  
Follow Blake's path in a stolen flyer,  
There's ten minutes left! How can this work out?  
Can it really end well? I'm beginning to doubt.

We've arrived at Blake's base and he's still playing games.  
He nabs people and sells them for money, he claims.  
And Tarrant's escaped, thinking Blake has betrayed them!  
Oh goodness what will he tell Avon about him?  
I'm biting my nails. This is all going so wrong.  
And then Avon arrives with a rather large gun.  
Where did he get it? He shoots without blinking.  
That was his wife he's slaughtered I'm thinking.

And then, sirens pulsing, it comes to an end  
As Blake is shot thrice by the hand of his friend.  
"Stand still," commands Avon, and Blake just ignores him,  
And Avon, the fool, decides he must shoot him.  
Arlen, Blake's recruit, steps forth as a spy  
And kills Deva and Dayna. Wow, Vila lets fly  
And decks her before he is shot in the back  
By troopers advancing. And quick as a flash  
The Scorpio crew are all dead or dying.  
I'm too numb with shock to even be crying.

But Avon's still standing. He raises his gun  
And smiles at the camera. Now what is to come?  
My screen goes blank. Are those shots I can hear?  
It's the end of the story. They're all dead I fear.  
Throughout the nation, the kids are crying  
Their hopes all shattered. Complaints will be flying.

And just as I question the end of this story,  
"Why, BBC, why deprive them of glory?"  
I hear Boucher's laugh as I put out the light  
MERRY CHRISTMAS YOU SUCKERS, TO ALL A GOOD  
NIGHT

Annie Worrall





## Craig Sanwell revisits A festive family fantasy - Lifting the lid and looking inside...



*The Box of Delights* is a rare gem in terms of children's television drama. Much like the fictional artefact itself, this magical 1984 BBC classic, when viewed for the very first time, is guaranteed to take the viewer on flights of fantasy and adventure, they have never seen before.

Enchanting, charming, and full to the brim of festive joy, this timeless seasonal children's drama celebrates the season of goodwill and rejoices in the Christmas festival. Blending myth, legend, and traditional fable from British folklore, it draws on elements from both Pagan and Christian ancient history in relation to the winter festivities, and executes these themes with a subtleness borne out of the technological restraints of the time, that only help to add to its appeal today.

Some of the effects look a little creaky in comparison to today's technology, but this only benefits the innocence and charm of the overall feel and tone of the production. Despite these limitations, *The Box of Delights* still won three Baftas in 1985 for its technological and aesthetic design and creation. And if, upon viewing today, one is aware of the restrictions in place at the BBC, during the period it was produced, still, at a financial cost of one million pounds in 1984, (making it the most expensive children's drama produced by the BBC at the time), certain elements, such as the use of traditional styled animation, help to

elevate *The Box of Delights* above any such minor distractions.

In a time when the BBC visual effects department relied on a much cheaper and primitive form of special effect in comparison to the CGI world of today, *The Box of Delights* utilises CSO, Chromakey and Quantel Paintbox; techniques predominant in shows such as *Tripods* and *Doctor Who* which were in production, and had been employed during the successful era of the recently departed Peter Davison earlier in the same year.



**Kay Harker played by Devin Stanfield with  
the mysterious Cole Hawlings, played  
by Patrick Troughton**



In fact, there is much for the *Doctor Who* fan to take and enjoy from *The Box of Delights*. Aside from the quaint and innocent effects, there is also Patrick Troughton's starring role as Cole Hawlings/Ramon Lully (the Punch and Judy man/mystical medieval philosopher; a natural, effortless and un-fussy performance) bringing something of a renaissance for the legendary actor. This performance for the BBC sandwiches between his return to *Doctor Who* the year previous for the 20th anniversary episode *The Five Doctors* and a following return a year after for 1985's *The Two Doctors*. I like to think of Cole Hawlings as being to the Second Doctor what Merlin was to the Seventh and the Mysterious Curator was to the Fourth!

BBC Radiophonic Workshop maestro and wizard, Roger Limb's incidental music also has something of the Peter Davison era *Doctor Who* about its musicality - faintly in keeping with, and reminiscent of, his evocative work on memorable scores for *The Keeper of Traken*, *Black Orchid*, *Terminus*, and *The Caves of Androzani*, among others. The opening bars of his haunting, tinkling re-arrangement of the Christmas carol, "The First Noel", played over the accompanying simplistic and dark, gothic and macabre, panto-like creatures and images in the falling snow Title sequence, are both effective and affecting.

*The Box of Delights* is 35 years old this year. I can still remember watching it weekly, for the first time, when I was just fifteen and six months away from leaving school. The six-part series ran in late November 1984 on Wednesday early evenings, and cleverly, and aptly, culminated in the final episode going out on Christmas Eve, (which fell on a Monday), brilliantly coinciding with the plot's festive finale, which takes place on Christmas Eve night during midnight mass. It left a lasting impression on me that stays with me to this day. I adored it then and I still adore it now.

For me, this 1980s children's tv classic was like no other I had seen before. Its clever use of iconic symbolism within the imagery and mix of ambiguous characters and downright shady villains who are pitted against the upright, upstanding friends and guardians to the young boy Kay, seemed to point towards, and foreshadow, the adult world I would soon be entering; something exemplified by the

scenes of *When the wolves were running*, which visually echoes the old proverb "wolves are gathering at your door." It soon becomes evident to the central character, the adolescent boy Kay Harker, played by Devin Stanfield, (who had recently been seen in ITV's 1980's children's sci - fi serial, *Chocky* ) that the artefact in his possession, and entrusted to him by Cole Hawlings, is attracting some pretty unsavoury and sinister characters.



**Cole meets Herne the Hunter**

Led by the villainous master criminal and ancient magician Abner Brown (played with convincing relish by Robert Stephens, latterly Sir) along with his dubious cohorts and slimy gangster henchmen, Foxy faced Charles, Chubby Joe and Sylvia Daisy Pouncer, the gang of rogues use ancient trickery to turn themselves into a pack of wolves (led by an ominous black wolf) that even allows them the ability, in human form, to fly a car that can turn into a classic 1930's aeroplane! All this is for the sole purpose of hunting Cole and kidnaping the ancient showman, and various other friends and allies of Kay, in order to possess the magical "Box". The backdrop of rolling snow-covered fields, heavy snow fall, old fashioned toys ornamenting classical festive Christmas trees, old fashioned Christmas decorations, and Father Christmas giving out presents in the town square, are mixed together with Kay's adventures while in possession of "The Box". These adventures include bestowing the boy the gift of flight, and offering him meetings with historical and mythological, factual and fictional figures and creatures from the past, such as King Arthur, ancient Roman and Greek soldiers, the



ancient mystic, Arnold of Todi, and Herne the Hunter (who was already familiar to viewers due to regular appearances guiding Robin Hood in the superbly atmospheric and mystical ITV Saturday evening teatime drama *Robin of Sherwood*, which was running at the same time.) Add in a mythological Phoenix, Lions and Unicorns pulling sleighs, all gifted to Kay (and executed through the visual effects department's use of use of CSO) and it allows for some pretty memorable imagery.

Pre-filming, director Renny Rye and his background crew sought a location in the U.K. that would guarantee heavy snow fall to coincide with the shooting schedule. An area in Scotland was chosen. Days before they were due to fly, locals informed the crew that, unusually for the time of year, no snow had fallen. A snow machine was hired to fly with them for the five days required for exterior filming. Some of the crews' travel arrangements were disrupted, and traffic was affected. As Renny was due to fly, the area was hit by the worst blizzards and snow fall in decades. Losing two days of filming, it was decided that all exterior shooting for the final three days would take place in the grounds of the hotel they were staying in.

In the show itself, other memorable moments see Kay and his friends using the power of the ancient relic to become miniaturized in order to escape the villainous gang, escaping on a children's toy sailing boat and navigating a stream that leads to waterfall, as well as a riveting cliff-hanger!

The fantastic animated sequences still hold up today; particularly Herne leading Kay through the forest as he morphs into a young stag alongside Herne's older stag; and the demon conjured by Abner in the centre of his lair.

Other notable features include the props, prosthetics, and both costume and scenery design, particularly the bronze mechanical,



talking, art deco animatronic robotic head in the belly of Abner Brown's hideaway, and the beautifully realized dormouse who befriends the miniaturized Kay in the underground sewer system.

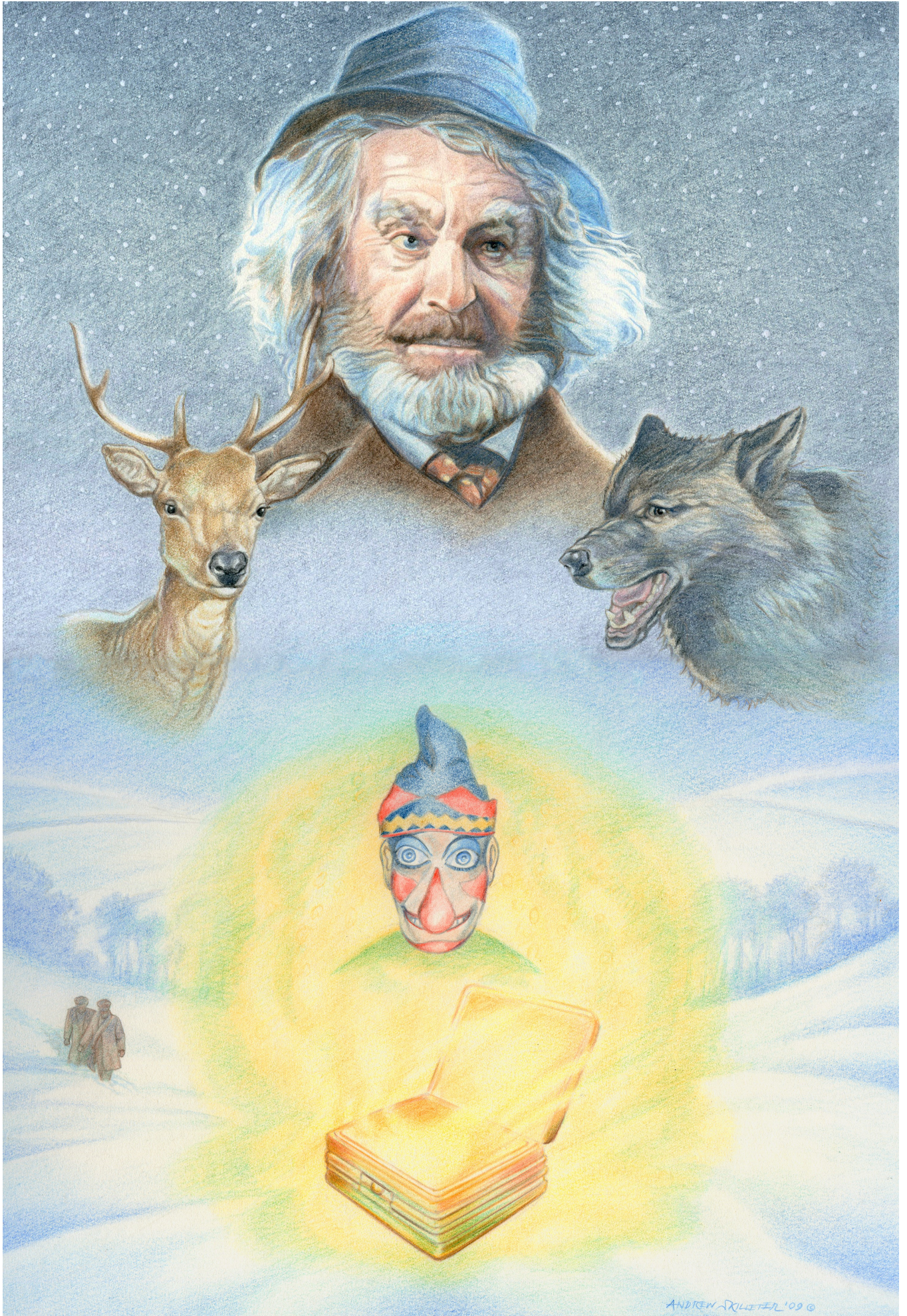
From the opening sequences and scenes that see Kay journey by steam train, with two suspiciously dubious clergymen, to his Christmas holiday destination, the 1984 period fantasy revels in its chocolate box by-gone era of Christmas past, which ironically, would have been contemporary to the story when it was first published in 1935. Written by the then Poet Laureate, John Masefield, it was the second in a series of two featuring the adventures of the young boy Kay Harker, this and "The Midnight Folk" being the authors only children's books. Masefield was poet laureate from 1930 until his death in 1967. His poems included tales of the sea faring life he had experienced first-hand as a young man, notably the book of "Saltwater Ballads". He also wrote the literary classics "Reynard the Fox, and "The Everlasting Mercy", an epic short story-like poem of suffering, regret and ultimate redemption. His "Box of Delights" forms the template for every single children's fantasy book or even modern era film, that would follow it. Focusing on moral heavy metaphors of good vs evil, and intrinsic codes within the human condition of right and wrong, this classic children's fantasy is driven, motivated and informed by the characters that appear to, and surround, the young boy Kay and his friends.

Adapted by Alan Seymour for the BBC, cosy, timeless and offering joy and comfort, this truly magical festive treat was directed, as previously noted, by Renny Rye, (who would further his directorial credits in the 1990s by collaborating with the late Dennis Potter on several of his dramas, including *Lipstick on Your Collar* and the poignant and brilliant sci-fi classic *Cold Lazarus* which brought an end to this creative unity, with the sad passing of the acclaimed writer).

Thirty-five years on and *The Box of Delights* holds up very well and stands tall among the very best of the many and varied classic children's TV dramas made by the BBC from the early 1970s and throughout the 1980s and beyond. If you haven't already seen it, or even if you have, why not check it out and give it a viewing this Christmas, in its anniversary year. You won't be disappointed!







**The Box of Delights - Original Artwork commission by Andrew Skilleter ©**



# THE SHOWMAN AND THE TIME LORD

BY CRAIG SANWELL

***(A fan fiction. With the greatest respect to writers: Terrance Dicks and John Masefield  
And actors: Patrick Troughton and Peter Davison.)***

A loud wheezing and groaning echoed throughout the empty alpine pass, filling the silent void with a grinding, mechanical-like sound. The flickering outline of a blue box, juddered and staggered into existence, the noise coming abruptly to a thumping halt as the box finally settled, precariously, on a ledge overlooking the valley that stretched out between two tall mountains.

A young man stepped out of the blue box and onto the path, taking in the breathtaking panoramic vista, and drawing a deep breath in the cool, clean, crisp, alpine air. Young, fair haired and dressed in cricketing whites with red stripes on the trousers and red trim on the pockets and lapels of his Edwardian frock coat, his attire somehow contrasted with his boyish, youthful, good looks, but complimented his calm and relaxed pose.

