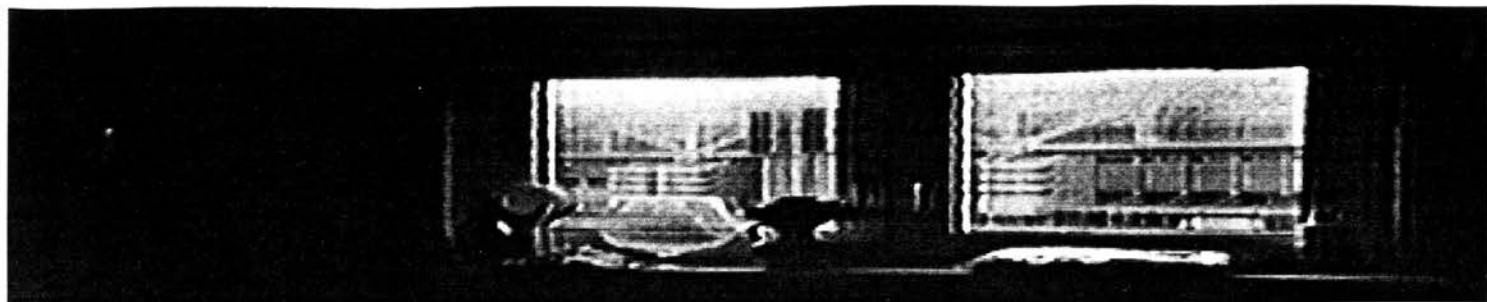


b r o a d s w o r d



yes it's true, we are immune.
we practice fiction and superiority

BROADSWORDISSUEFOURTEENFICTION



CONTENTS

GENERAL

Editorial by Richard Prekodravac	3
Upcoming issues by Richard Prekodravac	3
Inveigle by David Golding	4
Internet Adventures by Rebecca Dowgiert	4
Labyrinthe Fields of Experience by Christian O'Brien	5

NEW BOOKS

Virgin releases	20
BBC releases	21

F I C T I O N

<i>Model Train Set</i> by Jonathan Blum	6
<i>Bohemian Rhapsody</i> by Rebecca Dowgiert	9
<i>Footprints of the Soul</i> by Susannah Tiller	11
<i>Schrödinger's Botanist</i> (part II) by Ian McIntire	14
<i>Virtual Reality Story</i> by David Golding	18
<i>The Death of Self</i> by Richard Prekodravac	27

R E V I E W S

<i>The Device of Death</i> by Christopher Bulis reviewed by David Robinson	22
<i>The Dark Path</i> by David McIntee reviewed by Richard Prekodravac	22
<i>A Well-Mannered War</i> by Gareth Roberts reviewed by Grant Watson	23
<i>The Room With No Doors</i> by Kate Orman reviewed by Richard Prekodravac	24
<i>Lungbarrow</i> by Marc Platt reviewed by Jonathan Blum	25
<i>So Vile a Sin</i> by Ben Aaronovitch and Kate Orman reviewed by David Golding	26
<i>The Dying Days</i> by Lance Parkin reviewed by David Golding	26

CONTACT DETAILS

BBC Books

Doctor Who Books, A3008 Woodlands, 80 Wood Lane, London, W12 OTT, UK.

Virgin Books

312 Ladbroke Grove, London, W10 5AH, UK

Broadsword copyright declaration.

We believe in a fair usage of all material. Material created by one person should never be claimed by another. Material used from other sources is done so because it reflects the right belief wished to be expressed. Where possible permission is sought for usage. Permission is always sought sources from Doctor Who fan writers, such as fiction and articles that appear in the fan press and on the Internet. This declaration is not complete, but approximates the current thinking of the editors.

Richard Prekodravac

UPCOMING BOOKS

Forthcoming New Adventures

<i>Beyond the Sun</i> by Mathew Jones	July
<i>Ship of Fools</i> by Dave Stone	August
<i>Down</i> by Lawrence Miles	September
<i>Deadfall</i> by Gary Russell	October
<i>Ghost Devices</i> by Simon Bucher-Jones	November
<i>Mean Streets</i> by Terrance Dicks	December
<i>Tempest</i> by Christopher Bulis	January
<i>Walking To Babylon</i> by Kate Orman	February

Forthcoming Eighth Doctor Novels

<i>The Eight Doctors</i> by Terrance Dicks	June
<i>Vampire Science</i> by Blum and Orman	July
<i>The Bodysnatchers</i> by Mark Morris	August
<i>Genocide</i> by Paul Leonard	September
<i>War Of The Daleks</i> by John Peel	October
<i>Alien Bodies</i> by Lawrence Miles	November
<i>Kursaal</i> by Peter Anghelides	January
<i>Option Lock</i> by Justin Richards	February
<i>The Longest Day</i> by Mike Collier	March
<i>Legacy Of The Daleks</i> by John Peel	April
<i>Dreamstone Moon</i> by Paul Leonard	May
<i>Seeing I</i> by Blum and Orman	June
<i>Placebo Effect</i> by Gary Russell	July

Past Doctor Novels

<i>The Murder Game</i> (2nd) by Steve Lyons	July
<i>Business Unusual</i> (6th) by Gary Russell	August
<i>The Ultimate Treasure</i> (5th) by Christopher Bulis	September
<i>Illegal Alien</i> (7th) by Robert Perry & Mike Tucker	October
<i>The Roundheads</i> (2nd) by Marc Gatiss	November
<i>The Face Of The Enemy</i> (UNIT) by David A McIntee	January
<i>Eye Of Heaven</i> (4th) by Jim Mortimore	February
<i>The Witch Lords</i> (1st) by Steve Lyons	March
<i>The Hollow Men</i> (7th) by Topping & Day	April
<i>Mission Impractical</i> (6th) by David A McIntee	June

Forthcoming Miscellaneous

<i>Decalog 5</i> (Virgin) ed: Mortimore and Leonard	September
<i>Short Trips</i> (BBC) ed: Stephen Cole	March

DETAILS

Issue 14 March-April 1997 (printed August 1997).

Editor and layout design: Richard Prekodravac.

Cover cover: Richard Prekodravac. text: David Golding. Back cover: Richard Prekodravac. text: *Wings of Desire* Thanks to Becky, Susannah, David G, Ian, Jon, Grant, Shannon, Kate, Dave S.

No attempt is made to supercede the copyrights of Virgin Publishing, BBC Enterprises, Wim Wenders and Peter Handke.

