The Tides of Time
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The Passage of Time

It has been far too long since an edition of Tides has been published. It is, though, an interesting time for it. Issue 32 was published almost exactly four years ago. We’d just met David Tennant’s Tenth Doctor in the first Christmas Special. We were all beginning to realise that Doctor Who was not just back but was once more a national institution. As I write this editorial, The End of Time Part 2 is mere hours away, with Tennant’s imminent death opening a new world possibilities in the form of Matt Smith and new script editor Steven Moffat.

Also, this term is the 20th anniversary of the foundation of this fair society. We will likely celebrate it by making Matthew stand up and recount his memory of its great past rather more frequently than usual. Roll on 20 more!

Hopefully the next edition of Tides will be published before Matt Smith regenerates, but there’s only one way that will happen – if YOU contribute. This magazine is entirely built from voluntary contributions and the only reason you weren’t reading this sooner is it took four years to get together enough contributions to even get close to printing an edition. The magazine will accept almost anything, from fanfiction and artwork to critical studies of the shadows of John Nathan-Turner on the RTD era. If you’ve been on a visit to a filming location, write a few hundred words about how it felt (and send lots of pictures). If you can’t stand Sarah Jane-Smith and think it should have been the Leela Adventures, express your anger through your keyboard! The article doesn’t even have to be entirely about Doctor Who (just look at my Steven Moffat piece on page 11). If you’ve got an idea but don’t know if it’s enough for an article, send me an email and we can work on it together.

I want your submissions!

Before I let you loose on the content, though, I do give you one warning – here there be spoilers. Spoilers are completely unavoidable in critical studies and discussions of the type that form this magazine. All broadcast Who is open pickings. I’ve kept the details of the new series down to only the things you’d find in The Sun. I add a special warning that ‘Time and Relationships Diverting in Space’ (page 11) have some details of Steven Moffat’s Jekyll, though I for one don’t think it’s anything that would ruin a viewing experience.

And so I duely present, The Tides of Time, Issue 33.

Share and enjoy,
Adam Povey
Matthew Kilburn looks back on the massive contribution by Barry Letts to Doctor Who.

The Sage and the Daemons

I've been aware of Barry Letts for almost as long as I can remember. I'm not sure where I first came across his name, but it was probably as the author of Doctor Who and the Daemons, which I knew from lists of books printed at the back of other titles in the Target series. By the time I was seven I knew that he had actually been producer of the series, and broadly understood what a producer did. A little later, I finally read Doctor Who and the Daemons, and was struck not only by the richness of the prose compared to that of most of the Target novelizations covering the later Tom Baker period, with which I was most familiar at the time, but also by the warmth with which the book was written. Doctor Who and the Daemons is full of vividly-drawn people with whose inner lives we become acquainted. Miss Hawthorne reduced to girlhood, ‘an eight-year-old surprised in some naughtiness’ when faced with the Master for the first time; the coven in the cavern is witnessed mainly through a bullied and terrified youth, Stan Wilkins, too frightened to speak out against his tyrannical uncle and the older men of the village. Montmorency Vere de Vere Winstanley, a squire whose superciliousness is interrupted by bluster to obscure his ignorance, most of all of himself. Unseen characters like Lily Watts, who ‘is the letting committee’ of the village hall, express the contrast between UNIT’s international and indeed intergalactic outlook and the bucolic rural fastness exploited by the Master. The Master himself, obsessed with power, but also very lonely:

If only the Doctor weren’t so abominably good! All this claptrap about morality, integrity, compassion and the rest! If only he had seen sense, together they could have ruled the Universe... (Barry Letts, Doctor Who and the Daemons, chapter 7)

At the centre of all is the relationship between Jo and the Doctor, passionately loyal to one another despite the gulf between them, one child-like and contemporary, the other easily frustrated and quick to anger, but motivated by a profound sense of good in the universe and overwhelming concern for its welfare. In the wake of Barry Letts’s death, one forum poster identified this passage as epitomizing Barry Letts’s conception of the Doctor:

Suddenly Jo realised that the Doctor was singing a jolly little song. She grinned to herself. She could never be cross with him for long. ‘You sound happy,’ she said. You must be very sure...
this idea of yours will work.’

The Doctor looked surprised. ‘I was singing because... oh, because the sky is blue, I suppose.’

‘But the Daemon... and the end of the world and all!’

‘Oh, yes, of course, the end of the world. But that’s not now. That would be tomorrow—or this evening—or in five minutes’ time. And right now, the sky is blue. Just look at it!’

Jo looked... and looked again. It certainly was blue! A deep, almost cobalt blue overhead fading to a pale greenish duck-egg blue near the horizon. She stared round, drinking in the blueness, becoming the blueness—and suddenly found that she was singing too!

‘See what I mean,’ smiled the Doctor. (Barry Letts, Doctor Who and the Daemons, chapter 8)

It was no surprise, really, that when I finally saw a photograph of Barry Letts, it revealed him to be a sage-like figure, balding and grey-bearded. This seemed suitably contemplative. This confirmed an impression given by ‘An Interview with Barry Letts’, published in Doctor Who Monthly 52 (May 1981), which is where I first came across Barry Letts explaining that he and Robert Sloman lurked behind the mysterious name of Guy Leopold, credited with the television version of The Daemons (1971) and with no other story; and drawing attention to the environmentalist message in The Green Death (1973).

He also declared that he was a Buddhist, though he ‘disliked such labels’. He came across an intellectual with a wide body of knowledge both practical and esoteric at his fingertips, just the person my ten-year-old self had hoped to find behind the worlds of Doctor Who.

Meeting the Doctor

By the 1980s Barry Letts already seemed like a wise television veteran, who surely had been peering over his head at the bright young things at Alexandra Palace back in the 1950s. This would of course have been a misleading impression. Photographs which accompanied the newspaper obituaries revealed him as an actor to have been a sharp-eyed and clean-shaven man of action. He was a familiar figure on film and television screens from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, battling heroically against adversity in films such as Scott of the Antarctic and The Cruel Sea or on television in period costume in a range of literary adaptations for the BBC Television Children’s Department in the 1950s. He appeared in several contemporary plays series too – IMDb reveals him to have been a semi-regular in early series of pathfinding police series Z Cars – but in the mid-1960s he moved towards writing (pitching several ideas to Doctor Who in 1966 when Gerry Davis was story editor) and directing, including in 1967 a six-part Doctor Who story, The Enemy of the World. This starred Patrick Troughton, an old friend from BBC Children’s Department plays, in the dual role of the Doctor and the global dictator Salamander. Letts would later recount how he became Troughton’s sounding board as the actor contemplated the punishing weekly production-line schedule of Doctor Who – then made in over forty half-hours a year, with location filming fitted in around studio sessions on what had originally been thought of as the actors’ days off – and with his demands for a shorter production block for his third year, prepared the ground for the seasons of between twenty and twenty-six weeks in which Doctor Who was broadcast in the 1970s.

Letts’s association with the BBC Children’s Department of the 1950s probably influenced his appointment as producer of Doctor Who. The Children’s Department had been broken up during 1963, its staff and surviving programmes scattered elsewhere. Blue Peter, initiated in 1958, went to the Women’s Department (renamed the Family Department); Crackerjack and broad responsibility for children’s entertainment programmes passed to the grown-up Light Entertainment Department. Children’s drama staff members were transferred to the newly expanded Drama Group, which was already planning Doctor Who for a family audience which would cross the generation gap. Among the producer-directors who moved from Children’s was Shaun Sutton, who had directed Barry Letts in The Silver Sword in 1957. At the Drama Group he gained a reputation for managing crises, becoming Head of Serials in 1966 when Gerald Savory was transferred to plays at short notice, and later acted as Head of Drama Group in 1967 when Sydney Newman left to head the production division of the Associated British Picture Corporation.

When he appointed Barry Letts producer of Doctor
Who in October 1969, Sutton had been permanent Head of Drama Group for only a few months. He had many other administrative issues to deal with and his old colleague Letts had experience of Doctor Who's target audience of 8-14 year-olds as well as knowing a television studio from both sides of the camera.

Few veteran fans would disagree with the statement that decisions made by Barry Letts in his first few months as producer probably saved Doctor Who. The background to his appointment is well-known, but is worth recalling. Jon Pertwee had been cast as the Doctor by Peter Bryant, who with script editor Derrick Sherwin had devised the new format in which the Doctor, exiled to Earth, would work as scientific adviser to the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce (UNIT). However, the Bryant and Sherwin 1968/69 season had demonstrated a great deal of drift. After The Invasion at the end of 1968, which introduced UNIT, the series could be accused of marking time on screen until Troughton’s exit at the end of The War Games in June 1969. Behind the scenes a series of scripts collapsed, with crisis management being delegated to Terrance Dicks, who had been brought in as assistant and possible successor to Sherwin early in 1968. An industrial dispute in late summer 1969 forced Sherwin, acting as producer while Peter Bryant was ill, to make all of Jon Pertwee’s first story, Spearhead from Space, on film. Just as Bryant returned to work, he and Sherwin were transferred to troubleshoot detective series Paul Temple. The first story that Barry Letts produced, Doctor Who and the Silurians, was thus the first story which involved studio scenes shot in colour. Letts immediately showed he could reconcile the interests of different production departments in the BBC, salvaging cave sets which had not been completed as planned and which were almost unusable.

**Balancing the elements**

The last story of the first Pertwee season, Inferno, saw Letts take over as director when Douglas Camfield fell ill during the first studio session. It was also the first story commissioned under Letts’s producership, and it’s tempting to see the emphasis on the strength of the relationships between the Doctor and the Brigadier and the Doctor and Liz as evidence of Letts’s influence. In the earlier stories of the season Liz and the Doctor combine a professional regard with a light-humoured fondness, whereas the Doctor and the Brigadier are often antagonistic. It’s possible to interpret Inferno as showing the Doctor learning to appreciate his associates on the Earth to which he is exiled, after being forced to compare them with their counterparts in the militarist republic. The story ends with a grudging note of warmth from the Doctor to the Brigadier; it’s a self-serving moment, but Pertwee – and the Doctor – frame it as forgivable self-aware desperation. It’s moments like this which became the basis for the future development of the Doctor-Brigadier relationship.