“Hmm, definitely NOT the Eye of Orion,” he said to himself as he turned to face the descending pathway before him, that ran on down the alpine ridge.

Far off in the distant sky, a partially cloud covered sun, struggled to throw light over the alpine valley. A silhouetted figure could be seen approaching, sat astride a donkey and laden with a large box-like carry sack/hold all, his outline becoming clearer as he worked his way up the steep, rocky pass. A sandy coloured dog ran on ahead and greeted the young man, who was gazing at them inquisitively.

“Come along Toby dog” called the man on the donkey. “Leave our young friend alone.” He was an old man and as he dismounted the donkey, he offered an outstretched hand to the fair haired traveller to shake. “Aah! Hello there. The Doctor isn’t it?” he enquired.

“Yes, but how do you know my name?” asked the Doctor as he took the old man’s hand, curiously looking him over from head to toe. “Have we met before?” he questioned, staring intently into his face. There was something familiar about him, he thought, but eh couldn’t quite place the kindly-looking gentleman.

“I’m Cole Hawkins” answered the man. “Yes, we have met. At least I have. But not yet. At least not for you. Well ... not yet anyway.”

Puzzled, The Doctor studied the man even more closely, taking in every micro expression. There was definitely something familiar about him: especially that twinkle in the eyes, the sharp, prominent features mapped onto his face and the very slightly crooked toothy grin. But other things about him were distinctly unfamiliar: the heavy, brown trench coat, tied at the waist with thick, knotted string, the fingerless mittens, the peppered grey beard, and the black/brown, crumpled fedora hat that sat upon his shock of white, thick, straggly hair, framing the very wise, old face.

“Who are you? And where are you from?” enquired The TimeLord.

“I’m Cole Hawkins, lad, a travelling children’s entertainer. Magician, Punch and Judy man, what you might call a Showman, of sorts. Or even a clown. I’m from the future. Your past.”



None the wiser, the Doctor asked him, “Why are you here?”

“Be warned young lad. Dark times approach. For you and your many young friends. Dark times for all who know and have known you. Betrayal. By a figure held in high regard,” predicted the old man.

The Doctor felt an sense of foreboding at the ominous forewarning in the words.

“Are you a time traveller?” he asked.

“In a manner of speaking. Only to the past. As The Box will allow,” the old man responded. “Now... I must be on my way. The wolves are running. And there is much for me to do this night.”

With that the old man raised his hat to bid farewell, and led his donkey up the path between the mountain wall and the ledge where the blue Police box rested uncertainly.

The Doctor watched the figure ascend the pass and gradually disappear into the distance. Something, he thought it might be a stick, fell from the box-like hold all on the stranger’s back. His dog darted back to retrieve the object, picked it up and headed back towards The Timelord. As it got closer, The Doctor noticed the object in its mouth was a recorder.

“Come along Toby dog!” called the old hobo, as he carried on further along the pass, eventually disappearing out of sight. The dog sped off in pursuit, with the recorder firmly in its jaws.

Low cloud now filled the entire valley, and heavy snow began to fall. Troubled, The Doctor quickly headed back towards the Tardis and opened the doors. The faint hum and warm glow within, brought him to his senses. “Right,” he said to himself, “where are Tegan and Turlough? I promised them a trip to the Eye of Orion.”

Outside in the snow-covered valley, the blue box stuttered and flickered from view, to the accompanying sound of a wheezing and groaning engine that had known better times.







**The Box of Delights BBC TV Programme starring Patrick Troughton ~ a magical and much loved show from 1984.**

**Andrew Skilleter has two A3 size giclee prints available, the first is *The Box of Delights* from a private commission by Craig Sanwell (see page 16).**



**The second *The Box of Delights ~ The Painting* is from a private commission for a new painting that attempts to reproduce as faithfully as possible the iconic magical painting that features in the BBC TV production. This print continues to be very popular with fans of the show!**

**These Art Prints are produced to order using light fast archival inks (8 colours) and printed on the finest heavyweight archival acid-free silk finish paper. Beautifully produced, they capture the quality of the original art and are printed and signed by Andrew Skilleter.**

**These can be ordered directly from Andrew's website <https://andrewskilleter.com>. Go to Store/Gallery > Fantasy, Magic & Imagination category or search for *Box of Delights* within the Store.**

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# DOCTOR WHO

## THE CHRISTMAS SPECIALS: A NU-WHO OVERVIEW

BY CRAIG SANWELL

*Doctor Who* has had a long association with Christmas. Many episodes of the earliest Doctors aired over the festive period. This is because, in the very early days, the seasons would often begin in Autumn or Winter and run right through to the following Autumn; or, with the advent of the later shorter seasons of the classic era, until Spring or Summer.

The now legendary, William Hartnell episode of *The Daleks Masterplan: The Feast of Steven*, was broadcast on Christmas Day 1965, and the Christmas period during the early 1970s, also saw omnibus edition repeats of older episodes from recent Doctors.

Most memorably for me was the broadcast of *Robot*, featuring Tom Baker's debut as the recently regenerated Doctor during the 1974 festive holiday. It was probably the earliest example of a sure-fire ratings winner during the Christmas TV schedules; something which has become the norm in recent *Nu-Who* 'regen' years.

The quaint, one-off special, *K9 and Company: A Girl's Best Friend*, was set and broadcast at Christmas in 1981 between Tom Baker's departure and Peter Davison's arrival. And in the 1996's *Dr Who: The TV Movie*, *Paul McGann's Doctor* sought to defeat Eric Roberts' Master on New Year's Eve, (millennium night), although the episode was shown over Spring bank holiday in the UK.

As already noted, from 2005, the arrival of *Nu-Who* on our screens meant that the series became a mainstay and focal point of the Christmas TV schedules, as well as, in most case, a certain ratings winner.

What follows is a personal overview and brief summary of these festive favourites. But be aware, the opinions here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial team.

I will also be awarding a point system of 1-5 points: Christmas crackers for hits and Christmas turkeys for misses - a Christmas Craig-o-meter if you will - as suggested by the editor, old Saint Nick himself! [Ho-Ho-Ho! - Ed]

### ***The Unquiet Dead***

Although not technically a Christmas special, this 2005, Christopher Eccleston, 9th Doctor story, (like the TV movie of '96), aired in Spring, but it contains within it many of the tropes and conceits of all the greatest Christmas day stories that would follow. Set on Christmas Eve 1869, the story is essentially a ghost story, with the added twist of an alien invasion. It combines a gothic, Victorian, snow-covered Cardiff with the wonderful acting talents of Eve Myles, prior to her *Torchwood* lead role, as medium/alien conduit, Gwyneth.

This *tour de force* of festive fun sees the Doctor and assistant Rose join forces with Charles Dickens, (played lovingly and passionately by the brilliant Simon Callow), as they set about defeating re-animated, gas filled corpses, the "vehicle" of the alien Gelth.

This enjoyable caper could quite easily have held its own as the very first Christmas day special, had Eccleston's tenure and season planning allowed.

### **Five Festive Christmas Crackers**



### ***The Christmas Invasion***

Also, from 2005, this Christmas Day adventure is the first *Dr Who* Christmas Special proper. Full of excitement and adventure, it introduces us to the extremely likeable, but no nonsense, Tenth Doctor (the superb David Tennant).



This 'Earth under alien invasion' romp, utilises Christmas themes and presents them sublimely to its family audience. Combining humour and wit with the beautifully conceived danger of deadly, spinning Christmas trees and ominous killer robots disguised as Santas, it presents a threat which is convincing in both design and execution. It's baffling that the fantastic Sycorax were never utilised again (save for a brief glimpse in *The Pandorica Opens/The Big Bang* in the Matt Smith era.) The pace of the drama borrows from some of the best *Doctor Who* 'regen' episodes from the classic series: the serene calmness of Peter Davison's out-of-action fifth Doctor in *Castrovalva*; the dazed and confused, breathy energy of Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor in the TV Movie; and the immediacy, and can do attitude of Jon Pertwee's Third Doctor in *Spearhead From Space*. It sets all this against the backdrop of Christmas and an invading alien race, and culminates with the Doctor showing his darker side as he defeats the aliens and offers a word of warning to Prime Minister Harriet Jones, after her selfish act of betrayal. Wholly enjoyable seasonal fun.

#### Five Festive Christmas Crackers



#### The Runaway Bride

This 2006 episode involved the first "celebrity big name" casting which helped to ensure another *Nu-Who* Christmas day "runaway" success. The acquisition of Catherine Tate as the comical and loveable Donna Noble, proved so popular with the audience that she would return as a permanent companion to Tenant's Tenth Doctor. This story also saw the beginning of the trend for epic, filmic scenes and scenarios to enhance Christmas family viewing, particularly the incredible motorway shots of the Tardis and car in chase, stretching the limits with wonderful use of CGI.

Sarah Parish takes great pleasure in her portrayal of the gruesome/alien spider -The Empress of Racnoss - who's villainous plan involves releasing her offspring from the centre of the Earth, upon London. The festive visuals include the return of the robot Santas, used this time by the Empress to do her bidding, and her impressive, silk-made webstar - a giant star-shaped ship that appears over London's night-time Christmas landscape.

#### Four Festive Christmas Crackers



#### Voyage of the Damned

Without doubt my personal favourite of all the modern era seasonal specials, 2007's *Voyage of the Damned* is a throwback to the Christmas holiday disaster movie extravaganzas of my youth: a kind of *Poseidon Adventure* meets *The Towering Inferno* for the revamped, *Nu-Who* age. Max Capricorn, the megalomaniac former owner of a space cruise liner modelled on RMS Titanic, sends the ship on a collision course with Earth. He is hell-bent on revenge towards his former co-directors who did him wrong, and uses The Host to kill the ship's crew and threaten the lives of the passengers and the people of Earth in the process.

After his Tardis collides with the ship, the Doctor sets about defeating The Host and Max Capricorn, who, it turns out, is no more than a head wired to a mobile life support system.

Guest starring the superstar songstress Kylie Minogue as the tragically short lived companion Astrid Peth, the production is filled with iconic imagery: from the beautifully designed Host, (gold-masked, heavenly angels sharing the same cold, devastating beauty as the Voc-servo robots from *The Robots of Death*) - to the futuristic, art deco inspired design of both the interior and exterior of the Titanic itself. The casting of the stunning, extremely talented, and popular Miss Minogue was something of a coup and a triumph. This classic is an enjoyable adventure in the true spirit of Christmas family entertainment.

#### Five Festive Christmas Crackers





## ***The Next Doctor***

2008's Christmas offering plays on both fandom and media's fascination with the casting of the titular TimeLord. Rumours were rife as Tennant's tenure drew to a close, and, with the same names for a replacement being bandied about in the press and across social media, Russell T Davies decided to run with the notion, casting one of those named, David Morrissey, in the role of Jackson Lake, in the cleverly titled *The Next Doctor*.

This is another snow covered, Victorian-set, adventure (and one which fits Christmas *and Doctor Who* like a hand in a glove.) The concept of an ordinary man discovering the Doctor's abandoned sonic screwdriver, and, through harnessing its unknown alien powers when activating it, forgetting his own identity, is a brilliant and original one.

If you add to that time- shifting Cybermen in a Victorian setting; the construction of a giant Cyberking marching over London pursued by a hot air balloon; the two 'Doctors', and their Victorian acquaintance Rosita Faris, rescuing young boys from the machinations of the Cyberking once they discover that workhouse children have been kidnapped to operate the giant construction; and the cold and calculating Miss Hartigan, working alongside the Cybermen, and played exquisitely by Dervla Kirwan; you end up with another dead-cert Christmas classic.

## **Five Festive Christmas Crackers**



## ***The End of Time***

Christmas and New Year 2009 belonged to David Tennant. With his imminent departure from the role of The Doctor, the Christmas TV schedules were crammed with appearances from the actor, as he hosted and guested on various panel shows and showed us his theatrical skill, and acclaimed versatility, in the role of Hamlet. We said goodbye to our favourite Time Lord in repeats of his two-part *Sarah Jane Adventures*' guest episodes, and his swansong, a fittingly sad *Doctor Who* finale, the

Christmas and New Year's Day two -parter, *The End of Time*.

This adventure involved the re-appearance of the Doctor's long lost home planet, Gallifrey, (albeit a version from its ancient past), and the mighty Rassilon, (played charismatically by Timothy Dalton), for the first time since the series returned to our screens; and pitted The Doctor against the most deranged version of his nemesis, The Master, since 1976's *Deadly Assassin*. This two part 'Master' piece, revelled in the series own myth and lore, as well as creating it along the way. The beautiful interplay between Tennant's tired and melancholic Doctor, ultimately aware of his impending fate, and Bernard Cribbin's Wilfred Mott, naïve, and ignorant of the important role he would play in the Doctor's end, was both thoughtful, and executed with underrated perfection.

## **Five Festive Christmas Crackers**



## ***A Christmas Carol***

David Tennant was a hard act to follow but any doubts or concerns about whether anyone could do so were soon eradicated when Matt Smith's more than capable Eleventh Doctor arrived in the Tardis. And it was soon to be proved that this version of the Time Lord was more than capable as well, of entertaining the family audience on Christmas Day.

*A Christmas Carol* (2010) is another favourite of mine, second only to *Voyage ...* a sweet and charming re-interpretation of the Dicken's Christmas staple of the same name. Michael Gambon provides a masterclass in acting as the miserly Kazran Sardick, and Katherine Jenkins is sensational as Abigail, the ethereal, angelic, and





majestic love of his alternate life, as shown to him through The Doctor's travels through time. Considering she had never acted before, Miss Jenkin's portrayal of Abigail is sincere and spellbinding. Her hypnotic singing voice is both mesmerising and exhilarating. Considering she had never acted before, Miss Jenkin's portrayal of Abigail is sincere and spellbinding. Her hypnotic singing voice is both mesmerising and exhilarating. And it was to the show's good fortune that rumoured first choice Cheryl Cole, declined the offer. Kazran's land beneath the clouds, the atmosphere he controls and its surreal images of swimming deadly sharks that inhabit it, make for some pretty convincing alien terrain, and create an atmospheric delight.

### Another Five Festive Christmas Crackers

#### ***The Doctor, The Widow and The Wardrobe***

Focussing on both the magical and 'family' elements, which are so important to Christmas and the season of goodwill, the eleventh Doctor's 2011 seasonal offering borrows heavily from CS Lewis's fantasy children's story 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe'. Visually, it bears more than a passing similarity to some elements realised by artist John Ridgway in his 1980's classic *Doctor Who Voyager* comic strip series.

Cleverly combining eco-friendly issues within its subtext, while on the surface pulling at its audience's sentimental heart strings, this is a Christmassy tale of the Doctor masquerading as a caretaker for a recently evacuated family in a Dorset stately home, during 1940's England.