Broadsword is David Robinson and Richard Prekodravac.

Subscription \$9 AU for 6 issues. 153 Wardell Rd Dulwich Hill NSW 2203. email: navaz@zip.com.au

<http://modjadjj.anu.edu.au/broadsword>

images on p2,3,5,8,10,13,16,17,22,23,24,26,27 are from *Wings of Desire*. Banner text © Wim Wenders and Peter Handke (*Wings of Desire*). Images on p4,7,12,15,19,20,21,25 and tea cups © Richard Prekodravac. Material from *Wings of Desire* used without permission. All fiction are copyright to authors, otherwise:

Issue 14 © Broadsword 1997



Name me the men, women and children
who will look for me
— me, their storyteller,
their spiritual guide —
because they need me
more than anything in the world.

We have embarked!

Homer, *Wings of Desire*

Don't just fly past the images that line the pages of this issue of *Broadsword*. Look at them and pause to think about what you see. The pictures were chosen because they're strangely provocative. Recall Robin Williams in *Dead Poets Society*, standing in front of old photographs of ancient faces. He calls his students closer, to stare into those faces and then he breathed into those people voices from the past.

A window looking out over a chemical refinery, the scene from outside a window - a weary body expressing pain and despair.

Those particular images are from the Wim Wenders' film *Wings of Desire* as is the text at the bottom of the pages. Wenders' with his images and his text evokes the ideas of the storyteller, heightened human experience and immortality. The film paints passionately the need for stories. The above quote ends the film, it is said by the old man, Homer, who is truly a custodian of those kind of stories that fires our imaginations.

The encouragement of writing is a noble endeavour. That was true with Virgin, and it seems also true with the new names appearing in the BBC list of *Doctor Who* adventures; but writing is the foundation of fandom. It is the expression of ideas that is able to be

FOOTPRINTS

provocative, speculative and wonderfully inventive.

It is why we awarded Rebecca Dowgiert with a Sgloomi Po, in her article on page 4 you'll know what she has done. I was personally pleased to begin one of the round robins some 12 weeks ago with the Missing Internet Adventure *The Horror of Angels*. In this story a blind seventh Doctor stumbles through events of a civilisation on the brink of collapse. It humbly attempts to repay Wim Wenders, David Lynch and J. Michael Straczynski for providing an incredible panorama of ideas, images, words, breaths, expression, brush strokes all things that light imagination.

Why them and not Ben Aaronovitch and Kate Orman. No reason not Ben or Kate except that for *Doctor Who* to remain vital and relevant we need an influx of words and images from other storytellers. I suppose I'm looking for a way to unify ideas like an alchemist in search for a philosopher's stone.

So stop and look at the images, read the words at the bottom of the page and remember that archetype hiding in your memory. Do this as you read these stories. Do this as you read the reviews and recall your own thoughts when you read those novels.

In this issue *Schrödinger's Botanist* reaches its conclusion. The story arc that began in issue 10 progresses with *The Death of Self*. We have a slight focus on the eighth Doctor. Jonathan Blum's charming story, *Model Train Set*, characterises the eighth Doctor so well. Susannah Tiller introduces Samantha Jones and Rebecca Dowgiert picks up on an idea from last year's TVM of dark blue subtle imagery.

Taking a different approach, this issue contains the reviews of the last of Virgin's *Doctor Who* books. It's sad but strangely invigorating. It appears like *the death*

of hope or the death of dreams [1], but it points to something more lasting and assurgent, like angels. It is the image of the tea cup smashing. I find it haunting. In *The Room With No Doors* and *Lungbarrow* it has become a symbol of fate and death, the tea cup will become a lasting image.

They're the images of film makers and they're the words of writers, they're the modern storytellers.

Richard Prekodravac

[1] J. Michael Straczynski, *Babylon 5*.

FOOTPRINTS

by Richard Prekodravac.

Marks that are permanent shadows,
Keys to locked secrets that whisper constantly,
Never stopping.
And echoing in your mind until we die.
They're the key to our origins and they're the
storytellers of evolution.
Its that dark forbidden call, leaving its shadow
for eternity.
They're far to real for any thoughts,
It has an existence that haunts like desire.
They are the whispers from time that you will
always hear,
Never stopping.
And it hurts like scars.
Its a knife through flesh, and into your bone.
Because they are your scars.

UPCOMING ISSUES - INTRODUCTION



As part of our society we have access to a wide range of thoughts and ideas that are heard in various forms. Film, literature, theatre, music and even television are the media with which these ideas are expressed. Many critics of these

fields explore various aspects and dimensions, and whether they are intellectual or aesthetic, various films, books, plays etc carry those ideas effectively. Of course many fail miserably. It is, I suppose, to put it in a broad pretentious way it all has to do with something called art.

Whether *Doctor Who* in its television form or novel form, *Doctor Who* fans have explored that concept of art. There are several stories which are identified as classics, other stories that fall badly, it's all apart of that grey are called art. At a meta-level other people before have dis-

cussed what is art, how does one recognise art, what defines art and who defines it.

Doctor Who fans have been a part of that discussion at a more concrete level looking at those classic TV stories. Fans wonder about favourite stories, doctors etc and invariably creeping in we give reasons to substantiate one's position.

Of recent times *Doctor Who* fans have been trying to work out the merits and failures of the seventh Doctor.

Read the reviews of the various New Adventures and that discussion is alive.

Over the course of the next issues of *Broadsword* this discussion of 'art' will be disguised at various levels, because its not a discussion about art but the discussions of ideas that make up that thing called art.

The origins of mythology, Jungian archetypes, myths and legends will be looked at in the exploration of the Timewyrm series. *Genesys* provides an excellent backdrop of creation mythology and the development of civilisation. *Exodus* pushes us to question the concept of the heros and villains of warfare. *Apocalypse* reveals to us the end of the world and how especially

now, that has crept into pop culture, through films like *12 Monkeys* and *Blade Runner*. With *Revelation* we will look at our own mythology the *Doctor Who* universe, and how *Revelation* became a revolution.