In practical terms Letts realised that the series had to play to the strengths of its star. He defended Pertwee from those among his superiors who wanted Pertwee replaced by another actor, perhaps Alfie Bass, and while devising a possible replacement series also advocated the retention of Doctor Who with a revised format which seems to have drawn on Pertwee’s experience as a leading member of ensemble casts in radio comedies such as The Navy Lark and Waterlogged Spa. The ‘UNIT family’ of the Brigadier, Jo Grant, Captain Yates and Sergeant Benton was born. Time/space travel was restored to the series, first by proxy through the introduction of the Master and then with the Doctor’s ability to travel in the TARDIS cautiously and gradually restored, allowing for experiments with the budget as well as a wish to avoid a repeat of the drastic format change of 1970. Terrance Dicks, of course, remained script editor; he found Letts provided a more congenial working environment than had Bryant and Sherwin, and Dicks’s highly interventionist level of script editing helped maintain what became a distinctive style.

It’s not going too far to say that Barry Letts with Terrance Dicks developed a distinct and functional philosophy for Doctor Who. When Letts took over, Doctor Who had long drifted away from any reputation for the avant garde it might have enjoyed under Verity Lambert. As far as BBC management were concerned, stability in terms of audience figures had been achieved by a concentration on conservative adventure stories under the producership of Innes Lloyd, combined with a more populist and less agitational contemporaneity (to use a favourite term of Doctor Who’s co-creator Sydney Newman). Letts did nothing to endanger this boat, but he made substantial improvements to the vessel so it could successfully navigate more challenging waters without alarming its audience. Whereas much of the Troughton era was pessimistic about the future, Letts
engaged with contemporary concerns. *Colony in Space* isolates and contrasts two distinct strands in colonialism: those who have left their home because they reject its values and want to start again, and those who just want to extend the worst of their home culture. *The Green Death* is a self-avowed ecological fable. *The Mind of Evil, The Daemons, The Time Monster, Planet of the Spiders* and to some extent *Death to the Daleks* all deal with different aspects of ESP, column inches on which filled up newspaper cuttings libraries in the 1970s. Continued interest in the space race in the early 1970s, with pictures of Apollo and Soyuz craft filling boys’ bedroom walls, no doubt contributed towards the spacecraft-heavy *Frontier in Space.*

Reassessing the future through the fears of the present, rather than dramatising fears about the future, allowed Letts to return *Doctor Who* to an optimistic outlook close, perhaps, to that intended by its creators. Fear was to be overcome not through defeating the enemy through force or willpower so much as through understanding the nature of a threat and how one could make peace with it. Time and time again, the third Doctor offers his opponents the chance to accept that both they and he are in the same predicament. The protective, avuncular side of his character, often obscured in the first Pertwee season, was brought out by Jo and coloured his attitude to human beings and the alien cultures encountered. When his exile is rescinded at the end of *The Three Doctors,* he doesn’t isolate himself from his human friends; it’s implied throughout season ten that the return of the Doctor and Jo to UNIT HQ would follow a successful visit to Metebelis Three. When the Doctor loses Jo in *The Green Death,* he loses a window into himself. Though he readily accepts Sarah Jane Smith as his new travelling companion, they never seem quite as close, and Sarah (one suspects to the unbridled joy of the writers) is never granted the immunity from hypnotism or possession granted to Jo by the Doctor in *Terror of the Autons.* By the end of the third Doctor’s life, he is calling the Brigadier by his first name. Critics certainly have a point when they say that the Brigadier had well before *Planet of the Spiders* been reduced to the role of a comedy foil, but the antagonism by which the relationship between the Doctor and the Brigadier was marked in the first Pertwee season could not have been sustained, and the change, viewed over several years, formed a kind of character development. It’s tempting to compare the third Doctor’s increasing willingness to acknowledge that he takes the side of humanity to a possible humanization of the first Doctor under the influence of Ian and Barbara.

One world, many people, no BOSS

As expressed in *Doctor Who and the Daemons,* the Doctor endures because he knows how to make friends on a basis of equality and mutual respect, whatever someone’s background, outlook and intelligence. This is an appropriate message for early Saturday evening, when the target family audience watched *Doctor Who* over the proverbial beans-on-toast, licking their wounds away from the rough-and-tumble of school and work. The Doctor’s life becomes an essay in self-discovery as well as in the education of others. Jo Grant, underqualified and naive, whose career is dependent upon family connections, becomes self-reliant not just because of the Doctor’s guidance but because she learns to hold on to her natural optimism in the face of previously unimagined horrors. The Doctor learns to be patient and to appreciate the good in his Earthbound predication. The protective, avuncular side of his character, often obscured in the first Pertwee season, was brought out by Jo and coloured his attitude to human beings and the alien cultures encountered. When his exile is rescinded at the end of *The Three Doctors,* he doesn’t isolate himself from his human friends; it’s implied throughout season ten that the return of the Doctor and Jo to UNIT HQ would follow a successful visit to Metebelis Three. When the Doctor loses Jo in *The Green Death,* he loses a window into himself. Though he readily accepts Sarah Jane Smith as his new travelling companion, they never seem quite as close, and Sarah (one suspects to the unbridled joy of the writers) is never granted the immunity from hypnotism or possession granted to Jo by the Doctor in *Terror of the Autons.* By the end of the third Doctor’s life, he is calling the Brigadier by his first name. Critics certainly have a point when they say that the Brigadier had well before *Planet of the Spiders* been reduced to the role of a comedy foil, but the antagonism by which the relationship between the Doctor and the Brigadier was marked in the first Pertwee season could not have been sustained, and the change, viewed over several years, formed a kind of character development. It’s tempting to compare the third Doctor’s increasing willingness to acknowledge that he takes the side of humanity to a possible humanization of the first Doctor under the influence of Ian and Barbara.

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limits to the producer’s intentions. The rapport between Jon Pertwee and Katy Manning was obviously more powerful than that between Katy Manning and Richard Franklin, so the planned romance between Jo and Captain Yates never got very far. Nevertheless, as Letts’s producership progresses the disconnected adventures of the previous era – including the first Pertwee season, mainly planned under the aegis of Peter Bryant and Derrick Sherwin – are replaced by a greater sense of cohesion which recalls the first few years of the series where the audience was invited to have a close relationship with carefully constructed consistent characters and share their adventures. This isn’t just a matter of the UNIT ‘family’, but also the relating of UNIT to the real world by placing the regulars in British army uniform rather than the disliked quasi-futuristic ‘Mothercare’ outfits commissioned by his predecessors, and in the second Pertwee season giving UNIT an easily identifiable objective by making the hunt for the Master its main priority. Beyond UNIT, the second Pertwee season sees the Time Lords mentioned much more than previously, and in the remaining three years, as space and time travel comes again to characterize the series, old monsters start to appear again, Daleks, Ice Warriors, Sea Devils being like the familiar turns cropping up in odd situations who populate the radio comedies in which Pertwee made his name. The development of the series’ mythology under Letts thus helped play to his star’s strengths, just as Letts ensured that the stories in which the old monsters appeared were consistent with the moral outlook which he thought the series should have.

Barry Letts was a good manager. It’s easier for the viewer to assess his output in terms of creative style, but the observations of those with whom he worked combine with the impression he gave in interviews and latterly in DVD commentaries of someone with an uncommonly balanced perspective on the world. He could note achievements quietly and deal with failures without browbeating. Mistakes were to be learned from. In an age when television was still acknowledged to be a great experiment, he acknowledged that he made several without trying to defend them. Defences could be made: the replacement of Delia Derbyshire’s tape-edited sound realisation of the theme music with a new one generated on a synthesiser, intended for the 1972/1973 season but vetoed by head of serials Ronnie Marsh, kept pace with changes in electronic music in the early 1970s. The technical innovations behind the scale models of dinosaurs commissioned for Invasion of the Dinosaurs failed to translate to the screen, but only trying them out could reveal this. People, though, respected Barry Letts because he didn’t try to bully them into things they didn’t want to do and worked with their strengths instead of trying to build upon weaknesses. He won the confidence of Jon Pertwee by emphasising what they had in common – they were both actors trying to get through middle life and do the best work they could. Others found under Letts that finding fulfilment from what one did in the office and the studio was better than treating both as interludes between drowning sorrows at the bar of the BBC club or the Bush pub as was the norm in some previous and subsequent regimes.

Regeneration

Barry Letts turned Doctor Who around, restoring it by 1972 to audience viewing figures of nine million and more, not seen since 1965. By the end of his tenure in the producer’s chair it was being written about as a reliable cultural touchstone in the quality press. Following his departure from the production office the series took turns which made successive department heads nostalgic for Barry Letts as a safe pair of hands. He returned for the 1980/81 season, Tom Baker’s last, as executive producer, supervising his successor but two, John Nathan-Turner. He said little about the experience. The script editor of the 1980/81 series, Christopher H. Bidmead, often cites Barry Letts as a authority for his move to more didactic storytelling in the interests of familiarizing children with current science, which Bidmead
believed was the original purpose of the series. His impression of Letts's period as producer omits Letts's willingness to incorporate pop culture obsession with the New Age – two successive season finales (to use modern terminology) mentioned the fall of Atlantis – and its sympathetic outlook on some aspects of the ‘hippyness’ which Bidmead decried. Bidmead also views Letts as a cohort in his war on the influence of 'Eastern religions' in 1970s Doctor Who. Where this leaves Letts’s Buddhism has never been made clear.