Claire Skinner plays Madge Arwell, wife and mother of two small children whose spitfire pilot husband, Reg, played by Alexander Armstrong, is declared 'missing, presumed dead' during the early days of the second world war. In the run up to Christmas, Madge tries to shelter her children from the harsh, and potentially heart-breaking, realities of the situation. In a moving and touching reveal, the enchanting home, decorated with The Doctor's touch, is shown to contain a Christmas present with a portal leading to a snow-covered forest, and a tall lighthouse structure, created from several



interwoven trees, which houses large wood carved, human-like figures.

The Doctor and the children discover that their mother is the key in assisting the wooden people in their pursuit to save the dying souls of the forest.

Die-hard *Doctor Who* devotees will recognise the nod here, to another 1980s classic, *The Caves of Androzani*, where rangers from Androzani Major harvest the trees' life sources for fuel.

A heart-wrenching and magical family entertainment.

### Four Festive Christmas Crackers

#### ***The Snowmen***

My third personal favourite, in my very own list of specials in the *Nu-Who* era. Broadcast in 2012, it offers another snow-covered Victorian setting but combines this with many fantastic, and fantastical, elements: from the downbeat Doctor living in self-imposed exile and isolation in the Tardis above the clouds, complete with spiral staircase leading to the city below; to the brilliantly conceived collection of allies watching over him known as The Paternoster Gang; and the return of the classic series evil threat, The Great Intelligence, voiced by the wonderful Sir Ian McKellen. The sneering and seething Richard E. Grant, as the loathsome Dr. Simeon doing it's bidding, is a wonderful addition to the cast.

I love a, not too obvious, returning classic series monster/villain/threat and witnessing The Great Intelligence's early genesis, (pre his 1960s Troughton encounters), is sublime, and a genuine surprise to older fans. The evil looking 'Snowmen' are superbly realised too, and work as a perfect precursor to The Yeti! Then of course there is the mystery surrounding the enigmatically lovely Clara Oswin Oswald. Love it, Love it, Love it.

### Five Festive Christmas Crackers





## ***The Time of the Doctor***

All the stops were pulled out, and no expense was spared, for sorely missed Matt Smith's departure in his 2013 epic Christmas Day farewell in the show's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. It proved a fitting tribute to this popular incarnation of the *Nu-Who* generation. Loose ends were tied up and problematic plot devices from the show's recent and distant past resolved. The Doctor lives out a prophesy in the town of Christmas, spending hundreds of years of his last and final embodiment protecting the planet Trenzalore from the many familiar enemies intent on preventing the return of The Time Lords after they send a message to him across time and space.

The pathos of the ambience of the setting is reflected in the aged, ancient, and weary Doctor, who's only companion is "Handles", a dilapidated and battle worn Cyberhead, after he sends Clara away; although she finally returns to intervene and prevent The Doctor dying of old age at the hands of attacking, swarming Daleks.

With its mix of melancholy and exciting action and adventure, plus a sweet cameo from an old friend as a parting gift to the Doctor and the audience, this special has more than enough to keep the Christmas family thoroughly entertained. It even has a beautifully conceived twist on passing the baton of the role of the Doctor on to a successor and the effect it has on the remaining companion post regeneration. This festive 'regen' special is awarded:

### **Five festive Christmas Crackers**



## **Last Christmas**

Tickling all the right boxes, festively speaking, Peter Capaldi's 12<sup>th</sup> Doctor Christmas Day debut in 2014 featured Father Christmas, Elves, a Reindeer driven sleigh, and even the North Pole - although this is for the purpose housing a scientific base rather than Santa's workshop; and one under siege from the "Dream Crabs" or "Face Huggers" intent on destroying the scientists who work there. These crab-like aliens devour by inducing a dream state within their victims' brains; and this blurring of lines between what is and what isn't reality, allows for

some Christmas myths and fantasy 'standards' to be enjoyed – paradoxically creating what is probably the most "Christmassy" of all the festive specials.

The supporting cast is strong too. Jenna Coleman is as reliable and resourceful as ever; Nick Frost is perfect as Santa; *Nu-Who* regular, Dan Starkey, wonderful as one of Santa's two Elves; Faye Marsay brilliant as Shona McCullough, (the companion who never was); and it is just great to see Michael Troughton finally appear in *Doctor Who* as Professor Albert Smithe, to prove himself as capable an actor as any other of the Troughton dynasty.

### **Four Festive Christmas Crackers**



## ***The Husbands of River Song***

Now, before I begin with 2015's Christmas Day special. I would just like to re-iterate that these are just "my" opinions, and if this is a favourite of yours, then my apologies in advance as I do not wish to cause offence. But... I'm not fond of this particular festive special!

And I'm not sure why that is because I love Greg Davies as a comedian, and the same goes too for Matt Lucas, whom I enjoyed in the hilarious days of *Shooting Stars*, *Rock Profiles*, *Little Britain*, and *Catterick*, as well as finding him a likeable and endearing companion when Nardole joined Peter Capaldi in his final season.

The fact that The Doctor and River get to live out their final, fateful date together on the planet Darillium, is a nice touch and a box ticked fandom wise, but it's a small moment within the story and it's the execution of that, that I struggle with.





*The Husbands of River Song* was apparently to be Steven Moffat's swansong as writer and showrunner at one point, until he had a change of heart and decided to stay on. I'm so glad it wasn't, as it would have been something of a damp squib, and provided a disappointing end to his tenure and contributions. It is a little too farcical and dare I say it, self-indulgent at times, for my tastes.

A disappointing special.

Three Turkeys and No Christmas Crackers!

### ***The Return of Dr. Mysterio.***

Luckily, the bar was set back up to high for this, Moffat's 2016 offering. A great story with great characters and told with much depth, heart and passion. The notion of The Doctor being responsible for giving a young boy the gift of superpowers, so he grows up to be the superhero, The Ghost, is an ingenious one: a twist on the Christopher Reeve *Superman* saga (another Christmas holiday feature of my formative years.) The chemistry between the two guest leads - Justin Chatwin's Grant Gordon/The Ghost, and his boss/love interest/journalist Lucy Fletcher, played by Charity Wakefield, is both naturalistic and spellbinding. In fact, so compelling are they, that I have always felt that they, or even Matt Smith era guest companions The Paternoster Gang, would have made for a far better and more deserving spin-off, than the ill-conceived *Class*.

The effects of *Dr. Mysterio* are of filmic quality, and the costumes and set designs of a very high standard. The alien threat of the Harmony shoal and its research lab, transplanting alien brains into humans, is a very well thought out and convincing threat.

### **Four Festive Christmas Crackers**



### ***Twice Upon A Time***

With the advent of the first female Doctor, in the guise of Jodie Whittaker, for the first time in the show's 54-year history, and excluding Big Finish's alternate Doctors series of audio adventures, and Moffat's own earlier spoof *The Curse of Fatal Death*, for Comic Relief, 2017's *Twice Upon A Time* is a poignant, reflective, pensive, sorrowful rounding off for the 54-year cycle of male regenerations for the Doctor.

From the moment that the very first Doctor, (canonised here by David Bradley who had previously played William Hartnell for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary docu-drama *An Adventure in Space and Time*), returned to our screens to reassure the twelfth incumbent of the Tardis, and us the viewer, that while there might be rocky roads ahead, everything would be alright in the end; the story's tone of sweet sentimentality glorified the show's rich past, while paving the way for the single, biggest transformation of the show since the very first regeneration back in '66 when Hartnell became Troughton. The two Doctors feeling the same trepidation, hesitation and fearful resignation, is a very clever plot device that reflects the feelings of the audience, the show's place in its own mythos and legend and draws inspiration from cut dialogue from *The Tenth Planet* originally intended to show the first Doctor's reluctance towards his impending regeneration.

The setting of the famous First World War, 'Christmas truce' of 1914 within the adventure is a lovely touch, and the reveal of the Captain character (played by Mark Gatiss) as an ancestor of Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, provides a tender moment and a heartwarming surprise.

Other highlights include the excellently executed, glass-like, holographic pilot and her ship, Testimony; the Dalek hive mind and the return of The Good Dalek, Rusty, (affectionately named after former showrunner Russell T. Davies by Steven Moffat); and hordes of rampaging shell-less Daleks! And there's also the thoughtful return of Bill Potts and Nardole as holographic Avatars, and the restoration of Clara in the Doctor's mind to enjoy. Not a dry eye in the house.

### **Five Festive Christmas Crackers**





## Resolution

Returning to a New Year's Day slot for the first time since the McGann TV Movie, *Resolution* uses classic *Who* for its inspiration, serving up a biblically titled Dalek story in the same tradition as *Genesis ...*, *Destiny ...*, *Resurrection ...*, *Revelation ...*, and *Remembrance ...*. There is something about the 7<sup>th</sup> Doctor classic *Resolution*, (with a little nod to Ecclestone's Dalek story), within the pace of the action, and its scenario of adventures.

Jodie Whittaker plays the Doctor with an energetic, enthusiastic, and excitable energy that is a breath of fresh air, the opposite end of the spectrum to her Skarosian nemesis. Guest star Charlotte Ritchie gives a scintillating performance as archaeologist Lin, who finds one piece of the three parts of the defeated Dalek scout, scattered and buried across the globe by his warrior victors in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Death and destruction follow, as it attaches itself to her, takes over her mind and body to use her to facilitate the building of a new, outer 'recon' shell for its reunited parts, and then sets about trying to contact the Dalek fleet

An enjoyable, 'end of Christmas holiday', romp, in which Jodie Whittaker nails her performance as the thirteenth Doctor. The guest and supporting cast



are capable, believable and reliable. My only "minor" criticism is in the execution of the 'recon' Dalek design, which jarred with me, and I found even less aesthetically pleasing in design, than the Dalek Paradigm of the Matt Smith era! And I had hoped to get a glimpse, if only briefly, of the Dalek fleet, to show the viewer what they might expect in the future.

A great story, as I say, brilliantly conceived but, for me, let down by the weak design of the 'recon' Dalek, which looks too skinny latte for my tastes, I prefer my Daleks full fat!

So:

**One Christmas Turkey and Four Christmas crackers**



Image created by Hydref





**Another Kind of “Special” Festive Treat  
By The Ghost**



**Sarah-Jane Smith (Lis Sladen) with K-9 and friend**

The much adored, and much missed, Sarah Jane Smith returned to the world of *Doctor Who* for the first time, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1981. It had been five years since the character, played lovingly, by actress Elisabeth Sladen, bid a swift farewell to Tom Baker’s fourth Doctor at the close of the final episode of *The Hand of Fear*, in early autumn 1976.

Sarah Jane was a headstrong investigative journalist who worked alongside UNIT as a companion to the third Doctor and later, as a travelling companion through time and space, with both the third and fourth Doctors. A fan favourite and believably portrayed by Lis, it seemed only right that she should front her own prime-time show one day, even if she had to share it with a robot dog.

Writers Bob Baker and Dave Martin had collaborated on many episodes of *Doctor Who* throughout the 1970s. These included, amongst others: *The Claws of Axos*, *The Three Doctors*, *The Sontaran Experiment*, and *The Hand of Fear*, with Baker producing his final script for *Nightmare of Eden*, alone. Together they were responsible for creating some of *Dr. Who*’s most memorable and iconic monsters and characters, including: The Axons, Omega, and the robotic dog, K9, who made its debut in 1977 in the *The Invisible Enemy*.

K9 had become a phenomenon with the children of the “Star Wars” age of iconic droids and robots, and was created to appeal to them. It is probably, second only in popularity to the Daleks in terms of iconic *Who* conceptual design.

Baker attempted to capitalise on this some years later, as Terry Nation had before him, with limited success, putting K9 on children’s TV outside of the *Doctor Who* series in the hope of bringing the character to a wider audience.

The Australian made, 26-part children’s TV series, *K9*, (2009 – 2010) was co-devised and created by Bob Baker and new collaborator Paul Tams. The two co-wrote the episode, *Mind Snap*, while Baker penned *Angel of the North*, alone. Debuting on Australia’s channel 10, Disney XD in the UK and Europe, and later in the year, Channel 5, (again in the UK), *K9* initially featured the “original” mark 1 version, (last seen being gifted to Leela on Gallifrey as a farewell present from the Fourth Doctor at the conclusion of, *The Invasion of Time*.)





© PA

**The old and the new: The original BBC K9 and the 2009 Australian version**

In the opening episode, *Regeneration*, however, K9 literally regenerates into a newer, more technically advanced, junior, child-friendly version, with the ability to fly!

This re-designed and re-vamped model of the iconic robot dog proved moderately popular with very young children, but without official BBC backing and promotion, it was ultimately to be overshadowed by the enormous popularity of CBBC's *The Sarah Jane Adventures*.

Back in 1981, incoming *Doctor Who* producer John Nathan Turner had also recognised the potential and appeal of such a franchise. He set about creating a public outcry of affection for the metallic mutt by removing K9 from its Parent show, and in so doing, helped to generate interest for his next TV project, *K9 and Company*.

Commissioned by the, then, current BBC1 controller, Bill Cotton, *K9 and Company* was to be an initial pilot episode, aired over Christmas 1981, followed by a full series. Nathan Turner had initially approached actress Elizabeth Sladen to reprise her role of the very popular assistant to the Doctor, to help the audience accept the transformation of The Fourth Doctor into Peter Davison after seven years of the commanding Tom Baker in the role. But the actress declined, deeming it too derivative of what she had done before. When Nathan Turner returned to her with his new project, which would see the investigative journalist as the heroine and main lead alongside the robot dog, she accepted, feeling that it would be rewarding of her time and talent to develop the story of Sarah Jane Smith.

The pilot episode began with Sarah Jane Smith arriving at the home of her Aunt Lavinia, (occasionally referred to, but never seen in *Doctor Who*), for Christmas, hoping to enjoy a festive "family" holiday. Instead she discovers her aunt has left on a lecture tour and she is now responsible for



the care of her Aunt's young ward Brendan. She has also been given a parting gift from The Doctor in the form of a futuristic robot dog!

Against the backdrop of Christmas, Sarah Jane tries to find her place within her Aunt's community, sharing evening drinks with her Aunt's friends and the local villagers to gain their acceptance, but it soon becomes apparent that all is not as quaint and cosy as it first appears. Using the notes left by her Aunt, she follows up on suspicions that witchcraft is being practised in the sleepy village. What transpires is an Agatha Christie like guessing game of who she can and can't trust, as the underlying sinister events continue and affect her personally, when Brendan is first attacked, and then kidnapped, by two locals who break into Aunt Lavinia's home.

Together with K9, she sets about rescuing Brendan from a potential midnight sacrifice at the hands of the coven's high priest who, it transpires, is a well-respected pillar of the local community. All this occurs within the context of picturesque village life, and the episode even ends with K9 attempting to learn the Christmas Carol, 'We Wish You A Merry Christmas'- something obviously aimed at the younger areas of fandom.