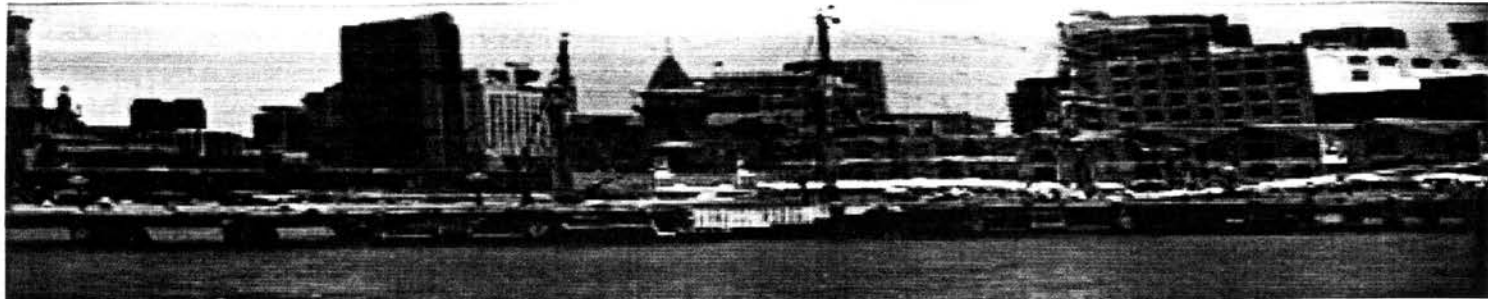
Concepts of the inner self: soul, memory, identity make up the discussion of Paul Cornell's novels.

The old argument of art versus science will be explored within the context of the Psi Power series. Are Psi powers an art or science. Tradition holds it as an art but in the context of science fiction psi powers are part of the evolving human. At the same time, sceptics demand for scientific scrutiny whilst parapsychologists claim their field to be scientific.

The Kate Orman books will look at human development from birth to identity to knowledge and understanding all characterised though pain. It was Kate who developed Pain as one of the Gallifreyan gods.

And Ben Aaronovitch novels will explore society and culture and their interactions with the individual.

This next issue of *Broadsword* will begin with the *Timewyrm* series.



OPINION

Inveigle
by David Golding

Is the Mardi Gras political? Which is to say: is the Mardi Gras relevant to the governing of our country? The answer, according to Richard Prekodravac (*Obfuscated, Broadsword* 12), in a ill-thought statement, in a media soundbite, is yes.

"This Mardi Gras, saw as they say a return to the political side of the parade, with Hanson and education Vanstone as prime targets."

A return? They?

The parody of Pauline, the admonishing of Amanda, don't make the Mardi Gras political. It is an inherently political act. Relevant to the governing of our country? When our politicians refuse to endorse or be associated with the event? When homosexuals are bashed on our streets? When gay and lesbian couples aren't recognised in our laws as being on equal footing to heterosexual couples?

Many, in letters-to-the-editor, in talkback radio, in the Green Guide, would prefer the event not be broadcast, last year, this year, and, I bet, next year. Surely it concerns the governing of our country that a portion of our people are marginalised, hurt, or made invisible?

The Mardi Gras is an act of gay and lesbian visibility. It says "we're here" and "we're healthy" and "this is okay". The politics haven't returned. The politics will not leave until our country fully recognises homosexuals as our people.

They? They say? Richard later said to me that the quote was taken directly from the media. In their defence he says:

"I think the media saying that it was 'political' was a nice way of saying 'not a corporate selling-out'."

But to accept this misguided complement is to say that gays and lesbians are an integrated part of society. That they are universally accepted. That they are recognised by our laws and rulers. This is a nice idea, but wrong-headed. It is not the truth.

Unfortunately, in politics, fighting for rights, an event is often weakened by the recognition of other rights. The media latch onto Hanson and Vanstone and marginalise the importance of the event itself. In many ways it is the intolerant voices who remind us what the media commentators do not: the fight isn't finished. The Mardi Gras is political.

We can't let them say "I'm all for gay rights, but I'm sick and tired of them pushing their agenda in the New Adventures". How can we, when that agenda is existence?

FEATURES

The Fiction Revolution
by Becky "The Moderator" Dowgiert

THE INTERNET ADVENTURES MANIFESTO:

DOCTOR WHO
FOR THE PEOPLE
BY THE PEOPLE
And It's FREEEE!!!!

(The Internet Adventures Moderator suddenly remembers that among the readers to this 'zine are Virgin Books Editor Rebecca Levene and a whole passel of those New/Missing Adventures authors...)

(pause)

Hi there! (Bright, cheery grin, big wave)

The origin of the Doctor Who Internet Adventures is a very simple one. In early 1996, a bunch of on-line Whovians who enjoyed the published novels and were re-energized by the news of the production of the up-coming tele-movie basically said: "Why should **they** have all the fun?"

An unmoderated round-robin story begun on the newsgroup alt.drwho.creative was the impetus. Frustrated by how no one knew who (if anyone) would post the next section, I decided the newsgroup needed someone to impose Structure and Order (Oops - starting to sound like one of those Whoniverse megalomaniacs again) and put out a call for people to participate in a moderated round-robin, with turns and due dates to be agreed upon ahead of time. Intrigued, twelve people signed up, and soon *DeathRace!* was off and running. The first writer got to choose the Doctor and companion, and darned if that Jeff Beuck didn't go and pick the new Eighth Doctor and Doctor Grace Holloway, before we'd even seen them! (In March of 1996.) Happily, due to the plethora of promotional photos of the film that could be viewed on-line, we were able to give reasonable physical descriptions of our heroes. Jeff's 'gauntlet' premise, with the Celestial Toymaker forcing the Doctor and Grace to race across a continent in order to win back the TARDIS, worked excellently in our round-robin format, since the necessary denouement was set from the start. (And yes, **our** 'Return of the C.T.' storyline appeared before the one in the DWM strip). All that was left for us to do was to have fun with the chapters in between — and we did. Shortly after, the first Missing Internet Adventure was begun as a tribute to Jon Pertwee, and was moderated by Jeff Beuck.

Subsequent MIAs have been moderated by myself, and Ian McIntire, who also organised a couple of 'Companion Internet Adventures'.