In any case, Barry Letts had other things to concentrate upon. After a period as an assistant head of serials, he took over as producer of BBC 1’s Sunday evening family drama strand, the classic serial. These had been inherited from the old Children’s Department in the 1960s, and in the mid-1970s when Barry Letts took over were regarded as the lightweight cousins to the more prestigious adaptations of literary classics made for late evening viewing on BBC 2. Under Barry Letts’s stewardship the Sunday serials continued to aim at the same audience, but they lost any inferiority complex they may have had. By the middle of his tenure, they were winning nominations for Emmys and BAFTAs, and in 1981 he won a daytime Emmy for A Tale of Two Cities. The reinvigorated classic serial changed minds and launched careers – Letts’s 1977 Nicholas Nickleby starred Nigel Havers. After leaving the post he returned to directing, including several episodes of EastEnders in the 1990s. I seem to remember a reference to him having redefined the programme's house style. He also taught on the BBC directors' course; those who have the BBC DVD release of Carnival of Monsters will have seen his tutorial on how to use Colour Separation Overlay, dating from his time as producer of Doctor Who, and it was perhaps appropriate that he ended his BBC career teaching. How many familiar names from today’s television credits today benefited from his advice?

Barry Letts never distanced himself from Doctor Who. He wrote two radio series for the BBC in the 1990s, one for the old Radio 5, the second for Radio 2, starring Jon Pertwee, Elisabeth Sladen and Nicholas Courtney. It seemed odd that someone who had caught the mood of the times so well in the early 1970s should be asked to serve up the old mixture as nostalgia, but such a decision seems sadly representative of corporate attitudes to Doctor Who during its wilderness years, at least during the pre-TV movie period.

I was at the Panopticon 1996 convention in Coventry, a few months after the TV movie was broadcast, and attended the joint Barry Letts and Terrance Dicks panel early on the Saturday morning, during which they were asked their opinions about the sole McGann adventure. The criticisms formed an exchange, Terrance becoming more agitated while Barry remained softly spoken and self-moderating, ultimately stopping and holding his peace while Terrance told how they walked out of the launch party soon after the screening because the film was ‘a load of crap!’ There were cheers and applause; not necessarily because people agreed with Terrance’s view, but because this was Terrance speaking his mind as part of the Terrance and Barry double act, forged over two decades of appearances in front of fan audiences, where Barry was the sensible and responsible figure whose judgements were always diplomatically pronounced. Letts was more circumspect about the 2005 revival, to my knowledge always having praised it in public, and wishing that he had been fifteen years younger and could have lobbied for the chance to direct an episode.
The winning piece from our “Write something about Doctor Who” competition, Thomas Keyton presents a brief argument against David Tennant. He has promised not to mention Rose.

Lack of difference

Season 1 of New Who had a lot of promise. In *The End of the World*, it turns out that by the year 5 billion (or 5.5/Apple/26), there is only one genetically pure human left and other than Cassandra, the rich and powerful of the universe are all aliens. In *The Unquiet Dead*, Nine learns of the (supposed) plight of the Gelth and supports the idea of letting them inhabit human corpses. As he points out to Rose, this is essentially the same as humans receiving organ transplants. In a few sentences, we see the Doctor's compassion for the casualties of the Time War and his alien morality, seeing corpses as objects whose potential use to the Gelth outweighs human sentimentality and feelings of "ickiness". In *The Long Game*, humans have direct neural interfaces to the future version of the internet and can essentially control their technology with the power of their minds; and if it weren't for the Daleks' manipulations, their technology would be even more advanced. Similarly, their society is supposed to be fully integrated with several alien species. In *The Empty Child*, we are introduced to Captain Jack Harkness and learn that by the 51st century everyone’s omnisexual and perfectly willing to sleep with aliens. Unfortunately, most of this promise was lost after the Doctor's regeneration. In *New Earth*, it turns out that the wonderfully diverse universe hinted at in *The End of the World* has pretty much been forgotten about, and we have a whole planet of supposedly extinct humans. Not only does humanity still exist as a species, but it turns out that they can’t cope with not having a homeworld so they terraformed New Savannah, the Catkind's homeworld, and renamed it New Earth. In *The Lazarus Experiment*, Professor Lazarus’ research into extending the human lifespan is seen as a bad thing even before the professor transforms into a badly-CGIed scorpion thing. In *Utopia*, we learn that humans have had many shapes but can’t seem to cope with this, regularly returning to their original forms. In *Partners in Crime*, the Doctor interferes with what could have been a profitable symbiosis with the Adipose not because it’s a fixed point in history but because it’s illegal. Since when has the Doctor been interested in law-enforcement? And finally, we look at the Doctor's costumes. One to Eight have all been eccentric (and magnificent, in the cases of Four, Six, and Eight) in their dress sense. Nine's was fairly mundane but suited him as the damaged survivor of the Time War (plus we can make up theories about how the jacket was Fitz's). Ten's clothes, on the other hand, let him fit in with contemporary Western society. They're neither the clothes of an eccentric nor an outsider, and they don’t fit the Doctor.

Lack of heroism

The circumstances of Nine's regeneration are interesting. As part of his character arc, the Doctor's choice not to sacrifice any humans still alive on Earth to kill the Daleks makes sense. On the other hand, it's unbelievably stupid. Firstly, by the time the Doctor had finished building the delta wave generator, he was the only non-Dalek left alive on the Game Station...
and most if not all humans on Earth were probably killed by the Dalek bombardment. Secondly, the arrival of the Bad Wolf was totally unexpected. As far as the Doctor knew, he was the only person capable of stopping the Daleks from conquering the universe. Technically this is a failing of Nine rather than Ten, but the circumstances of the regeneration seem to have had some effect, as we learn in *Journey's End*, where the Doctor condemns Metacrisis-Doctor for actually saving the universe from the Daleks’ Reality Bomb. The Doctor had no plan, and as far as I can tell, all he was prepared to do was shout at Davros a lot as every universe burned.

**Anthropocentrism**

Where to start? In *The Christmas Invasion*, the Doctor’s perfectly happy for the Sycorax to go and attack other civilisations just as long as they tell people that Earth is defended. In *The Satan Pit*, he saves the humans but despite having a time machine that can materialise around objects larger than itself, claims not to have been able to save the Ood. In *The Sound of Drums*, he tries to persuade the Master to “fight across the constellations”, letting their feud spill over as collateral damage to who knows how many innocent civilisations, just as long as Earth was safe. In Season 4 he showed no concern over the disappearances of Adipose III and Pyrovile, which in the latter case would just seem like common courtesy. For all he knows, he’s just killed the last Pyroviles in the universe – the least he could do is go back to see what happened to their homeworld and try to save a few. It’s only when the Earth is taken that he deems the matter important enough to take to the Shadow Proclamation. Finally (so far), there’s his horrendous speech in *Planet of the Dead* to the annoying humans on the bus, wherein he claims that the ordinary events of their lives are more important than their being on an alien world. Yes, they’re scared, and yes, he’s trying to calm them down, but when looked at along with all the other horrendous anthropocentrism over the past three seasons it seems that the Doctor thinks that the mundane features of human life should take precedence over discovering that traversable wormholes exist and that there is at least one inhabitable alien world somewhere out there.

The Doctor is an alien. He spends his life exploring the universe and discovering new wonders. He’s visited thousands of civilisations from pretty much every point in history. He should not value humanity above everyone else.

**Useless Daleks**

*Dalek* made them scary. *Bad Wolf/Parting of the Ways* capitalised on this with a fleet of them destroying Earth, killing everyone on the Game Station, being capable of conquering the universe, and only killed by a human/TARDIS/Vortex hybrid. Then came *Army of Ghosts/Doomsday*, where despite the fact that four Daleks are effortlessly killing everything in their path, they gratuitously unleash an army (and oh how I wanted the Time Lord science of the Genesis Ark to be something clever and biodata-y). Then we were “treated” to *Daleks in Manhattan/Evolution of the Daleks*, in which we learn that when attacking Hooverville, Daleks are incapable of hitting anyone, and that Dalek Caan can’t be bothered to kill the Dalek Humans until it’s too late for Thay and Jast. And finally we had *The Stolen Earth/Journey's End*, in which the Daleks have helpfully returned to using a single power source like in *The Daleks* so that the DoctorDonna can spin them round and kill them all just by flipping switches that Daleks are physically incapable of activating. One could say that on a meta level this is the Doctor’s greatest victory over the Daleks, but it’s just embarrassing.

**His character**

He’s got all the flaws and few of the good points of the Doctor’s character. He’s smug, arrogant, flippant, easily-angered, and only cares about evil when it happens to him or to humanity (at risk of breaking my promise not to cite Rose, see his infuriating cliquishness with her throughout Season 2) – and even then, he’ll forgive the Master and keep him in the TARDIS forever and ever, and while there’s blatantly been something going on between him and the Master since *The Mind of Evil*, no previous Doctor overlooked the fact that the Master’s a cruel, sadistic psychopath with a god complex. Actually, this may explain a lot – Ten sentences the Family of Blood to horrific fates worse than death for doing little more than any other villains, doesn’t seem to care much about what happens to non-humans, and thinks of himself as the ultimate moral authority. No other Doctor is like this – even One, Six, and Seven, with their crotchety old man, egotistical bombastic eyesore, and seemingly-callous manipulative personalities all have a vast well of compassion, kindness, and wisdom. I don’t really see much of that in Ten’s personality. However, I wasn’t anticipating the explicit portrayal of Crazy Hubristic Ten in *The Waters of Mars*. It’s reassuring to know that there was a reason for the Doctor starting to act like the Master, but it was still unnerving watching three seasons of the Doctor behaving like that with apparently no sense that a hero shouldn’t.

So there you have it. Five reasons why I won’t be missing David Tennant as he leaves the TARDIS at the end of this year. Here’s hoping Matt Smith and Steven Moffatt make Eleven’s time in the TARDIS high-quality fun.
Time and Relationships Diverting in Space
Your glorious editor provides a brief ramble through the common tropes of the work of Steven Moffat.