The pilot episode, titled *A Girls Best Friend*, was a ratings' winner, but sadly for all concerned, was not commissioned for a full series. This was due to a changeover in the position of BBC1 controller. Incoming head Alan Hart did not like the project and saw no future for it within the BBC1 schedules, so, unfortunately, no further episodes were made.

There is no denying, however, that although he was criticised for much of his duration as series producer, (a demanding responsibility- effectively, that of the modern era's showrunner), by some areas of fandom, Nathan Turner had a keen eye for what would eventually become a sure-fire hit many years later and was, in some respects, ahead of his time.



The clever concept of bringing back *Doctor Who*'s most popular female companion and pairing her with one of the shows most recent and popular creations, was explored again in Russell T. Davies's era of *Nu-Who*, when both Sarah Jane and K9 returned during the David Tennant era in 2006's *School Reunion*. This was an enormous success, appealing to a brand new audience of children who took them to their hearts, and resulted in K9 and Sarah Jane's very own, proper spin-off series, 25 years after the original concept devised by John Nathan Turner. Incredibly, considering, they never actually met in their original series' runs, *The Sarah Jane Adventures* ran from 2007 until Elizabeth Sladen's tragic and untimely death in 2011.

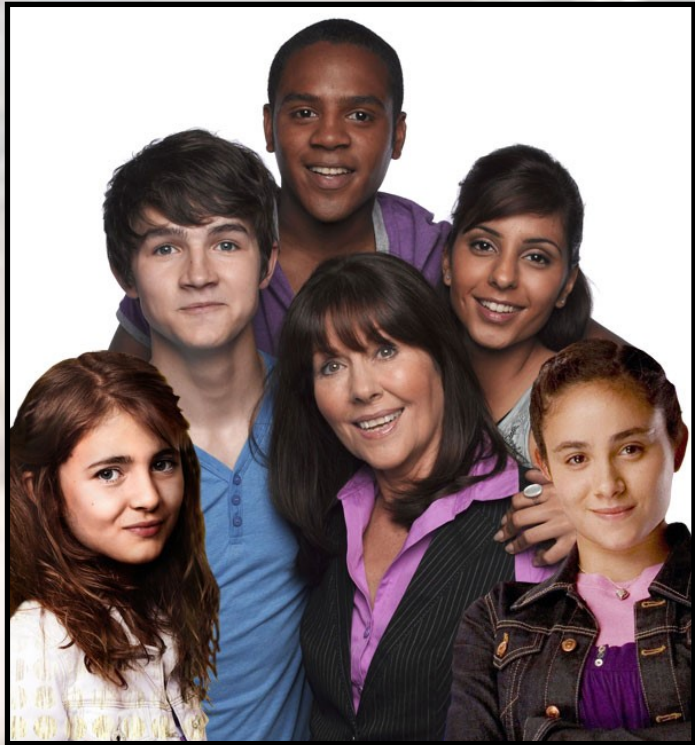
Sarah Jane would also meet the Brigadier again in *Enemy of The Bane* in 2008 and would become acquainted with her Third Doctor predecessor, Jo Grant, and the current Doctor of the time, Matt Smith, in 2010's *Death to The Doctor*.

The iconic duo of Sarah Jane and K9 returned to the world of *Doctor Who*, outside and within the TV series, many times over the intervening years between *K9 and Co.* And *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. Both came together, for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary special *The Five Doctors* when Sarah, the robot dog still in her possession, is whisked away to re-acquaint herself with the third Doctor and the Brigadier in the death zone on Gallifrey.



**“Another new face?” Sarah-Jane meets the Doctor six regenerations later**

Both characters appeared again with David Tennant in the *Doctor Who* stories, *The Stolen Earth/Journey's End*, (where Sarah Jane would, chillingly, be recognised by Davros, from her former time as travelling companion to the Fourth Doctor), and *The End of Time*, Tennant's moving swan-song. In 2009, David Tennant also guested in *The Sarah Jane Adventures*' two-part episode, *The Wedding of Sarah Jane Smith*



**Lis Sladen and the cast of the Sarah-Jane Advetures which ran from 2007 to 2011, cut short by Lis's tragic death**



**The Tenth Doctor, Rose and Mickey meet a rather battered K9 in “School Reunion” (2006), as Sarah-Jane looks on**

K9 teamed up with the Seventh Doctor and Ace in the 1990 children's education series for schools, *Search Out Science* in the ultimate challenge, game show episode, *Search Out Space*. And K9 almost returned to our screens permanently in the same year when the BBC approached Canadian animation studio Nelvana Ltd. to resurrect the recently, quietly axed, series in the form of a cartoon.

Nelvana Ltd, founded in 1971, were responsible for the very successful *Care Bears* animated cartoons and the *Star Wars* universe spin-offs, *Droids* and *Ewoks*; all of which boasted fantastic art.

This animated series would have been Nelvana's biggest undertaking thus far. It would have seen a central character, 'Doctor', modelled on previous

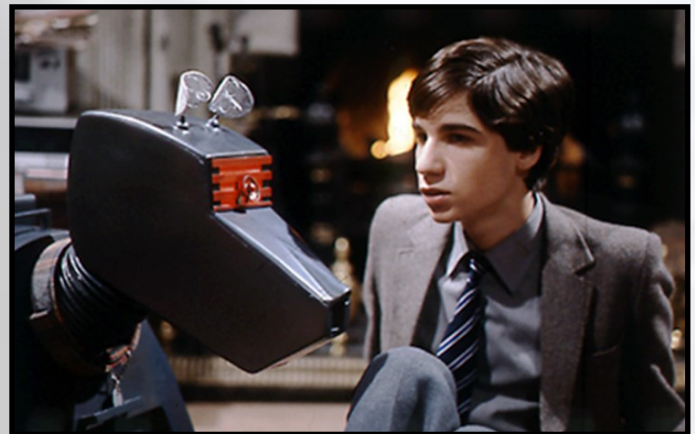


elements of earlier Doctors in the TV series. The conceptual art created would have featured the faces of voice actors it was hoped would star.

Names considered included Peter O' Toole, Jeff Goldblum and Christopher Lloyd. A modern styled, female Earth assistant would accompany The TimeLord. With artwork from Ted Bastien, a host of popular creations from the original TV series, including radically redesigned Daleks and Cybermen, K9, and a half-cybernetic reimagining of "The Master," loosely modelled on Sean Connery, complete with robotic pet bird, were set to excite a new generation of fans. Sadly, the project fell through, but some of the outstanding concept art can be found online.

In 1993, Sarah Jane was once again reunited with both the third Doctor and the Brigadier in two brand new radio adventures, *The Paradise of Death* and *The Ghosts of N-Space*. These would ultimately lead to a spin-off series for Big Finish audios entitled, *Sarah Jane Smith*. As well as that, there was the disappointing 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary "spoof" EastEnders crossover for Children in Need *Dimensions in Time*, (also in 1993), and the exceptional fan-made production for video release, *DownTime*, in 1995: a sequel to both 1960s *Doctor Who* "Yeti" adventures, *The Abominable Snowmen* and *The Web of Fear*.

John Leeson as a university DJ! It was also responsible for the introduction of the Briggs' daughter, Kate Lethbridge Stewart, portrayed here by Beverley Cressman.



**Top: Sarah-Jane's ward Brendan meets K9  
Below: Sarah-Jane confronts Bill Pollock (played by Bill Fraser)**

Of all these spin-offs, the finest adventure to enjoy during the Christmas period is *K9 and Company - A Girl's Best Friend*. Often mocked in fandom for its tacky theme tune and ill-advised portrayal of Sarah and K9 in the opening credits' sequence, this story of a sleepy English village, with local inhabitants, who appear upstanding pillars of the community, operating in witches covens and witchcraft, is a worthy addition to the tradition of Classic series *Doctor Who* stories and writings. Along with the legendary, 1960s Hartnell, *Feast of Steven* episode, it is probably the earliest example of what we now know as The Christmas Special. And



where else will you get to see a dynamic robotic pooch attempting to sing us Christmas carols?



**The Cover of Big Finish's adaptation of The Paradise of Death and The Ghosts of N-Space**

Written by classic *Who*'s Marc Platt and co. directed by *Doctor Who* luminary Chris Barry, with Keith Barnfather for Reel Time Pictures, this literal 'Whose Who' of popular *Doctor Who* characters and actors included Elizabeth Sladen, Nicholas Courtney, Deborah Watling and her father Jack reprising their previous *Doctor Who* TV roles. The cast also included *Doctor Who* actors in non-*Who* roles - notably Geoffrey Beevers and K9 voice actor





Bill Potts looked at herself in the changing room mirror. She looked ridiculous, or so at least she thought. She was dressed from head to toe in the garb of a stereotypical Christmas elf - right from the green pointy hat that sat upon her head, the short sleeved, also-green tunic, extremely tight green shorts tucked into long red and white striped socks, down to the black shiny and pointy shoes. She even sported a pair of fake pointy elf ears over the tops of her own more rounded ones. Bill couldn't help but laugh at herself, but she couldn't complain. She had to wear this ensemble as the uniform for her new Christmas job selling Christmas trees for one of the huge department stores in Central London.

Bill was taking a break from her travels through time and space with the Doctor and Nardole. The Doctor had offered to show her a 'proper Victorian Christmas', but she had turned him down, preferring to spend the holiday with her friends, at the new flat that the Doctor had helped her find. Bill had even managed to talk the Doctor into exchanging gifts, but in order to buy him one, she needed money; hence the need for a Christmas job. Being a tree-selling Christmas elf hadn't exactly been her first choice, but it was only temporary and money was money.

As she took one last look at herself, her dark curly afro protruding from beneath the cap and her brown eyes staring back at her, Bill smiled and decided that she actually looked kind of cute as an elf. And so, she exited the changing room and set out to begin her first shift selling Christmas trees to the masses.

When she got out onto the shop floor, Bill was greeted by her fellow 'elves'. There were three of them altogether; two guys and another girl. All were attired in the same elf regalia as she was. One of the guys was ambiguously Asian, he could have been Chinese or Japanese or even Korean, but Bill could not tell which. The other guy was a white dude in his forties and looked the most

conspicuous and ridiculous in his elf garb. With his short white beard he looked like he should be playing Santa instead! The girl was of Afro-Caribbean origin and made the elf -look rock even better than Bill did... at least that was Bill's humble opinion.

Her fellow elves introduced themselves.

"Hi, I'm Kevin!" smiled the Asian guy, shaking her hand warmly.

Kevin, huh? Bill thought to herself. That's a distinctly un-Asian name; doesn't really help me pin down where he's from.

Aloud she said: "Hi, Kevin! Pleased to meet you!" shaking his hand and returning the smile.

"I'm Richard!" the other guy introduced himself.

"Hi, Richard!" Bill beamed back. Let's hope you don't turn out to be a dick, she added silently.

"And I'm Natalie." The cute Caribbean girl said, offering her hand to be shook as well.

"I'm Bill!" Bill answered with her most charming smile, realising that she hadn't actually mentioned her own name before now. She held onto Natalie's hand a little longer than was perhaps necessary, but if the young girl minded it was not apparent in her demeanour.

After that the first customers began to arrive and there was no more time for idle chit-chat.

"The job's simple, Bill!" Richard offered with a friendly smile. "Just sell as many Christmas trees as you can!"

Bill's first customer was a maddeningly familiar, grey-haired man, in a long black coat, white shirt, cravat and black trousers. She found him literally



sniffing around the Christmas trees, like a dog trying to find somewhere to relieve itself.

"Doctor, what on Earth do you think you're doing?" she exclaimed, *sotto voce*, as she looked around to check that no one was watching them.

"I beg your pardon, Bill!" the Doctor replied in his broad Scottish accent. "Do these Christmas trees smell odd to you?"

Bill wrinkled her nose in confusion. "I hadn't really thought about it."

The Doctor picked up one of the trees and thrust it under her nose. "Go on! Have a whiff!"

Bill obligingly sniffed the tree. Somewhere amidst the earthy pine smell that you'd expect from your average Christmas fir tree, there was the barely perceptible stench of what could only be described as rotting meat.

"That can't be right!" Bill murmured doubtfully.

"Ahhh!" the Doctor remarked with an air of smug satisfaction. "So, you can smell it! What do you suppose it is?"

Bill remembered what she had been told in her training.

"Apparently, Morgan Chase Christmas Trees have been treated by a special chemical that prevents the shedding of pine needles on your nice clean carpet." She recited from memory. "Perhaps that's what you can smell?"

"Congratulations!" the Doctor beamed. "You'd make a very fine parrot, Bill! Is that what *they've* told you to say it is? That's all very interesting, but what do *you* think it is?"

Bill shrugged. "I don't know." She confessed. "I've got no reason to disbelieve what they've told me. What do you think it is?"

"I don't know either, but don't you think it's fascinating?" the Doctor replied with a conspiratorial wink.

"Um... yes?" Bill answered with perplexed bemusement. "Look, Doctor, what are you doing here? Did you want to buy a tree or something? At £9.99 they're practically a steal!"

"Oh, no, no, no! Nardole already bought one, from here actually, but yes, that's another thing!" the Doctor mused out loud. "Why are they selling so cheaply? I mean look at these things... they're exquisitely beautiful! Mr. Chase would be well within his rights to sell them for ten times the amount that he's asking!"

"Hey, I just sell the damn things! What do you want from me?" Bill griped.

"What time do you finish work?" the Doctor wondered.

"Around seven thirty. Why?"

"I'll meet you outside here at seven thirty then." The Doctor told her.

"Okay, but what are we going to do?"

"We're going to break in here and investigate those Christmas trees!"

After finishing her shift Bill was glad to change out of the elf costume and into her own clothes: a pair of black jeans that had faded from many washes so that they appeared a dark grey; a long-sleeved top that proclaimed her allegiance to the punk rock band, *Paramore*, with a blue denim jacket worn over the top.

Then Bill went outside, lingering a little as she waited for the Doctor to arrive.

She didn't have to wait too long as she recognised the tall figure of the Doctor, like a black clad salmon swimming against the current to reach the top of the waterfall, making his way towards her through the departing crowd.

Bill greeted him with a warm smile. "Well, you're punctual, I'll give you that!" she remarked dryly.

"It wouldn't do for a Time Lord to be late!" the Doctor told her cheerfully then peered closely at her ears. "Are you sure that you're human?"

Bill blushed under the Doctor's close scrutiny.

"What do you mean? Of course I'm human! What else would I be?"

"It's just that your ears..." the Doctor began.

Bill fondled her ears self-consciously and found that she hadn't removed her elf ears. She felt herself burn an even deeper shade of pink and she removed them promptly and shoved them into her jacket pocket.

"There are you happy now?" she grumbled.

"Actually, I think you should have kept them on; they were quite fetching!" the Doctor opined, but soon shut up at the sight of Bill's glare.