A year and a half later, the Internet Adventures are still going strong, though not without the occasional wobbly. The first chapter authors are often forced to watch as their premise crawls whimpering back to them, mercilessly mangled beyond recognition by cruel twists of plot. (shudder) And always the IA author is forced to choose between, as I recall one writer putting it, 'Steering into fairly continuity-free waters, or going over Fanboy Falls'. Doctor Who has such a rich history that most of the writers simply can **not** resist bringing back favourite villains and minor characters, especially from the New Adventures. Even in IA#5, *Arc*, where I tried to browbeat the writers into leaving out all the old familiar secondary characters, Time Lord Librarian Irving Braxiatel managed to sneak in (Thank you David R.), as well as a villain from the DWM comic strip. On the other hand, several characters unique to the round-robins have been created, including a new companion for the Eighth Doctor, Wil Young, as well as Dessia the tetchy Time Lady, the Historian Time Lord known as the Abbot, and Jadi Morok, the bounty hunter with a heart of gold, who even got his own 'spin-off' adventure. In the best tradition of Fandom, Whovian in-jokes, puns, intra-IA continuity, pop-culture references, and even pay-back for certain NA/MA fan 'guest appearances' abound. Needless to say, IA/MIA continuity has gotten so complicated that on-line guides to the people and places of this new corner of the Whoniverse are currently in preparation.

I'll admit it — I continue to moderate these round-robins because, as the person responsible for making sure each episode gets posted to the newsgroup in a timely manner, I'm always the first to see the next part of the story. And what these adventures sometimes lack in cohesiveness or continuity, they make up for in sheer inventiveness — truly a labor of love.

The Internet Adventures are where creative Whovians can have their say. If you want to know what's on the creative 'group mind', check out what's happening in whatever Internet Adventure is currently running on alt.drwho.creative.



Labyrinthine fields of experiences

by Christian O'Brien



Do you ever think about the lives of people you cross paths with? The labyrinthine fields of experiences that meet when you happen upon the same place and time as other people? Let me sketch the story of a courageous man I met a few nights ago.

His story has much in common with about 1300 who walk among us and a further 600,000 suffering across the seas from Darwin. As you'll see these people need help. As I'll show, you can help them.

Before I start, think about what was happening around you were 6 months old. An East Timorese, his city was pulverised as the Indonesian military began its unsuccessful, genocidal attempt to absorb East Timor when he was 6 months old. Citizens of his country were indiscriminately rounded up, blindfolded and extinguished. The shores of Dili Harbour became a makeshift abattoir, its waters a viscous repository of human remains. Among the 'luckier' ones, his family fled to the then densely forested mountains. During the next 12 years he lived in fear and squalor as guerilla warfare and mass executions of the Timorese ensued. At the age of 12 he was arrested, blindfolded and marched to a place of execution. His offence; preserving his cultural mores in his own country. He was spared. Through a program of torture and brainwashing, the Indonesian military tried to recruit him to help them dispatch his own people to the annals of anthropology. Instead he escaped and later established contact with several East Timorese resistance leaders. He was captured again, tortured again and he escaped, again. At great personal risk he travelled to Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, and assisted with the resistance before fleeing to Australia to do the same. During this time the Indonesian military slaughtered his father, most of his family and friends and 250,000 compatriots. That's roughly 1/3-YES-1/3 of East Timor's pre-invasion population. Since the invasion (December 1975) East Timor, its small community based societies, indigenous cultures, languages, cities, towns and natural environment have been battered and concussed. In addition some of its natural resources have been stolen by recent Federal Governments of Australia and the Soeharto regime. In fact, Australian Federal Governments

since 1975 have partaken of indefensible complicity regarding East Timor.

An unctuous elite in the umbral spectre of the Foreign Affairs Department knew the invasion was going to take place. They advised a select few in the then Whitlam Government to take a "pragmatic rather than principled" approach and ignore it. Billions of dollars worth of oil was at stake - East Timor's oil. Until a week or so before the invasion East Timor was a Portuguese colony. It was thought the Indonesian Government would be more likely to accede the wish of the Australian Government to take a significant portion of East Timor's oil than the governments of either East Timor or Portugal. Evading duty and decency successive Australian governments pretended that all was well in East Timor and tried to give the genocide legitimacy by becoming and remaining the only western nation to acknowledge Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor. As our 'government' holds hands with multinationals plundering East Timor's oil, murder and repression continue in East Timor. As the Soeharto regime represses East Timor, so our 'government' represses its knowledge of this. Even worse, there are 1300 or so East Timorese refugees seeking political asylum in Australia threatened with deportation to Portugal. In a sinister abrogation of moral responsibility the Federal Government contends that while East Timor is part of Indonesia the East Timorese are citizens of Portugal. Ergo, they reason, the refugees must be sent to Portugal. Feeling upset? Feeling angry? Good. But don't feel helpless, there is reason for hope and things you can do to help.

The hope primarily derives from the East Timorese and their continued, determined fight for justice. An international movement of

activists is helping raise awareness of the atrocities in East Timor and is pressuring western governments to recognise their obligations and assist East Timor in regaining its independence. Three recent indications of the success of this movement have been a UN resolution condemning human rights violations in East Timor, the censuring of Indonesia by the US House of Representatives for the same and the awarding of last year's Nobel Peace Prizes to two of the most important campaigners for an independent East Timor. I am a member of the Australia East Timor Association (AETA), one of many non partisan groups in Australia helping the East Timorese in their struggle. We help raise awareness of issues relating to East Timor through our newsletter, meetings and contributions to videos about the situation in East Timor. We are campaigning for the Australian Government to grant the refugees political asylum, to reverse its recognition of Indonesian sovereignty of East Timor and to support the struggle for East Timor's independence. We are part of a worldwide movement that will continue until the East Timorese are granted independence and compensated for the theft of their lives, oil and the destruction of their country.

If you would like to join or receive our newsletter please write to PO Box 251, Darlinghurst NSW 2010.

Whether or not you want to join you can help by writing to the Immigration Minister, Phillip Ruddock, demanding the refugees be granted political asylum and by writing to the Foreign Affairs Minister, Alexander Downer, insisting Australia reverse its recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor and demanding Australia assist East Timor gain independence.

A E T A Australia East Timor Association

The Australia East Timor Association (AETA) is a non-profit organisation aimed at supporting the cause of the East Timorese in their struggle for self-determination and human rights. AETA's activities include organising public meetings and demonstrations, publishing and selling books, providing speakers, raising funds, lobbying politicians and helping East Timorese representatives travel to promote their cause. Only by building a membership base of concerned Australians, can we hope to influence our government's policy of appeasement towards Indonesia and Australia's historical betrayal of the East Timorese. We urge you to join AETA. If you do not wish to join, donations are gratefully accepted.