Steven Moffat has been writing television since the late 80's and though not quite as prolific as some well-known writers, his body of work is fairly impressive. His first major commission came with the hugely successful Press Gang, a children's show with more guts than most 'grown-up' shows and more darkness than any number of Harry Potter sequels. He then moved onto sit-coms such as the semi-autobiographical Joking Apart, a few episodes of the Dawn French led Murder Most Horrid, and Chalk.

Wide-spread popularity came in the new millennium with Coupling, possibly best introduced by IMDb with, “On average, men and women think about sex every six seconds. Shorten that to every second, and you've got Coupling.” Off this reputation, he was approached to write Jekyll, a 'sequel' to Robert Lewis Stevenson's classic tale, which accumulated praise.

However, we can imagine he never considered himself a true success until he could fulfil his childhood dream and finally write for Doctor Who. Though he technically had written an episode for Children in Need in 1997 with The Curse of Fatal Death, he couldn't add to the canon until RTD asked him to write his first Hugo Award winning script, The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances, introducing us to Captain Jack Harkness on a canvas of the London Blitz. He won further Hugos with The Girl in the Fireplace and Blink, but only received a nomination for Silence in the Library/Forest of the Dead.

Moffat's Who episodes are among some of the most memorable and popular in the returned series and the news that he would be taking over the reins as script editor in 2010 was generally met with excitement and high expectations. Certain themes and settings often recur in the work of a writer; favoured plots and character types return for another lap. Which areas has Steven Moffat left well trodden, and what does this tell us about his future Who?

Of all his work, Jekyll shares the most with Doctor Who; both fall squarely within genre television, aim to build suspense, and have a lead character with an uncertain past. There is of course a great difference in tone as Doctor Who is a family program to be broadcast around 7pm whilst Jekyll was a distinctly adult drama with all the sex, violence, and swearing that comes after the watershed. Regardless, some features leak through. One of the primary mysteries in Jekyll is Tom Jackman's origin. Flashbacks to a conversation with Robert Lewis Stevenson and Victorian England introduce the possibility that somehow Tom is actually the original Dr. Jekyll on which the famous story was based that has slipped through time to the modern age.

This more fluid use of time is common in Moffat's genre work and provides an insight into what about Doctor Who fascinated his young self. He mixes past, present, and future in his Hugo winning scripts,
surprising amount of respect, building deep and its time, thoughtful plots.

age, this is mostly due to his generally more complex, though the joke-per-minute count has decreased with communication. This pervades all of his work, and moment and sarcasm is the default form of writing style, where one-liners can attack at any time not moving in a perfectly straight line. It is in his cinema, but will change the channel at the first sign of executives) that will lap up hordes of 'common man' (as described by TV allegiance, but not enough to put off the vengeful Subtext's helmet translation betray his true fi sneak in and simple devices such as Captain realm of the real. Occasional references to classic sci-writing sit-coms. In these he stays firmly within the

Most of Moffat's TV career, though, has been spent to position a trapdoor to their advantage. Time Crash uses the more traditional Doctor Who conceit of different regenerations meeting. Moffat's narratives remember the TARDIS is more than just a way to get to a planet at the start of the episode and the past is more than a place where flashbacks happen.

Jekyll demonstrates another common motif – the monster in plain sight. This is most overt in Mr. Hyde, the outwardly normal superhuman that, if not immoral, is at least working off a distinctly shorter list of moral qualms than the rest of us. A variation on this trope is the corporation that wants to capture Hyde; an seemingly beneficent employer trying to help Tom through his problems disguising an amoral corporation that will do (and does) absolutely anything to control Hyde and the advances he represents. Moffat's Who work goes on to make monsters out of a child in a gas mask, statues, and good old fashioned darkness, taking advantage of the fact that it is generally easier to scare children with something they think they know then a man in a mask. These villains are all the more memorable because they can latch onto an everyday object and haunt you for the rest of your life.

There is the most to potentially learn about Moffat from Press Gang as it is the only example of Moffat writing a serialised drama. Arguably years ahead of its time, Press Gang treated its young audience with a surprising amount of respect, building deep and varied characters, never shying away from a relevant topic just because it might be too dark, and never talking down to its viewers. The format is even similar to Doctor Who, with a recurring cast in basically stand-alone episodes held together by continuous character development and subtle continuity references. From this I would expect the new season of Who to spend more time concentrating on the characters of the Doctor, through his relationship with Prof. Song (who will probably show up whenever an episode could do with a B plot) and his new companion.

Previous seasons have developed companions as if they'd been on a particularly good backpacking holiday – a trip that opens their eyes to the world around them, convincing he/she that they need to live life to the full and do something important and that old quarrels are irrelevant compared to the problems of a planet. These stories concentrated more on how the Doctor could fall in love or how a companion could fall for the Doctor and how this affected their ability to run away from Daleks. Though Moffat is certainly interested in this, it's been done now. I would expect (and hope) to see a more troubled companion (as RTD has gone out in a blast of angsty Doctor pondering his purpose in the universe) whose adventures help them work through their issues. This would hopefully extend to the new characters of each episode, which too often in RTD's tenure are characterised, used, and killed with a single line of dialogue.

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Most of Moffat's TV career, though, has been spent writing sit-coms. In these he stays firmly within the realm of the real. Occasional references to classic sci-fi sneak in and simple devices such as Captain Subtext's helmet translation betray his true allegiance, but not enough to put off the vengeful hordes of 'common man' (as described by TV executives) that will lap up Transformers in the cinema, but will change the channel at the first sign of time not moving in a perfectly straight line. It is in his sit-com work that Moffat perfected his fast-paced writing style, where one-liners can attack at any moment and sarcasm is the default form of communication. This pervades all of his work, and though the joke-per-minute count has decreased with age, this is mostly due to his generally more complex, thoughtful plots.

However, it is worth remembering the Steven Moffat is a surprisingly genre savy writer. His work is filled with twists and turns and though there are similarities between some of his characters and plots, each new version is different enough to provide a unique situation (and a challenge to write). We should be able to assume the dialogue in the new series will be that little bit Wittier with his oversight, continuity references will be thrown in wherever they fit, and some of the tropes I mention here might just crop up, but as the few episodes he's already written show, he doesn't repeat himself. He kicks and bends the devices of the genre into a new shape that's more interesting to work with, and surely that's what we all want from television in the end – something new.
The Mighty 200

The President of the High Council of the Oxford Doctor Who Society (of Rassilon), Jonathan Nash, presents his opinions on the hefty canon he commands. You are recommended, but not obliged, to agree.

Recently, Doctor Who Magazine decided to do a survey of all 200 Doctor Who stories – or did they? And no this isn’t an article discussing whether we are all figments of our own imagination. This article will examine whether there actually are 200 stories, whether they are actually any good, and whether the fans who filled in the survey were completely pissed when they did so.

So, how many stories of Doctor Who have there actually been? The ‘official’ view is that there are 200, but this does require some slightly controversial (OK, it’s not exactly a racism debate – but fans can be very fierce) rules to be applied. The first is to ignore Shada, a story never finished due to industrial action.

The next is to count The Trial of a Time Lord as one story rather than four (as some fans decide it should be, presumably as they cannot count fourteen parts). For so-called ‘nu-Who’, Utopia/The Sound of Drums/Last of the Time Lords is one story, but Turn Left and The Stolen Earth/Journey’s End are two.

Count up all the stories that remain, and you get 200 good (more or less) stories throughout 46 years (is it just me, or does that sound remarkably small). We have them ranked in order of fan popularity. Now, I will pick out all of the interesting bits, and say how much I either agree or disagree with them. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to Doctor Who!

200 – The Twin Dilemma (3.844/10)
Unsurprisingly, this was not the most popular story, but some sections of the society would not agree with its placing at the bottom of the table. Despite Colin Baker’s valiant attempt to make the dismal material watchable, the Doctor’s latest form comes off as somewhat unconventional at best. Maybe he thinks that strangling Peri will atone for the cardinal sin of touching her leg in the previous story, The Caves of Androzani?

199 – Timelash (4.237/10)
Personally, I don’t see what people hate about this story. OK, Peri reverts to 60s-companion mode (screamer), the authorities on Karfel are really thick, the ‘celebrity appearance’ (a rarity in the ‘classic’ Who) made HG Wells look unimaginative, and it retcons a major plot point of Terror of the Zygons. However, the Borad is one of the series’ most impressive prosthetics, the Doctor is at his most mysterious (apparently he’ll explain the resolution of the climax later), and there’s a Portaloo full of tinsel. Oh, they call it a ‘time tunnel’, but we know better.
183 – The Sensorites 5.406
182 – The Mutants 5.431
181 – The King’s Demons 5.434
180 – Delta and the Bannermen 5.446
179 – The Monster of Peladon 5.469
178 – The Web Planet 5.469
177 – Arc of Infinity 5.492
176 – Silver Nemesis 5.526
175 – The Gunfighters 5.528
174 – The Power of Kroll 5.540
173 – Four to Doomsday 5.547
172 – Galaxy 4 5.551
171 – Colony in Space 5.642
170 – The Happiness Patrol 5.666
169 – Terminus 5.667
168 – The Armageddon Factor 5.694
167 – Nightmare of Eden 5.703
166 – The Krotons 5.719
165 – The Long Game 5.805
164 – The Invisible Enemy 5.810
163 – Planet of Giants 5.817
162 – The Savages 5.825
161 – Attack of the Cybermen 5.848
160 – The Keys of Marinus 5.966
159 – The Smugglers 6.006
158 – Inside the Spaceship 6.015
157 – The Chase 6.017
156 – The Wheel in Space 6.065
155 – The Invasion of Time 6.073
154 – The Ark 6.080
153 – Love & Monsters 6.121
152 – Daleks in Manhattan/Evolution of the Daleks 6.143
151 – The Celestial Toymaker 6.148
150 – The Lazarus Experiment 6.182
149 – The Leisure Hive 6.191
148 – The Mark of the Rani 6.224
147 – The Sun Makers 6.227
146 – Battlefield 6.280
145 – The Highlanders 6.290
144 – The Reign of Terror 6.337
143 – New Earth 6.339
142 – The Trial of a Time Lord 6.340
141 – Boom Town 6.341
140 – The Doctor’s Daughter 6.360
139 – The Enemy of the World 6.366
138 – The Idiot’s Lantern 6.384

198 – Time and the Rani (4.247/10)
‘Tumultuous buffeting’ (as the Target novelisation describes it) and Kate O’Mara dressed up as Bonnie Langford. What more could you want?