"So, what's the game plan, Doctor?" Bill brought him back to the situation at hand. "Are we really planning on breaking into the place where I work? If we get caught they'll probably fire me... at the very least!"

"Then let's not get caught!" the Doctor winked.

"Besides, if I'm right then getting fired is going to be the least of your worries, believe me!"

"You really think that there's something going on in there, don't you?" Bill asked seriously.

The Doctor nodded. "I do." He confirmed. "So, are you in? Not too late to walk away, if that's what you want to do?"

Bill did not even hesitate with her answer. "No, I'm in." she said. "So, let's get going!"

The Doctor rubbed his hands together gleefully. "That's the spirit!"





impassive visage of an immaculately attired mannequin the Doctor had to suppress an involuntary shudder. This did not go unnoticed by Bill. "It's not going to come to life, you know!" she teased.

"That one, maybe, but it has been known!" the Doctor replied.

Bill took a moment to digest this. "You've actually seen this happen?" she wondered, then she remembered who she was talking to, "Of course you have."

"Don't worry, I'm fairly certain this one is safe!" the Doctor told her.

"That's good to know." Bill replied with a smirk.

"Ah, here we are!" the Doctor exclaimed in a loud whisper... they had reached the Christmas trees. To be fair there were not that many left; about six of them. Bill and her colleagues had sold most of them during opening hours.

"There must be hundreds, if not thousands of homes in London that has one of these trees perched in the corner of their living room by now." The Doctor mused.

"Is that a bad thing, do you reckon?" Bill had to ask. "If my theory is correct then yes." The Doctor answered her. "Every single one of those households is in mortal danger!"

"Well, let's hope that your theory is wrong then." Bill replied simply.

"Only one way to find out." The Doctor remarked and he pulled out his sonic screwdriver again. He ran the sonic over the assembled trees, taking various readings.

"What is it telling you about those trees?" Bill wondered.

"Unfortunately, it's telling me that I'm right." The Doctor replied. "Sometimes I hate being right!"

Suddenly, the two adventurers were bathed in a beam of light from an unexpected source.

"Oi! What do you two think you're playing at?" A security guard was standing over them, shining his own powerful torch beam at them like an accusatory pointing finger. He was tall and well built, like a nightclub bouncer and appeared to be in his forties and he was not amused.

The Doctor held his hand in front of his face to shield his eyes from the intensity of the light that was being shone into them.

Bill led the Doctor round to the back of the building. "I can't believe I'm doing this!" Bill muttered, half to herself. "Breaking into the place where I work after I've only been working there one day!"

"Admit it, Bill... there's a part of you that finds all this exciting!" the Doctor answered her. "I know that you have an adventurous spirit. It's one of the reasons that I invited you to join me in our little adventures."

Bill broke into a happy smile as if experiencing some kind of epiphany. "Yeah, I suppose you're right!"

By now they had reached the rear fire exit.

"This is where we'll gain our entry." The Doctor announced rather unnecessarily, and began fishing in his pockets for his sonic screwdriver.

The Doctor pulled it out with a flourish and ran it briefly over the locking mechanism of the fire doors. There was a shrill whirring from the sonic and then the Doctor pressed down on the release handle. Bill steeled herself for the barrage of noise that would herald the alarm going off. It never came. The doors opened soundlessly. She looked at the Doctor with new-found respect.

"Child's play!" the Doctor whispered theatrically as he returned his sonic to the folds of his jacket.

They went inside.

Of course, now that the department store was closed, all the lights were switched off and so the Doctor found himself fishing through his pockets again until he found a small torch to provide a little illumination.

The beam of his torch danced over some of the various displays that peppered the ground floor of the huge store. When the light fell upon the



“Do you mind lowering your torch beam a little?” he complained. “I don’t think breaking and entering is quite punishable by being blinded!”

“Do you mind lowering your torch beam a little?” he complained. “I don’t think breaking and entering is quite punishable by being blinded!”

“Be still my bleeding heart!” the guard retorted unsympathetically, but lowered his torch anyway. It was as the Doctor’s eyes were adjusting to not having a light shone in them anymore that he noticed a movement behind the security guard.

“Look out behind you!” the Doctor called a warning.

“Do you think I was born yesterday?” the guard sneered.

And then the Christmas tree grabbed him from behind.

“What the...?” the guard exclaimed as a tentacle-like branch snaked around his barrel-like chest and another encircled his neck like a spiny green scarf. Bill couldn’t quite believe what she was seeing, unlike the Doctor who, though horrified, did not seem surprised at all.

Then it got worse. The tendril-like branches that had ensnared the guard began to constrict like the coils of a python and the needle-sharp pines punctured fabric and skin alike, blood welling up from the many wounds. The guard screamed.

Wherever the blood touched the pine needles or the branches it would recede and gradually disappear, as if it were being absorbed into the body of the tree itself.

“The tree is feeding on his blood!” Bill exclaimed in horror.

The tendrils pulled around the guard tighter and tighter and more blood burst forth and was absorbed with each constriction. Around the guard’s neck the branch there had already ruptured the carotid artery and the resulting torrent of crimson did not go to waste.

It all happened so quickly and within a matter of moments the guard was dead and almost completely drained of blood.

“We’ve gotta get outta here!” Bill tugged on the Doctor’s sleeve urgently.

They turned to run and found themselves surrounded by the other Christmas trees, rapidly closing in on them.

“STOP!” a voice rang out from nowhere and, just like that, the trees came to a halt mere inches away

from the Doctor and Bill.

The Doctor and Bill looked around to locate the owner of the voice and saw a man standing there with some sort of weird electronic device held aloft in his right hand. He looked to be in his late forties or early fifties and still had a full head of dark hair, peppered tastefully with grey. The man was dressed in a black trouser suit over a white shirt with black tie.

“You must be the Doctor, I presume?” the man beamed.

“I am.” The Doctor nodded. “Now who might you be... no wait... let me guess... you’re Morgan Chase aren’t you?”



The man slid his device into an outer pocket and slow clapped the Doctor with a sardonic smile. “Well done!” Chase confirmed. “I am indeed.”

“And these trees are your creation, are they?” the Doctor gestured at the trees surrounding him and Bill.

“A culmination of a lifetime of work!” Chase declared proudly. “I was hoping that you would become involved. I owe you a debt of vengeance for what you did to my father!”

“Your father being...?” the Doctor feigned ignorance though he felt that he already knew the answer.

“Don’t pretend that you do not know!” Chase sneered. “My father was Harrison Chase!”

“Your father was a lunatic!” the Doctor retorted. “Looks like the apple hasn’t fallen that far from the tree where that’s concerned. You seem to have inherited his love of botany too, I see!”

“I was ten years old when my father was murdered!” Chase spat back bitterly. “Murdered by you!”

“He tried to kill me first and, if I remember rightly, I actually tried to save his life!” the Doctor returned.

“I’m sort of wondering how you know so much about me?” the Doctor went on. “I never even knew that



Chase had a son. He didn't seem the type! Chase was more interested in plants than human beings!"

"That's right, he was." Chase agreed. "My mother was a botanist whom Chase employed to look after one of his sick plants back in 1965. They must have gotten close because I was born the following year. Of course, father never even knew I existed. Mother never told him about me because, as she put it, he loved his flowers much more than he would ever love me! She still told me everything about him though and I became fascinated by this powerful and mysterious man who had fathered me and yet whom I would never meet!"

"So how did you come to find out about his death?" the Doctor asked.

"My mother informed me, but it was not until fifteen years later that I found out the details surrounding it. I had a contact within UNIT who was able to acquire for me the information that I needed regarding my father's case. You can imagine how fascinated I was to learn of the existence of the Krynoids. When I learnt of your involvement in my father's demise, I asked my UNIT contact to acquire me as much information as he could possibly get his hands on that would tell me more about this mysterious Doctor. As a result, I know all about you being an alien with the power to change your face, and that you have the ability to travel in time and space using your, what is it called... TARDIS?"

The Doctor nodded in confirmation.

"Since then I have dedicated my life trying to locate two further Krynoid pods so that I could complete what my father started and realise his life's dream... a world ruled by plants, but with me as their leader!" Chase declared, his eyes gleaming with madness.

"Okay, so let me get this straight..." the Doctor continued. "You acquired yourself a Krynoid pod, or two, and isolated the DNA to create what... *Krynoid Christmas Trees*? And now you're going to use them to take over the world?"

"Each of my Krynoid Christmas Trees has been fitted with an inhibitor. While it is activated the trees are dormant. Just normal trees! However, on Christmas Eve I will deactivate the inhibitor in every tree that I have sold and the Krynoids will run amok. Through them I will be able to control every plant, first in London, and then the world!" Chase ranted.

"Well now I know you're mad!" the Doctor chuckled. "I just wanted to make sure!"

Bill couldn't help but chuckle along with him at that one.

"Laugh it up all you want!" Chase sneered. "Unfortunately for you you're not going to be around to see it!"

With those words he took the device that he'd been

holding from his pocket and pressed a button on it.

And the Christmas trees came to life again!

The Doctor pulled out his sonic screwdriver.

"I wonder how these trees will feel about a little white-noise to jam your frequency?" he declared with a devilish grin. He activated the sonic and it began to emit a shrill whirring sound.

The effect on the trees was almost instantaneous and an inhuman screech could be heard escaping from the disoriented trees as they immediately retreated a few steps back away from the Doctor and Bill, limbs writhing in discomfort.

"Come now, Doctor, you're only delaying the inevitable!" Chase barked out with a mad grin stretched across his face as he twisted a dial on his own device, increasing the power and overriding the Doctor's jamming effect.

The trees began to advance once more.

"Aren't you going to walk off and leave us to our fate like a good little megalomaniac?" the Doctor asked as he tried to find a frequency that would once again give him the upper hand.

"You are joking, aren't you, Doctor? I wouldn't miss this for the world!" Chase chuckled in reply, seemingly unperturbed by the Doctor's continued efforts to try and save himself and his companion.

The Doctor took Bill by the hand and they made a dash through a gap in the encroaching trees, deciding it was better to try and run before they were completely boxed in.

The Krynoid trees gave chase.

They were surprisingly nimble for creatures that did not have any legs or feet to speak of; they scabbled along pulling themselves forward using the longer lower limbs of their branches.

The Doctor ran passed a convenient exit and disappeared deeper into the store.

"What are you doing?" Bill wondered as she allowed herself to be dragged along by the hand. "We just ran by the exit!"

"We're not leaving!" the Doctor told her. "We need to get rid of these trees! And by get rid I mean destroy!"

Bill tugged her hand free of his.

"Well why didn't you say so?" she replied, and she ran over to the far wall where a big red metal box contained a fire hose for emergencies and also... a fire axe.

Bill smashed the glass with her elbow, her jacket protecting her from injury, and she snatched up the axe.

"Come on, Doctor!" she yelled, and she ran at the nearest Krynoid tree.

Bill raised the axe over her head in a two-handed grip and then brought it down in a swift chopping



motion upon the 'head' of the tree. Her blow bisected the treetop, but Bill didn't stop there. The axe blade rose and fell again and again, Bill yelling like a maniac with each blow until she had reduced her opponent to kindling.

The Doctor looked on with mounting respect for his young friend. And then he looked about for something that he could use to join her in the fray. As luck would have it, they just happened to be in the gardening department of the store and the Doctor's gaze fell upon a selection of small wood-chopping axes. He hefted one of them into his hand and ran to assist Bill.

Instead of running from the Krynoids, they were attacking them with axes.

Very soon they stood there panting from their exertions, surrounded by so much firewood that they could have started their own bonfire. The heady scent of cut pine filled the air.

"Well that wasn't so hard!" the Doctor smirked at Bill and winked.

She smiled back at him, leaning on her axe handle as she caught her breath.

Morgan Chase was not quite so amused to see his beloved trees cut down so easily.

"You leave me no choice, Doctor!" he snarled angrily. "I must bring my plans forward. Instead of Christmas Eve I shall be activating my Krynoid army tonight! And there is nothing you can do to stop it!"

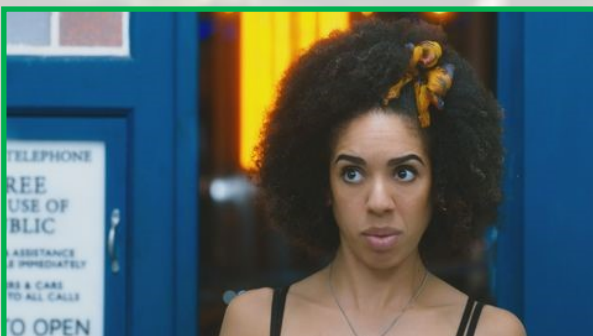
Before the Doctor or Bill could move to stop him, Chase ran off to carry out his threat.

"We've gotta get after him!" Bill urged.

"Let him go." The Doctor told her. "I have another idea!"

The Doctor and Bill left the building using the same fire exit that they'd entered by.

Bill followed the Doctor until he came to a stop by an all too familiar blue police telephone box perched on the corner of a nearby alley.



"You didn't think I came here by taxi, did you?" the Doctor winked at Bill as he unlocked the door and bustled Bill inside.

The Doctor bounded over to the console and began to pull switches and levers.

The doors closed behind Bill automatically and the rotor in the centre of the console began to rise and fall rhythmically, accompanied by a mechanical howling and grinding noise.

Bill joined the Doctor at the console. "So, what's this great plan?"

The Doctor fished a piece of Christmas tree from his pocket which he had taken from the remains of the Krynoids they'd fought earlier. He fed a sample of it into a tube that popped out of the console at the push of a button. The tube retracted back into the console and a little monitor in front of them began to process all manner of data concerning the sample's

The Doctor tapped a few switches here and there, typed in a few commands on a keyboard and suddenly the monitor displayed a map of Greater London that was illuminated by hundreds, if not thousands, of little red dots.

"Those red dots represent all of the homes in London that has one of Chase's Krynoid Christmas trees!" the Doctor explained, jabbing a finger at the little screen. "We're going to pull off a Santa and visit every one of those houses to effectively de-Krynoid every one of those trees!"

"How are we going to do all of them in time?" Bill wondered.

The Doctor looked at her and grinned manically. "Time machine, remember?"

Bill found herself grinning back, despite herself. "And how are you planning on 'de-Krynoid'-ing them?"

At that moment the rotor slowed to a halt and the howling and grinding resonated around the control room once more.

The Doctor activated the door control and ran outside, pulling out his sonic screwdriver as he went.

Bill followed after him.

Outside the TARDIS the street corner had been replaced by a homely Christmas living room. A mother and father sat on a burgundy sofa watching TV, although now they were gaping open mouthed at the two strangers that had invaded their home from this mysterious blue box that had appeared as if from nowhere.



Two children, a boy and a girl, had been squabbling over toys on the rug in front of the fireplace and they too were now flabbergasted by the new arrivals.

"Santa?" the girl asked dubiously.