Membership Registration

Supporter: COST \$10 ☐ (badge and regular notice of events over a period of 1yr)

Membership: COST \$25 ☐ Waged \$15 ☐ Unwaged (badge and East Timore ACTION newsletter bimonthly, 1 yr)

Donation: \$5 ☐ \$10 ☐ Other ☐ (please specify)

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Please send cheque/money order to: AETA PO Box 751 Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Ph: 02 9331 5986 or 02 9310 4510

MODEL TRAIN SET

[MODEL TRAIN SET]

[jonathan blum]

"So. Do you have a girlfriend?"

"No."

"Boyfriend?"

"No."

"Model railway set?"

—Bernice and the Doctor, *Love And War*

The one-inch-high figure in the painted-on business suit stood on the edge of the plastic railway platform, tapping its clockwork toes as it waited. The others in the queue behind it buzzed slightly to themselves. Finally, an impeccable O-gauge replica of a 1920's steam locomotive whirled and clattered its way up to the station, pulling three custom-made Pullman cars behind it. The miniature men stood patiently as the train came to rest, shuffled a bit while a line of other figures filed out of the cars, and finally trooped onto the train in unison and settled themselves neatly in their seats.

Behind the station, the eighth Doctor's face leaned in close, peering for a moment at the expressions on the tiny mechanical faces. Then he straightened up and gently turned one of the dozen handles on the control board, sending the train's wheels rattling into motion, and sighed.

He felt glum.

The model train set in front of him was a miracle of craftsmanship—his own craftsmanship, actually, built over the course of many years a lifetime ago. More than a dozen trains of all varieties—electrics, steamers, even an old Mickey Mouse handcar—circled between five stations across miles of carefully crafted countryside. A miniature river bubbled from a source in the papier-mache mountains and ran under half a dozen bridges of increasing size, ending in a glittering lake by the Shore Line terminus. And the people had been his crowning glory, the product of months of tinkering in his workshop and further months of painstaking hand-detailing the painted faces on each one. The resulting world stretched from wall to wall in his wood-paneled study, and had been guaranteed to make the eyes of anyone who saw it widen in amazement.

So what was missing now?

He'd always loved trains, for as long as he could remember. Even as a little boy, he'd dreamt of driving one. Sometimes he'd looked at the dream in a different way; at one point in his life he would much rather have been the station-master, quietly tending his plot and keeping his corner of the larger system in order, while at other times he would gladly have just been the man who rescued damsels from the bits of rail line to which men with curled moustaches kept tying them with alarming regularity. He rather

suspected that one of his more recent incarnations would rather have been one of the steam engines—all bright paint and gaudy brass, puffing and puffing and chuffing about with great noise and clatter.

But most recently, he had tended towards being the man in the nerve centre, routing and switching the trains on all their myriad ways. Each one playing a part in the larger tapestry of schedules and goals. This was the Doctor who had built the model train layout, who had machined each engine and laid each piece of track, who took a craftsman's pride in knowing every quirk and foible of the system he had engineered. He set each train on its way and happily juggled the dozens of minute details needed to keep them from interfering with each other. His pleasure came in the sight of a crisis overcome, or even better a potential crisis avoided. He was the man who got a childlike grin at the sight of the whole bustling network running smoothly... finally he'd come up with a plan in which everything worked.

No matter what else you could say about him, he made the trains run on time.

But now the new Doctor looked at the model train set with a vaguely dissatisfied frown. It was all very well having a system which responded precisely to what you told it to do... but where was the surprise in that? If he prodded the rail network, he knew instinctively which way it would jump, but it would never jump on its own. Why didn't anything happen without him telling it to? The miniature landscape required his constant attention to keep functioning. If he stepped away from it, or let his mind wander, it either froze into immobility or collapsed into collisions and derailments. It was beginning to feel like such a bother having to take care of every last detail... why couldn't he have the system just handle things on its own?

And so, that's what he did.

With a sudden burst of energy he dashed off to the TARDIS workshop, a long low room smelling of must and machine oil. He hunted through the rows of hulking metal machines till he found what he was looking for: an ancient computer terminal, tucked in a corner behind the lathe and the IC press. He pulled up a chair and set about imagining.

His first creation was a locomotive which laid its own track in front of it and pulled it up behind—letting it wander about free on the floor like a gerbil in a plastic ball. This wasn't entirely successful; while having an electric train nuzzling his feet as he worked at the console was definitely a fascinating new sensation, his enjoyment was marred by the day when the train



Tell me my muse, – or my storyteller



bolted away down the TARDIS corridors as fast as its little wheels would carry it, never to be seen again. It was bound to make a break for freedom one day, he mused, and went back to his workshop.

This time he brought a passenger with him, for inspiration. The tiny woman in the suit of paint stood on top of the terminal's monitor, politely but pointedly looking at her watch every few minutes as she waited for a train to arrive from somewhere. Programming this into them had been a matter of minutes; he'd just given the passengers the desire to constantly be somewhere they weren't. It was a simple drive, one he was quite familiar with in himself.

But what else might they be capable of doing?

For the next two days he worked at the computer. Occasionally he remembered to sleep or eat. Then he dropped his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and warmed up the furnace. He spent the next few days die-casting and assembling and painting, piecing together intricate clockwork while the IC press stamped out tiny silicon wafers like rows of gingerbread men.

He returned to the layout and drove all the trains back to the railyard. He picked up each of the passengers as they milled about on the platforms and placed them carefully in a large hatbox. Then he leaned over the main terminal on the Central Line, and began taking the track apart. Within a few minutes, all the railbeds on the layout were bare. Only the main railyard remained. Then he carefully disassembled the bridges, reducing them each to a pile of beams, leaving the stations standing alone.

Then he left the room, ignoring for the moment the confused shuffling and bumping coming from inside the hatbox. He returned an hour or two later pushing a wheelbarrowful of dirt, fresh from one of the agricultural areas of the TARDIS, and dived into his next task.

With a trowel, he began spreading half an inch of the soil over the entire landscape. By the time he started coating the mountains, he noted with glee that tiny shoots had already begun to sprout in the lowlands. Those miracle-gro microseeds the Kapteynians had sold him were turning out to be good value after all—pretty soon the entire countryside would be covered with a fine carpet of O-scale grass. Real soil over the paper-mache, real grass over the green paint.

He stepped back for a moment, admiring his handiwork. Then he dashed out of the room again, to return with another box bumping and rattling under his arm.

He opened the new box and let the clockwork men march out.

This new batch of people were painted in work clothes: toy soldiers with shovels and scrapers, clustering around the end of the track at the edge of the railyard. Two of the men in the lead set up miniature surveyor's tripods and quickly took a series of sightings in the direction of the Central Line terminal. The other little men stood motionless, the tiny positronic processors in their die-cast heads chattering silently over their wireless network.