195 – The Space Pirates (4.451/10)
*Doctor Who* writers’ room, late 1960s:
**Writer:** So, what’s my brief for this story?
**Producer:** Well, we want a story about popular things.
**Writer:** Space is popular. Kids love stories with lots of planets and aliens.
**Story editor:** How about pirates? Kids love pirates!
**Producer:** That’s it! We’ll put the two together...*The Space Pirates!*

193 – Paradise Towers (4.796/10)
I’m sorry, but this story has two cannibalistic grannies being eaten by a futuristic hoover. How is it not number 1? Also, one of the cliffhangers has the same two grannies threatening to eat...Bonnie Langford?!
There’s no meat on her!

192 – Fear Her (4.890/10)
This must have sounded like a great idea at the time – a creepy child, a scribble monster, and Huw Edwards. Add Billie Piper with a pick-axe and it degenerates from creepy to incredibly weird. And just how did the Doctor draw that torch?

190 – The Space Museum (5.042/10)
I think this is only unpopular because it has the word ‘space’ in the title and is essentially a lot of corridor-running. However, it makes you realise exactly how to beat a mind probe (No! Not the mind probe!) – take the piss.

185 – Warriors of the Deep (5.337/10)
Four words – bright, green, pantomime, horse.
Two more – overly, lit.
Oh dear.

180 – Delta and the Bannermen (5.446/10)
Not the greatest story ever (obviously), but this serial does have possibly the best unintentional foreshadowing event ever – unusually intelligent bees (Melissa Majoria anyone?).

*Tides of Time 33 • Hilary Term 2009 • 14*
172 – Galaxy 4 (5.551/10)
A planet apparently inhabited by beautiful blonde women...good job it was the first Doctor and not the ninth or tenth that came here.

179 – The Happiness Patrol (5.666/10)
I can perfectly understand this story being fairly low down on the charts. Not due to any particular flaw, unless you happen to dislike the mascots of sweet manufacturers turning evil and killing people. Twenty years later, and some fans are still mentally scarred by the KandyMan.

151 – The Celestial Toymaker (6.148/10)
Starting to speed up (due to both a rising word count and an imminent deadline), we reach the quarter mark. And one of the best stories ever! I honestly have no idea how this incredibly inventive story came this low...especially considering that fan popularity has spawned at least four sequels in varying mediums (and one near return to television).

142 – The Trial Of A Time Lord (6.340/10)
Starting with one of the best model sequences ever, the longest yet Doctor Who story gets off to a great start. Another noticeable fact is the large number of Colin Baker close-ups (see below or certain members of the society at any meeting).

117 – Black Orchid (6.794/10)
Many describe this as 'Doctor Who you can watch with your mother' – 'The Unicorn And The Wasp sans monsters'. Which just happens to have a disfigured man as the main antagonist. Cheery stuff!

107 – The Next Doctor (6.956/10)
Around the halfway mark, there are a lot of stories which have the unfortunate legacy of being ignored. And, as we all know, if there's one thing worse than being talked about, it's being forgotten. To a certain extent this applies to The Next Doctor, as it followed the madcap silliness of Journey's End, and was swiftly followed by the reveal of who the next Doctor actually is, making the resolution to the hype, despite being very dramatic and emotional (and possibly a little bit silly, but it's RTD), a disappointment.

97 – The Romans (7.073/10)
A well-deserved spot for a brilliant comedy. No monsters, but plenty of drama and laughs, and a brilliant script by Donald Cotton.

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<th>No.</th>
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<td>The Mind of Evil</td>
<td>7.134</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>The Sontaran Stratagem/The Poison Sky</td>
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75 – The Time Meddler (7.281/10)
Landmarks abound as we plough through the upper half. 78 shows the Ice Warriors’ debut, and the Face of Boe dies at 74. Perhaps the most influential of these landmarks, however, was the revelation that the Doctor is not alone (for the first time, though it is a delightful coincidence that Gridlock is the next on the chart), and that there are other Time Lords out there. And yes, we didn’t know he was a Time Lord back then. And yes, we had already met Susan. But the viewers didn’t care, and it still works brilliantly, so much so that it is easy to see echoes within Utopia.

51 – Terror of the Autons (7.700/10)
Another landmark – the first story for the Master! In other news, Jo Grant appeared for the first time, and the Autons returned for their last ‘classic’ story (alert viewers will have realised that Autons and the living shop window dummies from Rose are one and the same).

49 – Father’s Day (7.753/10)
Many fans were outraged at the announcement that Billie Piper would be playing the new Doctor’s first companion. Others were more annoyed at the presence of a family (which had never been done before). However, most were turned around by this episode with phenomenal acting from Billie, Shaun Dingwall (Pete), and Camille Coduri (the ever-lovable Jackie Tyler).

38 – The Five Doctors (8.027/10)
Multi-Doctor stories – everyone always wants them, but no-one ever seems to like them that much. But if you actually look past the Gell Guards, vomiting Cybermen and Androgums, there is usually a fairly cohesive plot and an enjoyable adventure. Except for Dimensions in Time. ‘Cos that was just rubbish (look on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yRtO8XtOyw if you don’t believe me [The editor cannot be held responsible for the side effects of following this link]).

26 – Horror of Fang Rock (8.228/10)
‘Everybody lives!’ This actually happens more times than you would think. The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances, Fear Her, Inside the Spaceship – they all have a death toll of exactly zero, but very few stories have only the Doctor and Co. walk away. Horror of Fang Rock is technically the only one (though the entire cast of The Keeper of Traken kick the bucket in the next story). This is also the only chance to see the Sontarans’ mortal enemies, the Rutans, in action. How are the Sontarans not all dead?

15 – Dalek (8.410/10)
Finally, after sixteen long wilderness years, the Daleks return!! And they can fly!!!! And it’s written by Rob Shearman (who, as we all know, is actually made of awesome)!!!!!!
11 – The Girl in the Fireplace (8.505/10)
How brilliant was this?! I have to admit, I wasn’t too keen on it to begin with, but on second watching, I loved every moment. This is Doctor Who you can laugh at, cry at, or cheer with – just what everyone needs at the weekend. Truly a great classic (Ok, it’s not really a classic yet. Ssh).

10 – Bad Wolf/The Parting of the Ways (8.514/10)

9 – The Robots of Death (8.683/10)

8 – City of Death (8.820/10)

7 – Pyramids of Mars (8.897/10)

6 – Human Nature/The Family of Blood (8.982/10)

5 – The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances (8.986/10)

4 – The Talons of Weng-Chiang (9.145/10)

3 – Genesis of the Daleks (9.155/10)

2 – Blink (9.161/10)

1 – The Caves of Androzani (9.164/10)

The Top Ten. How could it be possible to look at them individually? For me, there was only one surprising presence in the top ten, The Robots of Death. I haven’t actually seen it, but received fan wisdom (which isn’t very wise, but is often popular) tells me that its flaws are many. As I said, I cannot judge. Predictably, Blink is right near the top – in my opinion it should be lower. It may be very good, but does it stand up to second viewing in the way that, for example, Human Nature/ The Family of Blood does? The plot itself may seem exciting at the time, but not a lot actually happens, and there are no particularly emotional scenes. And the top spot? Well deserved – a thrilling, emotional ride, directed by the legendary Graeme Harper, director of, amongst others, Utopia and The Waters of Mars [The Editor points out that’s a total of 202 episodes with the recent specials].

An interesting thought to end on – the top story was transmitted immediately before the bottom. Just goes to show really – our beloved programme varies hugely, in style and pace. But it is very rarely below good – only 10 stories scored below five.

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Several years ago now, my sister was living at home while I was studying and then working in Oxford. My parents had satellite television, and my sister diligently recorded the Sunday morning compilations of *Doctor Who* off-air from UK Gold. (My college had satellite, but Matthew Sweet had got to the MCR's VCR first.) Occasionally, something would intervene and my sister would be unable to tape the programme. She would apologize over the phone, and on at least two occasions I was able to say: "Don't worry. It was only *Warriors of the Deep*.

A few weeks ago, I took advantage of a substantial discount at ASDA and acquired last year's 'Beneath the Surface' DVD set. I already had *Doctor Who and the Silurians* on video, but it's remarkable how DVD has inspired impatience with the fast-forwarding and rewinding of cassettes, and how all the dropout in VHS quality is somehow made more noticeable by the presence of the DVD. My copy of *The Sea Devils* had been mangled by a malfunctioning video player, so that was a much-missed gap in my collection filled; but I wouldn't really have objected to the omission of *Warriors of the Deep* if 2|Entertain hadn't decided to include the story in the set. Indeed, when I learned that they had, I even had the cruel thought that without it 2|Entertain would have been able to charge an extra £5 or so for the two earlier stories.