"Don't be silly!" the boy chided. "That's not Santa!"

"Don't mind us!" the Doctor announced cheerfully. "Christmas tree inspectors! We have reason to believe you may have been sold a defective Christmas tree!"

The tree in question sat in a corner between the TV and the sofa and was already beginning to twitch. A clock on the mantelpiece proclaimed the time to be five minutes past eight in the evening.

The Doctor raised his sonic screwdriver and pointed it at the tree. He activated it and a shrill hum resonated towards the stem of the tree. The quivering of the branches intensified for a matter of moments and then... the tree became still.

The Doctor lowered his sonic and replaced it within his jacket.

"*Voilà!*" he declared. "Your tree should now be fine!"

He turned on his heel and marched back into the TARDIS.

Bill followed him.

"Merry Christmas!" she called to the astounded family as she disappeared inside.

Seconds later the family gawped in amazement as the blue box faded from their living room with a howling and grinding noise.

"What did you do to the tree?" Bill asked as the Doctor pre-set the controls for their next little trip.

"I used the sonic to induce a massive internal electrical trauma within the tree, overriding the implant that Chase put into it and turning it against it. Everything Krynoid was killed and all that remains behind is the normal and harmless Christmas tree exterior. Now we just have to do the same to every other tree that's out there." The Doctor explained.

"Every single tree?" Bill exclaimed. "One at a time?"

The Doctor nodded.

"One down, one thousand three hundred and sixty-eight to go!"

And so, the Doctor and Bill materialised in living room after living room, always at around five past eight, or thereabouts. They would march out of the TARDIS. Sometimes the room would be empty, but other times there would be people there, as in the first one, and those people would exclaim and stare and the Doctor would trot out the same Christmas

Tree Inspectors routine. Then he would point his sonic at the tree and work his magic. The tree would be rendered harmless and the Doctor and Bill would depart again.

"Merry Christmas!" Bill would call out cheerily every time without fail.

For the next five hours or so it was five past eight for the Doctor and Bill over and over again until finally there was only one more tree left to do...

The TARDIS manifested itself within the corner of a very different room. Rather than a living room this appeared to be an office in some sort of academic establishment like a university or college, one with a lavishly decorated Christmas tree stood by the window in one corner. As with all the other rooms the door opened, and the Doctor and Bill emerged... and then the Doctor paused and looked around him with a puzzled expression upon his face.

"This room looks familiar!" he declared.

Bill rolled her eyes. "Well of course it does!" She said, "This is your office at the university, remember?"

"Well that explains the strong sense of *déjà vu* that I got as soon as we exited the TARDIS." The Doctor shrugged.

And then a chubby looking bald man wearing a salmon coloured dressing gown and blue striped pyjamas walked in carrying a steaming mug of hot tea.

Nardole paused in the doorway when he saw the Doctor and Bill standing there, the TARDIS in the corner behind them.

He stared open mouthed at them, clearly wondering why they had suddenly turned up out of nowhere.

And then the Christmas tree attacked!

Bill pushed Nardole out of the way just in time, but this caused him to drop his cup of tea.

"Do you mind!?" he exclaimed indignantly.

The Krynoid tree swayed from side to side in the centre of the room as it deliberated over which warm fleshed humanoid it should feast upon first.

It decided upon the Doctor, just as he was getting ready to use the sonic screwdriver once more, and a flailing tree branch whipped the device out of his hand before he could activate it. The Doctor backed away.

Bill dived onto the floor and retrieved the sonic. She pointed it towards the tree as it swayed and began to advance towards her.

Bill had no idea how to activate the sonic.

"A little help, please!" she panicked.



“Twist the handle ninety degrees clockwise!” the Doctor called from where he stood. The tree flailed a limb at Bill in an effort to disarm her as it had done with the Doctor. She twisted the handle of the sonic and...

*VREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!!!!!*

The low hum that she had become accustomed to over the course of the night and over several hundreds of five past eights emitted from the sonic screwdriver.

The tree trembled and quivered like a giant green spiny jelly and then it keeled over and landed on Bill.

She closed her eyes as she half expected the needles to puncture her skin and begin to feed, but nothing happened.

For what seemed like an age she just lay there under the tree.

“Can someone please get this thing off of me?” she exclaimed.

A short while later they were all sat around the Doctor’s desk with fresh cups of tea. The TARDIS still stood sentinel where it had landed, and the tree had been replaced in the corner by the window where it had previously stood. It was now half past eight in the evening.

“That’s the last time I go shopping for Christmas trees for you!” Nardole was complaining, “Next time you can buy your own flipping tree!”

“That’s alright, Nardole, you weren’t to know that you were buying a homicidal man-eating alien Christmas tree!” the Doctor grinned at him.

“So, what’s going to happen with Morgan Chase?” Bill wondered.

“I’ve already put in a call with UNIT. They’re on their way round to his store right now to arrest him!” the Doctor winked at her.

“Well, there goes my Christmas job!” Bill grumbled, “How am I going to be able to afford to buy you both gifts now?”

“Is that all you’re worried about?” the Doctor replied with raised eyebrows. “If you really want to give me a present for Christmas then come with me in the TARDIS... there is an Earth colony in the forty-second century where it’s Christmas all the time and the mince pies are to die for. Trust me, even if you don’t like mince pies, you’ll love these ones.”

“I can’t stand mince pies.” Bill admitted, and she grinned. “Alright, you’re on, but if these mince pies aren’t up to scratch then I am buying you the cheesiest pair of socks I can find, and you’ll have to wear them all the time for a month without changing them!”

“Is that supposed to make me scared?” the Doctor chuckled wryly. “Well come on then, no time like the present!”

The Doctor pushed himself up from behind his desk and darted towards the TARDIS with Bill scurrying along excitedly behind him.

For a moment Nardole just sat there with his cup of tea raised halfway to his lips. Slowly he lowered it back onto the saucer.

“Wait for me!” he called, and he sprang up to follow his two friends into the TARDIS, the doors swinging shut behind him.

Moments later there came a familiar howling and grinding noise and the blue shape of the TARDIS faded away.

**The End**





# THE SEARCH FOR OL' RED

## TRACKING DOWN THE RED DALEK

BY NICK MAYS

What is about a **Red Dalek**? OK, I'll hold my claw arm up here – red is my favourite colour (also my birth colour if you go in for Astrology). But if you asked anyone, even the most casual *Doctor Who* viewer which Dalek colour they'd most like out of, say, a line-up of bronze, pale blue, grey or white Daleks, the answer would invariably be red.

Of course, red is a nice, bright primary colour – easily recognisable and standing out from the crowd, so maybe it's no surprise that the first Dalek playsuits were manufactured in that colour, and that toy Daleks made by Rolykins, Herts Plastic Moulders and Louis Marx came in red colouration. Red Daleks were depicted in the pages of *TV Century 21* and later *TV Comic*, *Countdown*, *TV Action*, *Doctor Who Monthly* etc. And when the Daleks made the jump to the big screen in 1965 with the release of the movie *Dr Who and the Daleks*, filmed in glorious Technicolour, it's no surprise that the second-in-command Dalek was – you've guessed it – red.



Red Rolykin Dalek

Again, I have to state a preference here. The Red Dalek was always my favourite Dalek. Heck, I even painted one of my beloved Cherilea Dalek toys red (I used Airfix paints – great for model-makers!), because the only 'leader' colour variant available was black.

But, you may say, *Doctor Who* started in 1963, so why did we have to wait until 2008 to see a **Red Dalek** leader on our TV screens?

The answer (most likely) lies in the medium of television itself. *Doctor Who* was screened in black and white from 1963 until 1969, and even when colour transmissions came along in 1970, most households would have still been watching on black and white TV sets for a few years into the 1970s.

We all know the Daleks' history of course...

Devised by Terry Nation as aliens in a one-off serial, *The Mutants*<sup>1</sup>, the second ever *Doctor Who* to be screened between December 1963 and January 1964. In that story, there was no obvious Dalek leader. All the Dalek props were painted pale blue and silver so as to appear white on the screen. And then, of course, designer Ray Cusick's iconic alien design sparked something in the imagination of millions of children (and adults) watching *Doctor Who* and 'Dalekmania' began in earnest, with toys, colouring books, games, fireworks, soap, slippers and so on. Thus, it was inevitable that the Daleks should return to face the Doctor again.

The Daleks returned to Britain's TV screens in the first story of the second season of *Doctor Who* in November 1964, in the serial *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*. This time, Terry Nation decided that the Daleks should have a recognisable leader, so this particular Dalek had to stand out in some recognisable way. Of course, it was cheaper in production terms to simply paint an existing Dalek prop a different colour rather than go for a costly radical re-design of one prop. However, painting it red wouldn't be enough of a difference on black and white TV screens, so the Dalek leader was painted black. He remained black for several different Dalek serials, usually referred to as either the Black Dalek (catchy) or the Dalek Supreme (catchier).<sup>2</sup>

So, how did the Red Dalek (that's its *title*, like the Black Dalek) come about?

My best guess is that it was originally created by David Whittaker, *Doctor Who*'s first Script Editor, who had a great deal of input into Terry Nation's TV Dalek stories, as well as writing the bulk of the stories in the first two Dalek annuals and in the comic *TV Century 21*. (He also wrote two later Dalek stories for Patrick Troughton's Second Doctor, *Power of the Daleks* and *Evil of the Daleks*).<sup>3</sup> He possibly also liked the colour of the Dalek playsuits and toys and took inspiration from them....



The following is a list of Red Dalek appearances as best I can trace them from 1964 to date. I've stuck to the medium of TV, film and comic strip in the main, as these are red Daleks that you can actually see, as opposed to those mentioned in prose and audio stories (with a couple of justifiable exceptions). Any errors and omissions are mine. If you feel exercised enough by any mistakes I've made, please do write in to say so, as it would be nice to know that someone actually *reads* this stuff...

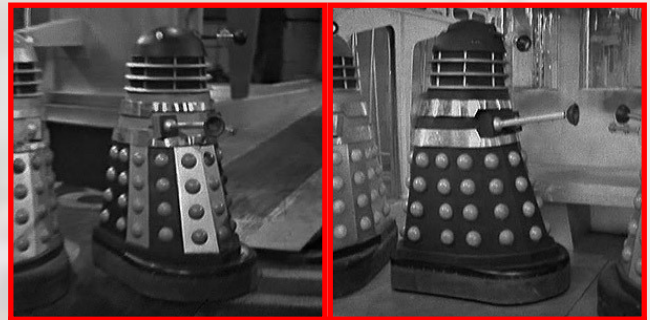
The first mention of a red Dalek, as opposed to *the* Red Dalek that I have found appears in ***The Dalek Book***, published 30th June 1964, several months before the Daleks reappeared on TV. A Dalek designated as *Red Commander* (of Kangring Squadron) appears in the strip *Invasion of the Daleks*. As far as artwork goes, this Dalek isn't completely red, but had red bands around its mid-section.



**The Red Commander of Kangring Squadron**

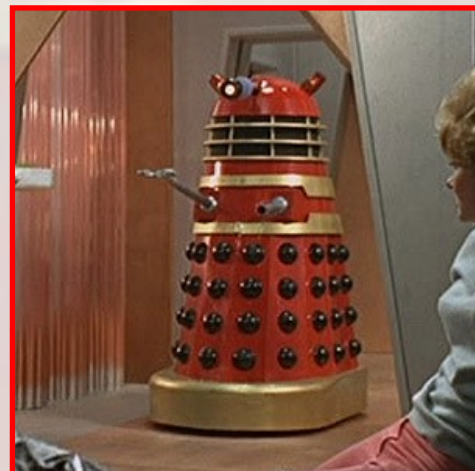
Later in the *Dalek Book*, a red Dalek appears to be heading a council meeting in the strip *The Oil Well*. However, this Dalek could possibly be Black, as the colour varies between frames, with the strip using black, red and white colour wash. However, in the first frame, it's most definitely red and it is clearly a leader of some kind.

By the time of the Daleks' second appearance on TV in *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* in November 1964, the Dalek leader is designated as the Black Dalek. However, in episode 2 we meet a Dalek leader on board the Daleks' spaceship (later referred to in fan circles as a "Saucer Commander"). This Dalek has skirt panels in alternating colours. It was long-held fan belief that the coloured panels were red, but as we have seen above, they were most likely black. In terms of the production, this Dalek was probably the Black Dalek prop in a part-painted state, most likely not quite finished before that week's episode had been Recorded. Certainly, we never seen this "Tabby Dalek" again after the Black Dalek turns up in Episode 3.<sup>4</sup>



**The "Saucer Commander" and the Black Dalek  
Are they one and the same?**

A Red Dalek appears as Second-in-Command to Black Dalek in AARU film *Doctor Who and the Daleks*. Principle photography commenced April 1965, so script/rights etc taken up latter part of 1964. I has long been said that the screenplay was written by Producer Milton Subotsky, based on Terry Nation's original TV scripts; if so the idea of a Red second-in-command was presumably his. However, although Terry Nation attended a couple of initial meetings with Subotsky and director Gordon Flemyng, he declined to adapt his own scripts and passed the task to David Whittaker, the Script Editor on *Doctor Who*. So it is likely that "Subotsky's screenplay" owed a lot of so the Red Dalek may be a joint creation, or, more likely, Whittaker's own idea.<sup>5</sup>



**The Red Dalek second-in-command from the film *Dr Who and the Daleks***

Following a laboratory accident Dalek inventor Zeg turns Red in casing, tooth and claw in comic strip *Duel of the Daleks* in *TV Century 21's The Daleks* comic strip Issues 11 to 17 - 3rd April to 15th May 1965. The comic preceded the release of the film *Dr Who and the Daleks*, but still photos from film featured on *TV21's* cover for several issues, including Black and Red Daleks. However, Zeg is not an "official" Red Dalek and the choice of colour scheme may have purely been an artistic one to differentiate him from the rank and file, so this is most likely a coincidence. The Black Dalek also makes his debut as Emperor's Second-In-Command in this story. There is no indication that there is a Red Dalek in a leadership position



alongside the Black Dalek. The main thrust of the story is that Zeg, now with an near-indestructible casing and whose brain has been affected by his accident wants to Emperor and so the stage is set for the titular duel. Although the strip was billed as *Terry Nation's The Daleks*, the fact is most of the scripts in the series' two-year run were written by... David Whittaker!