The Doctor suddenly realized he was holding his breath.

Then, as if a switch had been thrown, the group scattered. Most of them hustled over to the ground in front of the last piece of track and started shoveling and smoothing and grading the soil. Half a dozen others clambered over to the pile of track and began to ease a piece off the top, lowering it to the ground and carrying it with jerky clockwork steps over to the beginning of the line. They fitted it into place and marched back for another, while the crew ahead of them busily cleared the way forward.

The Doctor watched them, his eyes wide with awe.

He stared raptly as they reached the Central Line terminal, as the surveyors took a new batch of sightings, and the work crew split in half. One crew headed down the path of the old Central Line, while the other curved away on a new route towards the mountains. More workers, who had been waiting patiently by the railyard, hurried over to join the crews, lugging a set of points with them. The Doctor couldn't help it; his face burst open into a grin.

He tore himself away from the sight of the crew and let his hands flutter over the trains in the railyard. Which to do first? He lifted one locomotive, a replica of the New York Central's Commodore Vanderbilt, out of the railyard and dashed out of the room with it.

When he returned several hours later, the locomotive didn't look any different from the outside. He'd very carefully hidden all the additional wires and control circuitry beneath the surface. He replaced the engine in the roundhouse, and couldn't resist waving his fingers at the inch-tall figure now standing in the locomotive's cab. Aside from his blue-and-white engineer's cap, the young blond mechanical man was dressed in an outfit vaguely like that of an Edwardian cricketer.

For the next two days he made these changes, one locomotive at a time. Finally he replaced the last one, the Mickey Mouse handcar, on the track and leaned back to the layout. It was amazing—while he'd been working, the builders had woven all the stations together into

a complete web of shining tracks. Some of their lines followed the same paths he'd laid down before, but others took shortcuts he'd never dreamed of. They'd run track up to the top of the mountain and criss-crossed the river with four bridges of their own design. They'd even started work on a spur line leading off the table, and were industriously building a suspension bridge over to the nearest bookshelf.

It was ready, at last.

He looked down, surprised; the hatbox wasn't where he'd left it. Then he saw that the Brownian motion of the passengers bumping against the hatbox walls had caused the box to inch several feet across the floor. He caught it, picked it up, and poured the much-delayed passengers onto the Central Line terminal platform. They shuffled themselves upright and began to form orderly queues.

The Doctor took his seat and cranked the main transformer's output up to full.

And the little man at the controls of the Amtrak Metroliner checked the signals and with a whirl and a rattle pulled his train out onto the Central Line.

The Doctor barely moved or blinked for the next three hours. It took him that long even to get a glimpse of the marvellous complex rhythm the clockwork men had fallen into. The trains criss-crossed and outraced each other, dodging each other partly through careful scheduling and partly through fast reflexes and luck. One train could meander from the mountains to the shore like a wandering thought, or streak from Central to the rural whistle-stop at the far edge in thirty seconds flat. The trains played nice, followed the signals, got out of the way when another train was in a hurry, and every ten minutes an express ran out along the Bookshelf Line to the new depot they'd set up by War And Peace. The Doctor closed his eyes and just listened to the ebb and flow of the rattle of the wheels, clattering over the soft mechanical hum of the TARDIS itself.

Finally he took control of the 1920's New York electric commuter train and sent it weaving through the layout, his own trail dodging and zooming amongst the gorgeous shifting complexity swirling around him. He was grinning like the six-year-old he'd been centuries ago. The waves of movement which surrounded him were astounding, and the details of each piece in motion were mesmerising.

And the Doctor looked at the model train set, and saw it was good. He'd set it up, let it go, and it had become something greater than he could have done on his own. I thought I could, the Doctor chuckled to himself, I thought I could I

which was thrust to the edge of the world



thought I could.

Then one thing led to another, as things tend to do, and after a while the Doctor went away. It was just for a little adventure outside the TARDIS, a chance to wander through a world that was so much larger than he was. When he was finished letting the waves of the world's movement wash over him, he went back to his study.

He stared at the layout in disbelief.

Engines and cars lay strewn across the tracks, in the river, in a pile on the floor between the layout and the bookshelf. A lone digger wandered in circles, his pick jerking up and down in front of him, sparks arcing where his head had been. The Raymond Loewy streamline engine had somehow embedded itself nose-first in the paper-mache mountain. As he watched, the last surviving train, the little Mickey Mouse handcar, trundled up to the spot where the southern river bridge had once stood and fell into the river with a plop.

The Doctor collapsed into the chair in front of the layout. How could this have happened? A few scattered passengers were still standing unawares on the surviving platforms. Dear heavens, they hadn't even realized what was happening as it happened. His head slowly shook back and forth, his jaw hanging slack.

As far as he could reconstruct, it had begun when a group of passengers, impatient with waiting for the trains, had set out across the countryside by foot. One of them was hit by the Union Pacific express, got caught between its wheels, causing a spectacular derailment which took out the entire Central Line. As the railworkers struggled valiantly to move the toppled cars, which weighed hundreds of times more than they did, the knock-on delays caused more passengers to abandon the rails. Another group of passengers picked up tools and started to lay track themselves, unthinkingly, as if the mere presence of a disconnected stretch of rails would cause a train to appear on it. They built their track-bed straight towards their destination, without regard for the rest of the rail lines; when they laid their new

tracks directly across the north spur of the Mountain Line, the next catastrophe was inevitable. With two lines out of service and every train running late, the fabric of agreement and compromise which held the system together began to unravel—engineers started cutting each other off at points, or gunned their motors to make time. The Raymond Loewy streamline jumped the rails on a curve and plowed into the little rural whistle-stop, demolishing the balsawood shelter and crushing the waiting passengers underwheel. The 1920's New York electric commuter train, unable to slow down in time, broadsided an arthritic freight train at a set of points. Two engines were left waiting on the Bookshelf Line bridge, and it gave way under the sustained weight. The civilian construction gang kept laying their line till they reached the river, at which point they blithely stepped in and got swept away by the current. It must have only been a few more minutes before the end, when the Commodore Vanderbilt and the Metroliner met head-on on the southern river bridge and demolished the whole thing.

He sat in front of the layout and put his head in his hands. He should have known better. You have to watch these things. You can't let these things get out of control. He should have known better. If you give them the chance to grow on their own, they're bound to bring it all crashing down around them. Look at what happened with the humans' Transit system. He should have known better. He had known better, back when he first built the layout, but he was so much older then. He really didn't want to be that old again.