Indeed, even without aspersions on the quality of *Warriors of the Deep* as a contribution to televised *Doctor Who*, it's cut from different cloth to its two bedfellows in the 'Beneath the Surface' release. *Doctor Who and the Silurians* and *The Sea Devils* were broadcast two years apart, in 1970 and 1972 respectively; both star Jon Pertwee as the Doctor, and both were written by Malcolm Hulke. The stories are similar: a state-backed installation is undermined by attacks from reptilian people who dominated Earth in the age of the dinosaurs, and went into hibernation to avoid the Earth's impact with what became the moon; the Doctor seeks to bring peace between the reptiles and their mammalian successors, with little success. *Doctor Who and the Silurians* takes the measured, sober approach of season seven and does a lot to present the point of view of the non-human species, to a greater degree than any story since perhaps *The Sensorites* in 1964. *The Sea Devils* is a revised remake of the earlier story, adapted for the more frenetic format established for the series after the first Pertwee season, set around the Royal Navy (more
accessible, and perhaps susceptible to familiar condescension by the third Doctor, than the scientific research base of ...and the Silurians) and with human guilt in part displaced on to the Master.

**Warriors of the Deep**, by contrast, is the product of a later age. Made in summer 1983 for broadcast in 1984, it has a much less immediately commanding Doctor in Peter Davison and is written by Johnny Byrne. Given that Malcolm Hulke's novelizations Doctor Who and the Cave-Monsters and Doctor Who and the Sea-Devils had reworked the first two stories for publication by Target, and in the process made the Silurians and Sea Devils both much loved by early fandom and made the creatures very much Hulke's own, commissioning a story from another writer who was very much his own man was going to risk antagonizing the most vocal section of the audience as well as disappointing that proportion of the loyal audience who knew the stories from the novelizations.

**Warriors on the Cheap?**

The nickname 'Warriors on the Cheap' has circulated in fandom for years, and was noted by Lawrence Miles and Tat Wood in About Time 5; but it's unfair. **Warriors of the Deep** is an expensive story, and the money spent is visible on screen. There is extensive modelwork, particularly in the first episode, when the Silurian underwater craft is revealed. Use was made of a naval swimming pool, in an unintentional echo of the use of naval hardware and personnel by **The Sea Devils**, in order to effect the Doctor's underwater swim in parts one and two. There are a larger than usual number of non-human characters in full body suits, and the Myrka is one of the most complicated costumes ever built for the series. Studio space was hired at Shepperton for some scenes, rather than use the centrally funded Television Centre - though this was a consequence of the BBC's need to reallocate studio space at short notice to ease coverage of the 1983 general election, and producer John Nathan-Turner's understandable and commendable desire to save the story rather than just write it off as he might have been encouraged to do. Whether by design or by expediency, **Warriors of the Deep** was not cheap; yet it is difficult to hail the story as broadcast as anything but a failure.

**Warriors of the Deep** had ridden some of the publicity wave associated with the previous story, the twentieth anniversary special **The Five Doctors**. The Radio Times Twentieth Anniversary Special, for example, had included a feature on Tony Burrough's set design, making a virtue of how Burrough could create several different interiors by reassembling a small number of the same elements of set. Much of the first episode is devoted to showing off the scale and variety of the sets and the modelwork. Martin Bower, veteran of **Space 1999** and **Alien**, created the scene where the Silurian craft docks with the Sea Devil crater, an accomplished sequence which provides a last hurray for the use of expertise and techniques (and sometimes props) developed on Gerry Anderson series for ITV which enlivened earlier **Doctor Who**s such as **Frontier in Space** in 1973. There are some moments which were groundbreaking for their day in **Doctor Who** terms, such as the awakening of the Sea Devil leader Sauvix, whose eyes open as he is revived; while **The Visitation** had seen the first animatronic non-human face in **Doctor Who**, on the Terileptil leader, Sauvix's ability to blink moves **Doctor Who** that bit closer to the prosthetics seen in the post-2005 series.

Unfortunately the quality of the design helps expose the absence of a co-ordinated vision for the story. There is no consistency between the exterior (which seems closer to Byrne's original idea of somewhere neglected by its distant owners) and interior of the principal setting, the sea base, and the exterior itself seems too complicated anyway for somewhere which is meant to be hidden to enemy eyes. The production seems proud of the Sentinel Six model, which gets to fill both the TARDIS scanner and the television screen, has an exchange with the Doctor, and seems to be intended in story terms to provide some texture to the world in which the TARDIS had landed, but in the end serves a purpose which is really superfluous. It was part of John Nathan-Turner's agenda to make the Doctor appear vulnerable, and the interrogation and attack by Sentinel Six serves this purpose as well as providing an explanation as to why the TARDIS arrived on the sea base; but if the Doctor was intending to visit 2084 anyway, where the polarization between armed power blocs is the defining feature of Earth politics, then having him land there deliberately and observe things under an ambiguous pretext makes some sense and renders the intervention of the satellite unnecessary. This observation is made, of course, after four series of a more reckless Doctor, armed with psychic paper and with his sonic screwdriver restored to him; the fifth
Doctor was generally more cautious, despite the “innocent recklessness” attributed to him by one of the Merseyside DWAS Local Group on Open Air in 1986.

The sea base itself is brightly lit and its crew suffer under elaborate make-up and false bushy eyebrows. The make-up is certainly arresting and is suggestive of a stylised futurism, but it and the non-utilitarian colourful costumes, and baggy marine guard uniforms with the boxy headpieces, seem to fight against the downbeat tone of the script rather than complement it, and lead to the storytelling’s messages being mixed. The production notes state that the bushy eyebrows were meant to suggest that sea base belonged to the power bloc which was the successor to the Soviet bloc of the postwar period. Presumably it was thought that all Russians looked like Leonid Brezhnev. It is difficult to believe that this was not considered crass ethnic stereotyping a quarter of a century ago; and, if peoples are meant to take upon them the imprint of leading politicians of the 1970s and 1980s, what of our own Denis Healey?

Guest actors and characters

The DVD release packages *Warriors of the Deep* with two stories notable for their economic attitude to casting. There are very few people in *Doctor Who and the Silurians* and *The Sea Devils* whom we have to get to know all at once, and both exchange one of the guest male actors for another half way through. In contrast we are immediately given the impression that the sea base has a large crew, not only through the crane shot with which the story opens, but also with the large number of speaking parts among them. The audience is expected to get to know all the leading figures within a few minutes - Vorshak and Bulic, Preston, Maddox and Karina, and of course Nilson and Solow, the traitors - and many more than in the earlier stories in the box set. As a result we have to be told more than we are shown; where the earlier stories allowed for much to be inferred from performance, *Warriors* is both more complicated and has less time to develop its characters and impart the plot. The model for *Warriors of the Deep* was *Earthshock*, but where it had a similarly large array of guest characters, they were at least introduced in two tranches. This group needs lots of exposition, and few of them receive it, the most fortunate, perhaps, being Maddox thanks to the two-handed scene he shares with Karina.

Maddox’s surgery allows him to synchronize his brain with the base’s battle computer. It’s not clear why this is necessary within the context of the base - it’s presumably something to do with reaction times and the need for a human factor to ensure that the computer doesn’t start a war all by itself. Byrne might have read *Level 7*, a novel by Mordechai Roshwald published in 1959, or seen the 1966 television adaptation by J.B. Priestley, which featured ‘push button officers’ based in a deep underground shelter whose responsibility for initiating a war was dependent upon data fed to them by a computer. It’s vague whether Maddox is in a similar plight.

The two senior officers of the sea base, Vorshak and Bulic, are played by Tom Adams and Nigel Humphreys. Adams, as Eric Saward enjoys relating on the DVD commentary, was once the star of the Charles Vine series of films in the late 1960s, a cheap series of exploitation films seeking to ride the appeal of James Bond. Pat Mills, interviewed about his unmade story *The Song of the Space Whale* in *Doctor Who Magazine* 229 (30 August 1995), complained that Eric Saward insisted that all senior officers in *Doctor Who* be old-fashioned stiff-upper-lip characters, and Adams’s Vorshak is certainly that. In casting Nigel Humphreys as Bulic, director Pennant Roberts tipped more towards the rough diamond, and he possibly deliberately cast Adams and Humphreys as different types. However, there is no rapport between the two actors, and it's impossible to believe that they've worked together for some time as is implied. This is important because the script keeps the Doctor, Tegan and Turlough out of the way of the sea base crew for a long time, and Vorshak in particular has to lead the narrative. The casting of Adams and Humphreys, though, seems symptomatic of much of the high risk approach to the production, throwing a lot of elements together and hoping that they work by themselves. Of the other guest actors, Ian McCulloch plays as straight a bat as he can, despite his idiosyncratic pronunciation of the word ‘demise’, and while Ingrid Pitt
not 'aged' as described in *About Time 5*, her make-up is unflattering, and her delivery eccentric. McCulloch and Pitt seem to play less off each other than against how they imagine the other should be playing their character, which again contributes to an air of disjointedness.

**Tegan, Turlough and the Doctor**

The strategy regarding the companions at this point seems to have been to integrate at least one of them with the society or (in this case) institution being visited, a policy followed most thoroughly in the 1960s. After being unduly pessimistic - assuming at the end of part one that the Doctor can drown in all of the next four seconds - Turlough spends much of his appearance in part three fighting under Bulic, wielding a gun and shooting at Sea Devils. This follows an intriguing exchange in which Vorshak conscripts Turlough in the defence of the bulkhead; intriguing not just because in serving the simple purpose of reinforcing Turlough's label as a coward, it confirmed that character development had been placed on hold since *Enlightenment* ended the Black Guardian trilogy the previous year, but because there doesn't seem to be any sign that there is a principled reluctance on Turlough's part. This is a pity, given that in Turlough's departure story *Planet of Fire*, four stories later, we learn that Turlough has the rank of ensign, and he has no problems with using a weapon, though perhaps Brendon School had a Combined Cadet Force. Tegan likewise has little to do; the production notes say that Tegan was intended to carry the emotional burden of the story for the viewer, but she is mainly a passive witness who gets captured, a step back from *Earthshock* where she is the gun-waving regular. It doesn't say much for this period of the programme that a companion's strength can be measured by whether or not they get to handle weapons.