**Zeg gets delusions of grandeur in  
*Duel of the Daleks*  
Artist: Richard Jennings**

The Black Dalek appears in the *Doctor Who* serial *The Chase* episode 1 - 22 May 1965. This is the Daleks' third TV outing. According to John Peel's later novelisation, the Dalek task force sent to pursue the Doctor was headed initially by a Red Dalek. He also inserts a Red Dalek into his novelisations of *The Daleks' Masterplan* and *Evil of the Daleks*. There is no indication that a Red Dalek was denoted ever as leader in the TV series, but only in the films, as confirmed by correspondence from the BBC *Doctor Who* production office to this author (then aged 11) in 1973. However, apparently the Red Dalek was scripted to appear in Episodes 3 and 4, presumably as the leader of the Daleks on Earth in 1866 and 1966. The fact that this story was written by David Whittaker is quite telling. It seems that he really did like ol' Red! [See the BBC scripts for confirmation at: <http://homepages.bw.edu/~jcurtis/scripts/evil/intro.html>]

The first "official" Red Dalek leader is featured in the TV21 strip *Eve of War* Issues 47 to 51 - 11 December 1965 to 8 January 1966. However, the Red Dalek departs the strip in Issue # 50), dated 1 January 1966 when the Mechanoids destroy the

ship he is commanding. The Red Dalek, seems to have joined the Dalek ranks since their city was rebuilt after the Monstron attack in the previous adventure. <sup>6</sup>



**The Red Dalek feels the heat in  
*Eve of War*  
Artist: Ron Turner**

The Red Dalek (presumably newly appointed) successfully aids the Emperor in averting a missile disaster in the TV21 strip *The Terrakon Harvest* Issues 70 to 74 - 21 May to 25 June 1966.

The Red Dalek appears in the second AARU film *Daleks Invasion Earth 2150 AD* released 22 July 1966 (filmed between January and March 1966). It appears to be Third-in-Command under the Black Dalek and a Gold Dalek. Again, the Gold leader may be an idea of Milton Subotsky's/David Whittaker's and is probably based on the Golden Emperor Dalek in TV21 and the annuals.

The Red Dalek appears again with the Black Dalek in TV21 strip *Shadow of Humanity* Issues 86 to 89 - 10 September to 1 October 1966. By now both the Red and Black Dalek seem to be of equal rank, next in line to the Emperor.

The Red and Black Dalek appear in the strip *The Dalek Trap* in *Dalek Outer Space Book*, published 8 September 1966. They are both under the command of a Gold Dalek, which may well be a 'steal' from the second film. David Whittaker did not write any of the strips for this, the final 1960s Dalek book, due to a dispute with Terry Nation.



**The Red, Black and Gold Daleks in *The Dalek Trap***



Still with the Dalek Outer Space Book, at least three Red Daleks make up the "Extra Red" Squadron appearing in the strip *The Secret of the Emperor*. They make the mistake of criticising the Emperor and are exterminated by the Black Dalek. How these Daleks fit into the Dalek hierarchy is unclear, but they are separate from the Red Dalek himself.

A rather odd "landing strip" white domed Red Dalek appears on the cover of the *Dalek Outer Space Book*.



The "Landing Strip Head" Red Dalek on the cover of the *Dalek Outer Space Book*

A Red Dalek/Black Dalek hybrid leader appears in Dell Comics' adaptation of *Dr Who and the Daleks* movie, December 1966. It features properly on the front cover photograph taken from the film. The two lead Daleks were probably combined for ease of drawing and colourisation.

The Red Dalek appears in the final *TV21 Daleks* comic strip *The Road to Conflict* Issues 96 to 104 - 19 November 1967 to 14 January 1967. After this, the Dalek strip ends in TV21 and the following week, Daleks appear in the *TV Comic Doctor Who* strip, the rights for their use having now been granted to Polystyle publications.

Several Red Daleks feature in the *TV Comic Dr Who* strip *The Trodos Ambush* (Part 3) Issues 788 to 791, dated 21 January 1967 to 11 February 1967. Their designation is unclear, but they may well be "squadron leaders". All Daleks are under the command of the Black Dalek Supreme.

Several Red Daleks feature again in the *TV Comic Dr Who* strip *The Exterminators* (Part 4) Issues 803 to 806 - 6 to 27 May 1967.<sup>7</sup>

A Red Dalek leader features in the *TV Comic Annual 1968* (published September 1967)



Red Daleks abound in the TV Comic *Dr Who and the Daleks* strip *The Trodos Ambush*

strip *Attack of the Daleks*. This strip is notable only for its horrible artwork and dreadful rendering of the Daleks themselves.



Several Red Daleks (and indeed Daleks of many colours) appear in the *Sky Ray Dr Who's Space Adventure* sweet cigarette Album in mid-1967.

No obvious Dalek leaders are seen. The first Dalek that the Doctor encounters in this story is a Red one, although it is soon blasted to pieces by the indigenous race, the Zoans.



Back in the "real world", a Red Dalek film prop is seen in Alan Whicker's interview with Terry Nation at Lystead Park in 1969. It's definitely *not* canon.<sup>8</sup>

A Red Domed Dalek Leader is seen in *Countdown* comic's *Doctor Who* strip, drawn by artist Gerry Haylock, *Sub Zero* Issues #47 to 54, 10 January to 26 February 1972. This coincides pretty much with the Daleks re-appearing in *Doctor Who* on TV after a 5 year hiatus in *Day of the Daleks*. The Red Domed leader seems to be second-in-command to a Gold Dalek leader. (In January 2017, *Doctor Who Magazine* reprinted *Sub Zero* in *Doctor Who Magazine presents Countdown to TV Action: Sub Zero*, a free giveaway edition with issue #508).

The Black Dalek commands Daleks in the follow-up strip in *Countdown/TV Action* issues 55 to 62 4 March to 22 April 1972. However, in some frames



he appears to be Red, so was there also a Red Dalek leader there somewhere, or as it just artistic licence and use of atmospheric colour?

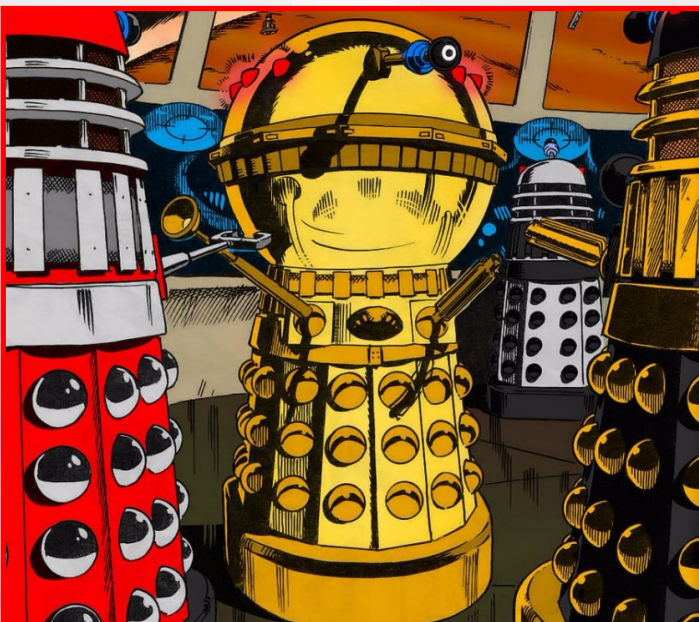
A Red Domed Dalek leader is seen again (at least on the cover), in the TV Action Doctor Who strip *The Threat From Beneath* issue 112, dated 7 April 1973.

In the Radio Times Doctor Who 10th Anniversary Special, published in November 1973, Dalek creator Terry Nation is featured with four Dalek props, some of which were former film props he personally purchased. One of these has a silver body and red head. Perhaps these photographs found their way to Countdown some months before the RT Special's publication? The BBC's Doctor Who production office and Countdown/TV Action had a close relationship at the time...

A distinctly non-canon Red Dalek appears in Weetabix cereal's Doctor Who stand-up figures promotions TV and cinema adverts in 1977. One of the actual Dalek figures drawn by artist Gordon Archer has a red dome, based on one of Terry Nation's own film props. The same photos being sent Weetabix for Archer to work from maybe?

A Red Dalek leader appears in the colourised reprint of *Return of the Daleks* in Marvel's *US Doctor Who Comic*. The strip was originally published in black and white in *Doctor Who Weekly* 17 October to 7 November 1979, with no obvious differentiation between the Dalek leader and other Daleks.

The Red Dalek and the Black Dalek appear in DWM strip *Emperor of the Daleks* Issues 197 to 202 - March to August 1993. Both fall foul of Dalek Killer Abslom Daak's chainsword... Ouch!



**The Emperor, Red Dalek and Black Dalek in the DWM comic strip *Emperor of the Daleks*, drawn by Artist Lee Sullivan**

The Red Dalek appears again in the long-awaited take-up of *The Daleks* strip *Return of the Elders* in DWM Issues 249 to 254 - 12 March to 30 July 1997. Sadly, the strip was curtailed following the death of artist Ron Turner, who worked on the later TV21 Daleks strips.

The Red Dalek 'Omega' is the leader of a race of humanised Daleks in the DWM strip *Children of the Revolution* DWM issues 312 to 317 9 January 2002 to 29 May 2002. Omega is one of the Daleks "humanised" by the Doctor in the TV serial *The Evil of the Daleks*, when he was just a plain white/silver "rank and file" Dalek. However, having led his fellow surviving humanised Daleks to a new world, he seems to have acquired a rather fitting paint job. (In fact, they all have, although Omega is the only Red Dalek).

(Fanfare!) The Red Dalek appears in *Doctor Who* on TV - **at last!** - as the Supreme Leader, with an augmented casing design in the episodes *The Stolen Earth/Journey's End* 28 June to 5 July 2008. He is ultimately destroyed by Captain Jack Harkness.

A red 'Drone' Dalek appears in *Doctor Who* *Victory of the Daleks* 17 April 2010 as part of the Dalek's New Paradigm. Not only do the Dalek's colours contradict all previous "colour rankings", the props are very poorly designed and appear hunch-backed.

New Paradigm Red Drone Daleks (and a few others) appear in the *Doctor Who* graphic novel *The Only Good Dalek* 16 September 2010

New Paradigm Red Drone Daleks appear in *Doctor Who: Evacuation Earth* - 12 November 2010 and *Doctor Who: Return To Earth* 19 November 2010 in Nintendo Wii video games.



**The New Paradigm Red Dalek Drone—original (Left) and "Officer Class"(Right)**

New Paradigm Red Drones, now designated as "officer class" Daleks with a much darker, more metallic paint job appear in *Doctor Who* in *Asylum of the Daleks* on 1 September 2012.

The Red Dalek is depicted in Rick Lundeen's graphic novel adaptation of *The Daleks Masterplan*, for BBC *Children in Need*, November 2013.

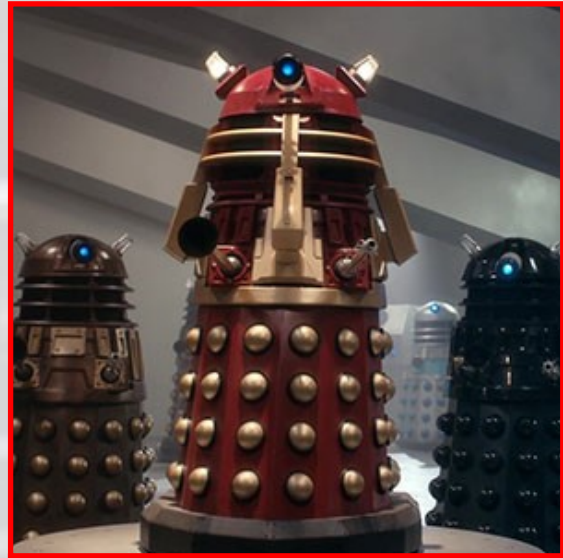
Another Red Dalek Supreme with the same augmented design, appears in *Doctor Who* *The Magician's Apprentice/The Witch's Familiar* 19 and 26 September 2015. It is last seen fighting off an invasion of Dalek slime in the main control room on Skaro City.



So there you have it; the search for "O! Red" ends here... at least for now. Who invented the Red Dalek? I'd say there's a high probability that it was David Whittaker's creation, like so much of what we accept as Dalek lore. Meanwhile, the Daleks are set to return in the latest season of Doctor Who, beginning on 1 January 2020. Whether any of them will be red remains to be seen. Talking of "seen" reminds me of a rather amusing contradiction from the *Dalek World* book (published 11 October 1965). In the feature *Strange to Tell - Facts About The Daleks* says that Daleks cannot see the colour red. (It's even funnier when you see that the Dalek depicted on the page is.. Yep, you've guessed it... red!)



Now *that's* awkward!



The TV Red Dalek Supreme. He even outranks the Black Dalek behind him!



"I-AM-INVISIBLE! YOU-CANNOT-SEE-ME...  
DUCK!"



## RED LINE FOOTNOTES

1. This first Dalek serial is sometimes referred to as *The Daleks*, so as not to confuse it with the later (1972) *Doctor Who* serial also called *The Mutants*.
2. The Black Dalek is usually seen as second-in-command to the Emperor or Davros, whoever happens to be in charge at the time.
3. David Whittaker is very much the unsung hero of the Daleks' popularity. He had great enthusiasm for the sons of Skaro and wrote most of the comic strips for *TV Century 21* and the first two Dalek books, very much at Terry Nation's behest (and profit). His own Dalek TV serials are very highly regarded by WHO fans.
4. There was a long-held "fan legend" that this half-painted prop was actually painted in red undercoat primer. It wasn't.
5. See: <https://www.gamesradar.com/uk/the-dalek-movies-from-the-sfx-archives/>
6. *The Daleks* strip in TV21 had been drawn by artist Richard Jennings up to this point. The artists changed halfway through *Eve of War*. The Red Dalek's untimely demise was the first strip drawn by Ron Turner.
7. Initially, Polystyle had the rights to the character of *Doctor Who* only, whilst the rights to the Daleks were claimed by *TV Century 21* publishers City Magazine. Polystyle Publications were so delighted at getting the rights to the Daleks in January 1967 that they re-titled their *Dr Who* (sic) strip *Dr Who and the Daleks*, even though the Daleks didn't feature in every serial. Later in 1967 they lost the rights to use the Daleks again when Terry Nation withdrew all rights to the Daleks from them and the BBC, as he was attempting to launch his own, independent *Dalek* TV series in the USA. (It didn't work out).
8. In the programme of 27th January 1968 – *A Handful of Horrors: I Don't Like My Monsters to Have Oedipus Complexes*, Nation was shown in his home which revealed that he lived with four Daleks from the second feature film released eighteen months previously.



# All I Want from A Christmas Sci-Fi Movie

By Annie Worrall

The Christmas season poses a particular problem for Sci Fi movie makers because the world in which the narrative take place may be far into the future, where there is no guarantee that Christmas is still celebrated; or an alien world where the concept of Christmas is unknown. If they set their film in the present day, the dangers that the human protagonists have to face can dampen the Christmas spirit amongst the audience: whilst bearing this in mind, and compensating for it, can result in a mess of a movie, bloated with its own sentiment as it reaches for a feel-good ending.