He picked up the headless digger, and with a merciful squeeze of a thumb and finger he switched it off. You can't mend people, he remembered a voice saying. He spent so much of his time trying to do just that—keeping their little worlds from tumbling into chaos when they didn't know how to cope with running them themselves. Helping them learn how to put the pieces of themselves back together. But somehow all his work ever did was make them depend on him more and more, make it more and more

impossible for them to go on without him. The rails he was on always led him back to the same place again. It would never change.

Then he spotted the work crew. They were standing clustered by where the bridge to the bookshelf had stood. They were reeling out a spool of thread they'd found somewhere, off the edge of the table. He leaned over to look over the edge. They were lowering a man on the end of the thread. As he watched, the man found his feet on the floor, walked over to the remains of the fallen bridge, and grabbed one beam. The work party up on the layout then began to hoist him back up.

A pile of beams they'd already retrieved stood next to them. Other workers were starting to maneuver a few of them back into position, putting the bridge back into place. A couple of surveyors, their work done, were moving on towards the remains of the river bridge.

The Doctor watched them for a long time.

Then he got down on the floor to help them. He started to pick up the remains of the bridge for them, but stopped. Leave that to them. Instead he helped them pick up the cars. Who knows, given enough time they might be able to figure out a way to shift the trains on their own, but he figured he could give them a hand and save them a few years. He shrugged, smiled, and started setting the cars back upright on the tracks. He'd be going away again soon, sometime, and the farther along they were the better.

You never know, they might just learn this time.

THE END

Model Train Set
An Eighth Doctor Story
(c) Jonathan Blum 1996



childlike, ancient

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

[BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY]

[rebecca dowgiert]

Milan, 1884

At the café *Osteria Aida*, a large group of Bohemians sat carousing far into the evening, around several tables that they had pushed together.

It was a mixed, motley group. A number were students at the Conservatoire; the rest were artists, actors, and writers, with an emphasis on the poor and starving variety. About half of the revelers had just wandered across the party and decided to stay. No one minded.

Wine, food, and song flowed freely. Occasionally, an argument would threaten to break out, as someone succumbed to a bellicose impulse, perhaps fueled by an excess of spirits. The group's natural peacekeepers managed to sort it out, though, keeping the celebration from spinning out of control, and the café owner from an excess of anxiety. No one had started to dance on the table-tops, either - yet.

What was the party for? It might have been to celebrate the end of exams, but those were still some time away. Perhaps one of the writers at the table had just sold a novel to a publisher? Actually, no. Most of the revelers there were hanging on, financially speaking, by their fingernails.

They were celebrating for no good reason at all. Just because.

One of the few woman at the table, Grace Holloway, a traveler from the United States, sat, resplendent in rust-colored silk. She was talking, laughing, and enjoying herself more than she had in quite a long time. Most of the men at the table were flirting with her outrageously, much to her amusement.

Well, all except one.

She flicked a quick, amused glance at the tousle-haired man in the dark green velvet jacket who sat at ease across the table, conversing with great animation with several artists and writers. The Doctor, her time-traveling companion from Gallifrey, seemed to be oblivious to her. A cup sat at his elbow, but he seemed to have forgotten it, as well.

Grace gave a mental shrug and turned her attention back to the man next to her. Was he a writer, or a playwright? She couldn't remember. She took a sip of her glass of wine

and snickered inwardly - she was drinking for mere pennies what snobbish wine connoisseurs in her time, the end of the 20th century, would pay top dollar for.

The Doctor noted Grace's glance, but did not acknowledge it, deep as he was in discussion. To his left, he could just see out of the corner of his eye that the fellow next to him was sketching with a charcoal pencil on a small scrap of paper. As soon as there was a lull in the conversation, the Doctor took the opportunity to look more closely at what he was drawing.

To his surprise, he saw a portrait of Grace forming before his eyes. The artist had caught her spirit with just a few perfectly-placed lines.

"Oh, well done!" the Doctor said in admiration.

The artist smiled, pleased. "It's yours, then," he declared, handing the impromptu portrait to a delighted Doctor. "Keep it; I insist."

"Thank you!" he said, and meant it. Displaying the sketch with a flourish, he turned to his fellow conversationalists. The others leaned forward to admire his prize and compare it with the real thing across the table, before returning to the debate. The Doctor fished in his pocket, removed a small tube, rolled up the small piece of paper carefully to avoid smudging the portrait, and slid it inside the tube. He then returned it to his pocket.

The artist leaned over. "You are a lucky man, to have such a lovely companion," he commented slyly, a hint of a question in his inflection. The Doctor deliberately turned a bland gaze to him. "Hhmm? Oh, yes..." he replied, as if distracted. The artist sat back with a speculative look.

The Doctor looked to see what exactly Grace was up to. It appeared she had seen none of his portrait presentation; she was too busy being chatted up by a handsome, dark-haired, mustachioed fellow. He was holding one of her hands, under the pretext that he was about to read her palm.

"Your hand...it is so cold," he said, smiling at her. "Ah, yes," the fellow exclaimed. "Here is your life-line..." He paused, frowning down at her palm, as if puzzled, but con-

and through him





tinued. The Doctor saw Grace roll her eyes. Did she need rescuing? No - she was handling that rascal, Giacomo, well enough.

Still...

The Doctor shot a glance of pure mischief their way.

Everyone at the table flinched, startled, as he stood up and slammed a fist down on the table top, hard enough to jolt wine out of several glasses. Most of the party-goers looked up in anticipation. Was there about to be a row over the American woman?

Grace was gazing at him, an eyebrow raised, as the Doctor leaned forward, glaring.

"It's been going on long enough, Giacomo!" he said sternly. Grace's would-be swain dropped her hand.

The Doctor continued. "Everyone's been telling me that you have yet to finish that opera, what was it - 'Le Villi', that you've been working on! When will it be produced, and the name Puccini begin to get the recognition it deserves?" He sat back down.

Grace's jaw dropped, and her head swiveled around to stare at the man next to her. "Giacomo Puccini? You're **the** Giacomo Puccini?"

"Er...yes," the man replied, surprised by her reaction.

She'd just spent the last ten minutes being chatted up by her favorite opera composer.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, grabbing hold of his hands, feeling star-struck. "I love all of your operas! In fact, I just saw *Madame*—"

Across the table, someone cleared their throat meaningfully, and she stopped, wincing. She'd been babbling. What had she been saying?