As for the Doctor... mention has already been made of the need for him to appear vulnerable. Davison was often accused by critics of being bland and 'only as good as the script', and this story gives him little to work with. The direction is unsympathetic; Pennant Roberts, editing as he went in the gallery, chose unflattering shots of Peter Davison, including a close-up in episode two where Davison looks as if he is trying to square up to Tom Adams when knowing he is going to lose. Those who have seen studio footage from Shada, Pennant Roberts's previous *Doctor Who* story as director, might wonder whether Roberts was inflicting on Davison some revenge for the abuse gallery-bound directors suffered from the mouth of Tom Baker. Davison is allotted some physical activity, such as the underwater swimming which does for the first version of the cricket costume, playing towards the impression of this Doctor as a more conventional physical hero. At other times his role bears comparison with that of the first Doctor in the first 'base under siege' story, *The Tenth Planet*, where much of the Doctor's role is to counsel and warn the Snowcap crew about the danger from the Cybermen.

Seen after four years of Russell T. Davies's presentation of the Doctor as a cheerleader for and protector of humanity, and with an awareness of how deep the roots of Davies's idea are in 1960s and 1970s *Doctor Who*, it's difficult not to wish for this story's treatment of the Doctor to have been rethought. *Warriors of the Deep* sets forth the Doctor's belief in mediated and intellectual solutions and then undermines them and with them the audience's confidence in him as the series' protagonist. Again and again the Doctor is forced to use violence rather than wit and intelligence. His sick joke about the dead guard's bad breath anticipates the grim humour of season 22; the breathless joie de vivre present in the early Davison stories has gone. He is prepared to play with the lives of everyone on the base in order to buy some time to repair his ship, exceeding anything the first Doctor did at his most self-interested. Even this leads to defeat of a sort, as he is forced to use the TARDIS to prove his credentials to Preston and her guards, which a script with more respect for the Doctor would have rendered unnecessary. He is placed in a situation where he has to use the same light-weapon on Nilson as he used on the Myrka - while this perhaps suggests that both victims were, in their different ways, engineered killing machines (not the first time that the story has suggested this comparison), it suggests that the Silurians are correct in their pessimistic assessment of the 'ape primitives'. When at the end of the story the Doctor pleads that there should have been another way, it is an expression of his own defeat - apart from the companions (who here function less as people in their own right, but as extensions of the Doctor) and Bulic (who seems to have been forgotten about rather than deliberately allowed to survive) there is no-one left for him to save. The destruction of humanity is only averted, for now. It's astonishing that so downbeat a script was used to launch season 21. At least in season 16's *The Ribos Operation*, Robert Holmes's loveable rogues Garron and Unstoffe survived. Here the Doctor's ability to make the situation a better one is
called into question; the Silurians are stopped by force, Turlough even killing one at close range when it wasn’t necessary to do so.

Outside the fiction of the programme, season 21 launched with Peter Davison’s Doctor compromised by the production office’s own publicity strategy. The casting of Colin Baker as the sixth Doctor had been public since August 1983, with most publicity over the summer and autumn divided between the incoming Doctor and the return of Davison’s predecessors in The Five Doctors. Season 21 thus launched with a star whose period as series lead was being treated as an interregnum between more exciting performances. The fifth Doctor is thus weakened by the production and by circumstances outside it.

**Survivors from prehistory**

The Silurians and Sea Devils appear to lack motivation for too much of the time, which reduces their effectiveness as a threat. They talk among themselves for most of the first two episodes, but after some initially promising dialogue fall into clichéd formal monster-speak, reveal little of their plans to the audience, and it is a pity that they are not better integrated with the sea base. If there had to be so many characters, perhaps one of them could have been in contact with the Silurians and Sea Devils, representing them on the base through pacifist motives, and helping explain their agenda to the audience. The reptile people are potentially more interesting than the human characters, but their motivation is rushed through; the audience is meant to be impressed by the slow lumbering pace of the sub-Samurai Sea Devils, and the hopefully-fearsome bulk of the Myrka.

The production notes on the DVD indicate that the Myrka was described in several drafts of the script as a bipedal cyborg, perhaps another close relative of Silurians and Sea Devils but one which had received greater cybernetic enhancements than they had (as Lawrence Miles and Tat Wood note in About Time 5, some characteristics of the Silurians and Sea Devils in this story could be explained as cybernetic implants). In one of the many examples of an absence of co-ordination between different departments, this description was somehow edited out of the script, so that when costume admitted defeat on the Myrka and handed it over to Mat Irvine to realise as a visual effect, Irvine had to rationalise his own vision of the Myrka from the dialogue, and came up with something more clearly dinosaur-like than Johnny Byrne seems to have wanted.

The inadvertent reimagining of the Myrka perhaps obscured a parallel. In part two, the murder of Karina by Maddox is intercut with the first appearance of the Myrka as it breaks its way onto the bridge. Byrne was perhaps drawing an equivalence between Maddox and the Myrka, which might have brought the audience to know of and question the moral certainties of the Silurians two episodes earlier than transpires in the finished story. Both Maddox and the original Myrka, through this lens, owe something to The Nightmare Man, a six-part serial by Robert Holmes broadcast in 1981, adapted from the novel Child of the Vodyanoi by David Wiltshire; this involved a soldier whose brain had been integrated with his craft’s computer, and who was driven insane when separated from it after an accident. The technology which integrated this man with his weapon was as much the product of a cold war as that which disfigures Maddox; and the impression is given by the script that the Silurians have considered...
themselves in conflict with humanity since at least the events of *Doctor Who and the Silurians* and have been covertly active more or less continuously since then.

In appearance the Sea Devils are more effective than the Silurians, who are simply too bulky, reminiscent of the rotund pinstriped employees of the Chester-Perry Organization from the long-running Evening Standard cartoon *Bristow* and lack the energy of their 1970 predecessors. It's telling, though, that the designers couldn't work out how the webbed heads of the 1972 story had been manufactured, while the Sea Devils are at their most impressive when standing still and in one case showing that they can blink. The 'string vests' of 1972 were a last-minute addition; while they were supposedly there to stop an intelligent species walking around naked, and were regarded by most of those involved with embarrassment, the replacement military uniforms only contribute to the stiffness of the costume; the story's requirements have not been thought through.

**Conceptualization...**

Johnny Byrne was probably not the writer to bring back Silurians and Sea Devils in the way *Doctor Who* fandom of the time might have wished. Although he seems to have been viewed by script editor Eric Saward as an expert in bringing back old villains, Byrne's writing had already reflected his own worldview. Saward seems to have been unaware of the amount of work his predecessor Christopher H. Bidmead had done on Byrne's first *Doctor Who* story, *The Keeper of Traken*. The account given on the Traken DVD suggests that while Byrne was on holiday in Greece, Bidmead realised that Byrne's script relied on a similar conceit to *Meglos*, the second story of season 18, in having a scientific and anti-scientific faction. John Nathan-Turner had suggested to Bidmead that the story be rewritten to reintroduce the Master as the end of season adversary to round off Tom Baker's run as the Doctor, and so on his return from holiday Byrne was faced with a new version of the script, not only pared down to meet the demands of the budget but replacing Byrne's villain with the Master; Byrne then took over the script again before production, presumably to restore his voice - important for an ambitious writer - and defend his concept of Traken's civilization. Byrne's second story, *Arc of Infinity*, is derided now for its transformation of Gallifrey into a hair salon, but Byrne wasn't responsible for the design; his Time Lords are a community of savants, apparently aided by sub-Time Lord classes of technicians and guards, who are misled by a quest of purity and their veneration for the founders of their culture. Byrne here drew from previous Time Lord stories, but his interpretation changed the emphasis from bureaucratic corruption to the misguided idealism of an isolated elite. Richard Landen in his review of the story for *Doctor Who Monthly* 75 (April 1983) thought that Byrne had reversed changes made by Robert Holmes and 'David Agnew' in the late 1970s, and brought the Time Lords within one step of what he saw as the omnipotence remembered by veteran fans in *The War Games*.

**...and realization**

The *DWM* endorsement came a year after Byrne had actually been approached to write *Warriors of the Deep*; the commission came after discussions with Saward following the transmission of Saward's Cyberman story *Earthshock* in spring 1982. Byrne observed that it provided a new template for *Doctor Who* - fast intercutting of scenes from distinct narrative strands with a reliance on a forced pace over plot. Injected into this was the revival of an 'old enemy', with the Silurians and Sea Devils being decided upon.

*Warriors of the Deep*, as it emerges, has very little resemblance to the serial it supposedly sought to echo. The pace of the story is slow, with lots of business which comes across as padding - one wonders what Byrne's lengthier first scripts were like - and a large cast who contribute to the impression of inaction by spending a lot of time standing around on a large set while someone makes a long speech. *Earthshock* was a homage to previous Cybermen stories, with set-pieces from the past recreated on a spacecraft intended to pick up on the fashion for depicting space as a dirty working environment run by cost-cutting corporations. In *Warriors of the Deep*, however not only do Byrne's Silurians and Sea Devils owe little to the originals envisaged by Malcolm Hulke, but there is no recreation of an iconic moment such as the rising of the Sea Devils from the sea in their first appearance, which might have stayed in the memory of the audience. Nowhore do the Silurians demonstrate the use of their third eye as a weapon - Byrne's reinvention of them need not have prevented this, but probably did - nor do they demonstrate any of the telepathic powers suggested in *Doctor Who and the Silurians* or trigger psychological collapses in Seabase crewmembers by their appearance.

Yet it doesn't seem to have been Byrne's intention to reduce the Silurians and Sea Devils to the generic monsters they appear to be for most of *Warriors of the*
Deep. Byrne has looked at the creatures he has inherited from Malcolm Hulke and tried to rationalize why there would be two species of reptile people. The straightforward explanation offered by The Sea Devils, that one species evolved to live on land, the other in or by water, is rejected in favour of Byrne's own ideal of the harmonious relationship of distinct castes seen in The Keeper of Traken and Arc of Infinity. For Byrne both species are water-dwellers - he emphatically describes Silurian technology as 'piscene' in the script, according to the DVD production notes - with one supplying intellectual leadership, the others force. It only becomes clear in the fourth part that the Silurians have a distinct moral stance which prevents them from wiping out humanity, but allows them to accelerate what Icthar has convinced himself is the inevitable process by which human beings will exterminate themselves.