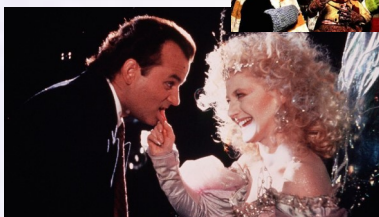
Christmas itself is an awkward season anyway- an uneasy combination of profound spirituality and rampant excess- making the task of delivering a satisfactory movie experience even more difficult. So it's perhaps not surprising, that, while several Sci Fi movies reference Christmas, few have been targeted at the Christmas Market. *Sunshine*, with its bleak reworking of winter solstice myth, was released in April, for example; *Prometheus*, featuring a drunken Idris Elba and a Christmas Tree, in June; *Edward Scissorhands* with its message of the power of Christmas, in July.

Those that have, are either more turkey than Extra Special, (*Star Wars, Holiday Special*: November 1978. 'Nuff said); or so bleakly plausible and depressing as to make Christmas itself seem a frivolous indulgence, (*Children of Men*: December 2006, U.S. release. A reworking of the nativity story; an uplifting ending but, oh my, what a painful journey). Even the successful *Gremlins*, (December 1984) can probably be best taken as a warning



about feeding children too many sweets over the period, rather than an unequivocal endorsement of what makes Christmas unique.

It is the Fantasy movie, with its celebration of all the uplifting things about the human experience, not the Sci Fi, that has ruled the cinema during December. (*The Santa Clause, Scrooged, Why the Grinch stole Christmas, Its a Wonderful Life, The Muppets' Christmas Carol*).



These fantasies don't really cut it for me, with their, for the most part, saccharine sentimentality about the season. The reality for many families like mine, involves dealing with ungrateful relatives we've avoided all year, and kids on a sugar rush, (the warning of *Gremlins*, sadly, unheeded): so an hour and a half spent watching *Scrooge*, in various guises, finding his soft centre, is less likely to warm the cockles of my battered heart, than have me reaching for the bottle. I



do like the Muppets' version of the story ... largely because of Rizzo the rat, and *Its a Wonderful life* has its moments, but *The Santa Clause* is frankly terrifying. Father Christmas literally EATS Tim Allen to effect the de-Scrooging process.



There is however, one Sci Fi movie that, for me, rules the Christmas Season: *Galaxy Quest*, a perfect mix of all the ingredients a Christmas movie needs.



The first element I look for, is that a movie celebrating Christmas is genuine and doesn't sentimentalise the season.





Mathesar and his fellow Thermians transform a group of has- been actors into beings capable of behaving like the heroes they played, simply through their belief in their innate goodness. They are the alien magic that effects this change.

And finally. Hey it's Christmas. You need a really good sense of humour to survive the hype and expectation. You need to laugh at yourself and see the absurdity of your pretensions if you're to have a warmly fulfilling time. And *Galaxy Quest* is a movie that joyfully laughs at itself, and the targets of its satire, and invites us to laugh along with it. Which we do.

Ok, *Galaxy Quest* isn't set at Christmas. It doesn't even mention Christmas. It's not a Christmas movie. True. But it is about a group of people who have been close to each other, getting together again, bitching about each other, and finally learning that once they stop being arseholes, they really do still like each other. It's about them becoming a family. And although this process is a feel-good one, it occurs gradually, plausibly and to an extent, through a genuinely shocking and moving death. If learning to get on as a family isn't what Christmas is about, then I don't know what is.



So Happy Christmas readers. And if, like me, you are looking for a movie to share with your kids. A movie that will appeal across the generations. A movie with heart and humour. Well, forget *Die Hard*, and reach for *Galaxy Quest*. You won't be disappointed.



Then, Christmas - both as a Christian and pagan ceremony - is about hope: the hope that death will lead to new birth and regeneration. And I want my Christmas movie to reflect this. Hope in this one is represented by the fandom of the original Sci Fi show in which the protagonists starred. They have kept this old show alive through the conventions they hold, and the on-line discussions they have about it, and it's thanks to them that the heroes get a second chance and the darkness that is General Sarris is defeated.

Christmas too, is about magic - the impossible that facilitates a transformation - the birth of a baby in a stable whose fate is to save mankind; the appearance of a fat man on a flying sleigh to reward the good and punish the bad. In *Galaxy Quest*,





# Out of the Vortex

News, Reviews and Previews from the Sci-Fi and Fantasy Multiverse

## DARK MATERIAL INDEED

The BBC/HBO co-production of Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* came to a shocking conclusion, or, more accurately, cliffhanger on Sunday 22nd December. If viewers were expecting a happy ending, they didn't get one, true to the original book, which can be very dark in places.

The acclaimed 8-part series has remained largely faithful to the *Northern Lights* (a.k.a. *The Golden Compass*) the first book in Pullman's trilogy. With excellent acting from all involved—special kudos to young lead Dafne Keen who plays the young heroine, Lyra Belaqua—stunning special effects and a masterclass in visualising the 'alternate' Earth that Lyra's lives in, the series has been a treat from start to finish.

The production team did take some licence by introducing the character of Will Parry (a teenage boy from 'our' Earth) as a gradually increasingly important element. In the trilogy. Will does not make his debut until the second book, *The Subtle Knife*. However, it makes perfect sense to set up Will's involvement in Lyra's quest at this stage, and thus make a seamless transition into the already commissioned adaptation of *The Subtle Knife*, which is due to air next year, most likely occupying the same Autumn/Winter slot.

It's going to be a long wait, but well worth it!



## MARTIAN MIS-STEP

Sadly, the success of *His Dark Materials* was not reflected in the 3-part BBC adaptation of

H.G. Wells' seminal novel *War of the Worlds*. Despite this version of the great invasion epic being set in the correct time and place—beginning in Victorian Surrey—writer Peter Harness removed his adaptation of Wells' original story too far for many viewers' tastes.

Whilst many 21st Century viewers could accept the lead character George having a feisty, intelligent girlfriend in Amy, the deviation and clumsy political correctness, such as sexism and the evils of the British Empire—overwhelmed the story. Far too much time was spent dwelling on a post-invasion Earth being slowly choked by the Martian's insidious red weed with Amy recollecting how she and her son (by George of course) came to be on their own in this apocalyptic England.



Although the Tripods looked great, ultimately the Martians themselves were a big let down, despite their insectoid, tri-legged nod to the Martians from the 1959 BBC serial *Quatermass and the Pit*.

After 2 episodes of wham-bam death rays and explosions, there was no actual *resolution*. No scenes of the Martians dying from human diseases—in this case, typhoid contracted from the human beings they sucked dry. This key fact was just relayed by reported speech by Amy.

As the credits rolled at the end of Episode 3, many viewers were left with the uncomfortable feeling of 'Well—was that it?'. Sadly a great opportunity to do Wells' brilliance justice. In fact, too much Harness, not enough Wells and Martians.

Ah well—there's always Fox's modern day "re-imagining" of WOTW, if that's your preference. Or there's some good audio versions out there. Or just read the original book and use your own imagination. The pictures are better.



## SEND FOR THE DOCTOR!

*Doctor Who* makes a welcome return to our screens after a year off-air. The first episode of Series 12 airs on New Year's Day, so rather cheekily not being the usual one-off festive special but just another episode in an already reduced 10-part run. It does beg the question as to whether the BBC are making and broadcasting the minimum amount of WHO affordable just to keep the series going and keep the residuals rolling in. Still, perhaps we shouldn't grumble... 30 years ago the-then BBC hierarchy loathed Doctor Who and ended its 26 year-run on 6th December 1989.

Jodie Whittaker will reprise her role as the Thirteenth Doctor alongside Tosin Cole (Ryan) Mandip Gill (Yaz) and Bradley Walsh (Graham) who are all returning for their second series. Chris Chibnall returns as Showrunner with Matt Strevens as Executive Producer.

Anjali Mohindra is set to guest star in upcoming episodes.

Previously starring as Rani Chandra in the CBBC Doctor Who spin-off *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, Anjali is no stranger to the Whoniverse but as she takes on a new character, it's safe to say she'll be worlds away from her usual appearance...

Starring in a separate episode, Laura has previously starred in various dramas including the hit BBC show, *The Missing* and more recently Netflix's *Better Call Saul*.

On appearing in Doctor Who, Anjali Mohindra says: "As a huge fan of the last series, it's a bit of a dream come true getting to work opposite Jodie, Mandip, Tosin and of course after all these years, to work with Bradley again! There's something undeniably special about Jodie's Doctor, and to be bringing some terror to the joint was rather fun indeed."

Matt Strevens, Executive Producer, says: "It was a real joy to welcome Anjali to the show. We've wanted to work with them since we started and have found the perfect characters for them to show off their talent and range – both formidable in very different ways."

The new series promises to see the return of old villains the Daleks and the Cybermen, as well as new terrors for the Doctor and co. to face.



**The first episode of a two-part story *Spyfall* airs on BBC One on New Year's Day at 6.55 pm. Part 2 airs on Sunday, 5th January.**

## SOMETHING TO GET YOUR TEETH INTO

"There are monsters in this world." So opens the BBC's new trailer for its upcoming *Dracula* miniseries, which gives fans an exciting – and terrifying – taste of what to expect from the fantasy-horror adaptation.

Flies, drinking vessels filled with blood and nuns armed with stakes are just some of the images seen in the minute-long preview. A few lines of dialogue are included, which discuss the personality of Count Dracula (played by Claes Bang), the charismatic villain who first appeared in Bram Stoker's seminal Gothic novel.

"He's a very persuasive man, the Count," says one voice. "He's a monster," says another.

*Dracula*, which consists of three episodes and will air on BBC One over three consecutive days in the New Year, is the latest project from Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat – the award-winning team behind *Sherlock*, their re-imagining of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

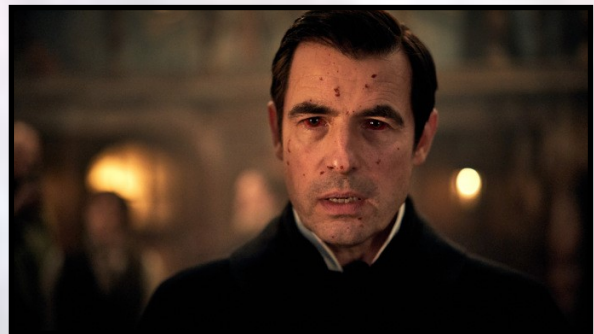
This new trailer shows the different sides of the Count – both the murderous, cold-hearted demon, and the seductive, well-mannered nobleman.

Towards the end, he even quips, "I'm undead; I'm not unreasonable."

This is the first real indication that the series will feature some of the humour that runs throughout much of Gatiss and Moffat's work.

When *Dracula*'s trailer was released, fans were surprised by the amount of blood and gore it promised. It will please many to find out that the Sherlock creators have found a way to introduce a little levity into their adaptation, while keeping true to the dark, morbid tone of the original material.

**The first episode of *Dracula*, entitled 'The Rules of the Beast', will air on BBC One at 9pm on New Year's Day, 2020.**



## COMING UP:

February 2020 will see the publication of a new Doctor Who novel, brought to you by BBC books.

First up there is the novel *At Childhood's End*, written by Sophie Aldred, who played former companion Ace to Sylvester McCoy's Seventh Doctor between 1987 and 1989. The novel partners Ace—now a reclusive millionaire philanthropist known as Dorothy McShane—with the Thirteenth Doctor and her friends Graham, Ryan and Yaz.

**Doctor Who: *At Childhood's End* is published by BBC books on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020. RRP £16.99**



**REVIEW: *The Target Storybook*, Various Authors, published by BBC Books, 2019**

One spin-off story from each Doctor, but not necessarily featuring the Doctor.

I loved the stories from the classic season: I could place each one exactly in the time slot it span from within moments - except the Third Doctor, I never did place that one in its relevant time slot.

The First Doctor is very neatly placed in *The Chase*, at the point where they leave the amusement park without Vicky. It's a pleasing adventure in which they are trying to retrace their steps. By Simon Guerrier.

The Second Doctor takes place at the end of *The War Games*, after Jamie and Zoe are returned to their own times, and before the trial. The Time Lords make use of the Doctor's love of interfering - but he doesn't know ... Cleverly written by Terrance Dicks.

The Third Doctor story left me baffled. It is obviously set sometime around *Invasion of The Dinosaurs*, but whether before or after or even during I couldn't tell. And whether the events within the story were related to the experiments by Sir Charles Grover or not, I also couldn't tell. By Matthew Sweet.

The Fourth Doctor story is based in *The Five Doctors*, and is the Doctor and Romana figuring out why they are stuck in the time scoop and trying to escape from it. Full of impossible Time Lord tinkering with everyday objects to turn them into tools to suit their needs. Good fun. By Susie Day.

The Fifth Doctor story is written by Matthew Waterhouse and is a super little adventure for Adric and Nyssa. Set in *The Visitation* after the android is blown up, and they try to 'fly' the Tardis to the Doctor to rescue him.

The Sixth Doctor has an adventure in the Matrix, when he looks for evidence in preparation for *The Trial of a Time Lord*. Written by Ol' Sixie himself, Colin Baker, he gives us an alternative ending for *Terror of the Vervoids*, the one not shown in the trail and the reason why the

Doctor chose it for his defence.

The Seventh Doctor extra tale is set in *Remembrance of the Daleks* The Daleks have brought an extra horror with them – The Slyther – which the Doctor deals with before going for his cup of tea in the cafe. Nicely written by Mike Tucker.

From the Eighth Doctor on, it's a mix. The Eighth and the War Doctor are obviously based on the audio adventures; the Ninth, Tenth and Twelfth are (as far as I can judge) extra stories, the Eleventh is a soliloquy by the TARDIS, and the Thirteenth has an extra story and also a spin-off in the Punjab.

They are all very good but not my favourite Doctors, so I don't 'drop in' to these stories so easily.

LP

**REVIEW: *Dr Who and the Krikittmen* by James Goss and Douglas Adams, published by BBC Books, 2019**

**What is it?**

A hybrid of a story, combining the late Douglas Adams' notes delineating the Krikittmen Universe with an original, pacy story from James Goss, involving the Fourth Doctor, the Second Romana and the aforesaid Krikittmen.

**What did I think of it?**

I'm not an Adam's aficionado, but I loved the sections based on his notes which explain the world view of the Krikittmen, and make some wry observations about our own world. The story is involving as well; though I, personally, found some of the dialogue a little underwhelming,

**Should I buy it?**

I'd guess it's a must if you're a Douglas Adam's fan. For those of you, like me, who hasn't read a lot of his work, this has much to offer. It's funny, thought-provoking, exciting and does a fair job at capturing a popular Doctor/Companion dynamic.

AW



# THE BACK OF BEYOND

**Coming soon! Issue #5 (Winter/Spring 2020):**

**Loads of great features ! Maybe even something written by YOU?**

**See You Soon! Oh, and a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Peaceful New Year!**





**Abominable Snowman. Artwork copyright © Andrew Skilleter**