Programme mythology and morality

One of the hallmarks of Eric Saward's script editorship of Doctor Who was the ease with which the jargon of the series was bandied about in conversation. In part four, where the Doctor introduces himself to Icthar, he refers to "a previous regeneration", which would leave Icthar none the wiser unless at some stage he has had a lecture on Time Lord biology and culture. No matter what Miles and Wood argue, there seems every reason to think that Johnny Byrne, who had struggled through videotapes of the black-and-white telerecording of Doctor Who and the Silurians and goodness knows what format of The Sea Devils, regarded Icthar as the Silurian scientist of the first story. He might even have read Malcolm Hulke's novelization, which gave the scientist the name K'to, and reworked it into Icthar. Possibly K'to fled through subterranea and suboceanic routes which had miraculously survived continental drift since the Silurians went into hibernation and ended up residing with Silurians where Icthar was the local form of his name.

The pivotal scene of the fourth episode is the one where Icthar explains his scheme to the Doctor. When the Doctor asserts that, after the two power blocs have eliminated each other in a nuclear holocaust, the Silurians and Sea Devils will inherit a dead planet, Icthar responds with some mystical lateral thinking, that his people are "the true life force of this planet". The return of the Silurians and Sea Devils to the surface will purify the world. This is expressed rather clunkily; this period of the programme didn't excel at easy exposition. Civilizations are not normally endowed with the power to rule, though there will be rulers in them. Byrne is interested in Silurian morality, but the idea that one is absolved of all blame for mass murder if one is only facilitating what would have happened anyway isn't challenged as much as it needs to be. The programme also offers a primitivist view of leadership, suggesting that Icthar can't sacrifice himself because without any member of the Silurian Triad, the Silurians will not be able to function, as if there is no mechanism for choosing a new leader; Byrne's love of an ordered society surfaces again, but also his apprehensions of its fragile structure.

Another way?

It seems to be a convention of fan analysis that John Nathan-Turner's producership turned a fatal corner at the end of season 21 with The Twin Dilemma, an end-of-season and thus end-of-budget serial which inflicted several clumsily realized aliens, two unsympathetic juveniles, a psychologically disturbed and sometimes murderous Doctor on an audience and mortally wounded the sixth Doctor's credibility with a large proportion of his audience in his first story. Many of the faults, however, are already present during Warriors of the Deep and to worse effect. The monster costumes work more effectively as pieces of art rather than as functional craft. The idea that the story will convey a sense of danger, of threat, is taken for granted, without any sense that much thought has been given to making the different components work together. Tony Burrough's sets are good, but the costumes and make-up of the sea base crew don't seem to belong in them. Achievements such as the stunt dive and underwater sequence of the end of part one and early scenes in part two are overshadowed by the slow-to-static monsters. The lack of co-ordination can't be blamed on the rescheduling of the production alone; too many of those involved, probably particularly director Pennant Roberts, were being asked to work against their strengths, to the detriment of the final result.

At times high and at other times drunk on the celebrations of the twentieth anniversary, the production office forgot that Doctor Who had endured and prospered because it knew its reach and when not to exceed its grasp. Warriors of the Deep forgets this, invites ridicule, and gets season 21 off to a bad start. The disappointment lies not only in the poor realization of the story, but also in the knowledge that there are elements in the concept which are sound, and from which an effective piece of television could have been fashioned.
...Told us somethin’ ‘bout bein’ in a boat on the Skookle something River somewhere talkin’ to a guy about mass communication...’ – Balthazar LaFontaine, *The Gods do Weep*

Philadelphia, July 4th 2076

“Kind of on the wrong side to be taking part in the celebrations, aren’t you?” joked the bartender, indicating the festoons of stars and stripes around the taps and bottles.

“Don’t worry, Jonesy, they’re with me,” Captain Jack cracked back with a smile and a wink.

“Actually, they’re with me,” the Doctor corrected, indicating the two companions to either side of him. “Captain America ‘ere’s got a birthday today, so I thought I’d bring him along to a good pub. Makes a change from his usual hangouts.” He had such a long-suffering look on his face just then that Jonesy chuckled.

“Hey, happy birthday, man. Double the reason to celebrate, I guess. Got tickets for the fireworks tonight? I know where ya can still get some...”

“Whatcha think, Doctor?” asked the blonde on the other side, in a London accent that reminded Jonesy of PBS reruns of *EastEnders*.

“Nah, I’ll pass,” said Jack, “you can get better ones on Senalus Four, and they don’t even charge admission. And the audience’s pretty good too.”

“Doctor?” prompted Rose, but the Doctor was already preoccupied with the crumpled old $100 bill he’d pulled from the recesses of his leather jacket, turning it over in his fingers. Jonesy looked a warning at him – the man had a look on his face like the guys who turned up in the mornings to drown their sorrows.

“Met him once, y’know,” the Doctor finally said, distantly.

“Who?”

“Ben Franklin.” He waved the note. “President, Founding Father, scientist, lunatic.”

“Yeah, I know who he is, I only live here. How can you have met him three hundred years ago?”

“Did we also mention we travel in time?” the blonde snapped. “This’s seventy years in my future. So what was he like?”

“You’d’ve liked him, for a start,” the Doctor said to Jack. “He was a right charmer. Could talk his way out of anything. Or into anything. Didn’t you meet him as a Time Agent, or somethin’?”

Jack shrugged elaborately: he’d met – and forgotten – a lot of people during that career.

“Anyway, we bought a few bottles of booze from a local – this local, actually – hired a boat and went rowing. At two in the bloody morning.”

“O-kay...” Rose and Jack were both grinning encouragingly.

“Nothin’, really.” The Doctor looked defensive.

“Got hammered, rowed up the Schuylkill, talked about things.”

Jack’s grin widened. “Aw, c’mon, spill it! You shoot the shit with a President of the United States and you don’t get some juicy gossip outta him? Come on!”

The Doctor scowled. “Gutter mind, you. Did most of the talking meself, actually; he was hardly in a fit state to talk – practically drunk him under the table. And that took some doing. We got talking about the future. I told him about the time travel thing – which he seemed to think was bloody funny, by the
“He was crazy, wasn’t he?”

“Just a scientist. Had some ideas about storing the energy of a lightning-bolt in a battery of some sort. I told him he didn’t need to go that far, but he was going in the right direction. But it wasn’t just having that much electrical charge that was important; it was what you did with it next. I said to him, if you can get a lightning-bolt to run down a kite-string and hit a key, maybe you can use the kite-string to move this stored lightning to somewhere useful. You can make it run through a special kind of wire and make it glow brighter than an oil-lamp."

“Sorry,” the blonde interrupted. “You got chips here?”

“Sure,” said Jonesy, a little startled. “You want salt ’n’ pepper, mesquite, Thai curry?”

The blonde wrinkled her nose. “You what?”

“She means fries,” the Doctor interrupted. “Make it a round. No, I know it’s not the same thing: if you want actual chips in this country there’s only a few places do them, and this isn’t one. Anyway, I told him, think of this lightning-stuff like it’s water, if a whole stream of it’s so powerful it can knock you down, even a tiny bit of it can be useful. They had these water-clocks in those days, so I told him, you could have a water-clock running off this lightning, more accurate than all your other water-clocks put together. And you’d only need a tiny bit of energy to run it. To tell the time with this stuff you’d need drips so small that a million billion of them wouldn’t fill a teacup. And he said, so you can tell the time accurately, that’s got a lot to do with keeping appointments, but what else can you do with it? And I said, think of how you can send messages by showing lights at a particular time. They hadn’t invented Morse code, yet, y’see, but they had the right general idea. If you can show a light, or send off a drop of this energy, for a split-second exactly measured down to the last fraction, you can start sending really complicated messages. You can start sending them everywhere. Just like the postal system, only instantaneous, fast as it takes a lightning-bolt to travel. You can send a message from here to London and get it back in the same day – post took months, and they were worse than they are now for losing letters. At least airmail doesn’t crash so often.

“Suddenly, everyone’s able to talk to everyone else about whatever they like. You don’t have to go down to your local coffee shop to hear the latest news – but a lot of people still do. You can get people who’ve never met, who probably won’t ever meet, talking about things they’re both interested in. Everyone on the planet becomes your next-door neighbour."

“Well, that got him interested. He’d been Postmaster General, so he knew a thing or two about mass communication. Took another swig, and said, so what would everyone talk about? Apart from all the usual family messages? Would they be discussing scientific ideas? Developing whole new ways of looking at the universe? I said, well, they’ll be more interested in that than they used to be, but you’re forgetting that not everyone gets as wildly excited as you do about new ideas like that. Society gossip? Political news? Getting warmer, I said: there’s a lot of that, and it does change the way people think about that stuff. About the one interesting thing about that year is all the blogs that got going. No, think about it. What exists now that you can absolutely cast-iron guarantee that at least half the human population will be interested in no matter what else changes about their politics and their science, no matter what different kinds of cultures and countries they come from, even if they won’t admit it?” He was grinning triumphantly by the end of this, all his teeth showing.

There was a pause, though not a silence: the bar was beginning to get noisy with the Independence Day revellers streaming in.

Jonesy looked blank. Rose looked anxiously perplexed.

Jack, on the other hand, seemed to be getting the idea: a slow and filthy grin was spreading across his chops. After a judiciously measured moment, he replied with one word, above the clamour: “Porn!”

“Give the man a cigar!” The Doctor clapped his friend on the back, cackling.

Rose raised a meaningful eyebrow. “What’s he gonna do with it?”

Jack’s grin didn’t diminish. “Wouldn’t you like to know.”

The Doctor merely rolled his eyes. “Same again, Jonesy.”