Puccini was looking at her, confusion written all over his face. "I'm sorry," he said. "You must have me confused with someone else. I'm scoring an opera, but I haven't yet finished it."

"Ah...What I meant," she said, back-pedaling, "is that I'm sure that you're going to write the music for a number of operas, and that people will love them." She squeezed Puccini's hands in hers, and smiled broadly, as he looked back at her, bemused. "You **are** going to write operas, aren't you? You must!" She thought she heard a strangled noise from across the table, but ignored it.

"In fact," she said, a wicked gleam in her eye, "**I know** you will!" Puccini stared at her, unnerved by her intensity. She leaned forward conspiratively. "You see," she said, dropping her voice down low, "I have a...feeling for these kinds of thing, sometimes. And I just know that you will be a successful composer."

He smiled back at her now, not at all displeased by her words of encouragement, as she released his hands. She could see why the Doctor did this sort of hint-dropping so often - this was **fun**!

The Doctor again captured the attention of all, as he got to his feet and raised his cup. "A toast!" he shouted, and the rest gladly took up the cry. "A toast to all the Arts, that bring Beauty to our lives!"

Everyone raised their glasses and cheered, and the party wound on into the night.

As the party broke up, hours later, the tipsy revelers began to drift off into the mist-shrouded Milan streets. Grace wrapped the shawl that was serving as a jacket around herself, as the Doctor waited nearby. She probably looked, she mused, like a character from one of Puccini's operas. Ahead of them, Giacomo Puccini, future composer of several operas that would in time become standards in the repertoires of opera houses around the world, was heading out of the square. He looked back at Grace and the Doctor, and she waved. Wistful, he grinned, lifting a hand in farewell.

The Doctor regarded Grace slyly. "What if I told you that what little you said to him here tonight was going to change history, cause him not to go on to write those operas?"

She snorted, a distinctly unladylike sound. "I'd say that you were full of it."

"Oh? How does that follow?" he asked, amused.

She looked skyward as she slipped the drawstring of her reticule over her wrist. "Well...if he had gone on and not written those operas, I'd have no memory of them right now. But I do. So he did." She rolled her gaze expectantly back to him.

"Well," he conceded, "as it happens, you're correct about history remaining unchanged, though its not **quite** as simple as you described it. You've got to be very care-

ful about that sort of thing; you have no idea what historical events and minute details may be important, in the end."

Grace put her hands on her hips and gave him a Look. "You're a fine one to talk - you do it all the time!"

"Yes, but I know what I'm doing."

"Uh-huh," she said, sardonically. "Ladies and Gentlemen, the Time Lord is a Professional. Do not try this at home!"

"Something like that, yes," he laughed. "So, what do you think of Puccini, now that you've met him?"

She considered. "I didn't really know that much about him before; I just enjoyed his music. He certainly was fun to talk to, though he is an awful skirt-chaser, isn't he? I mean, please - 'Grace, your hand is so cold-'"

She stopped abruptly. "Oh, my." She shook her head and laughed, as her friend grinned. "Well, at least it worked for Rodolfo!" she said.

The Doctor gallantly offered her his arm in the proper gentlemanly fashion of the time. Grace took it, and they set off through the lamp-lit streets for the TARDIS.

Bohemian Rhapsody

© Rebecca Dowgiert 1996

reveal Everyman.

FOOTPRINTS OF THE SOUL

[FOOTPRINTS OF THE SOUL]

[susannah tiller]

She sat at a corner table, sipping her scotch and coke, hoping that no-one noticed the bloodstains on her shirt. They would take a lot of explaining, and she was tired of explanations. She was also tired of the arguments, and yeah, maybe she was even tired of life. But she put that thought out of her mind, quickly, and gulped down half the drink. In the middle of the bar, there was a guy on karaoke. He was singing some weird 80s song.

After my picture fades, and darkness has turned to grey,

Watching through windows, you're wondering if I'm okay.

Secrets, stolen, from deep inside.

The drum beats out of time.

The song was making Cass feel even worse. Alex would be wondering where the hell she was, but she didn't want to go home. Not yet. She twisted her ring around, shuffled it up and down her thumb, before draining her glass and sprawling back against the wall. She rubbed away a tear that had ventured out of one eye.

The guy finished singing, and headed over to her. Great, she thought. Just what I need.

He slid into the seat opposite her. "I've been looking for you," he said.

She crunched some ice from her glass. "Nope, wrong person."

"I dreamed about you," he insisted. "It was you."

"Look, just get away from me, okay?" she said, tiredly, slurring a little more than she would have liked. He sighed, and moved to another table. Cassie put her head down on the table top, trying to block out the lights and the noise and the people. Someone tapped her gently on the arm. She looked up, expecting - hoping - to see Alex.

It was a girl, spiky blonde hair, about seventeen. "I'm Sam. Ummm, can I sit down?"

Cass shrugged. "I don't care." The girl sat down, nibbled on a fingernail. "I don't nor-

mally do this type of thing," she said, hesitantly. "But--"

"You're with him, aren't you," Cassie said, pointing at the karaoke-guy. He was pretending not to look at them.

"Yeah. He's my friend, the Doctor. Look, I'm supposed to be giving you the spiel, but I can't. It's just not me."

"So what's your story?"

Sam took a deep breath. "He's an alien, I'm from the future, and we need your help."

"Is this where you tell me I'm on Candid Camera?"

"Nope, this is where I look deep into your eyes and plead," Sam said pleadingly. She look into Cassie's eyes. "Do I have to go down on my knees?"

Cass sighed. They made more sense than most people do at two o'clock in the morning. And it was better than moping around here for the rest of the night, or taking a long walk off a short pier. "Okay, okay. At least one of us will get a laugh out of this." She raised her empty glass at the Doctor. "Cheers," she said.

When she woke up, she thought that it had all been a dream. But she had the beginnings of a hangover, and she wasn't in her usual bed.

She sat up, and looked around. There was nothing in the room apart from the bed. She got out of bed, and padded over to the window. Outside was the familiar Newcastle landscape - the foreshore, Newcastle Harbour, Stockton. On either side of the house were more terrace houses, all the same as this. She'd driven past them a million times. She relaxed a bit, and decided to have a look round.

Downstairs, the Doctor was bustling around in the kitchen. Something smelt delicious. There was a blue police-box sitting next to the fridge.

He noticed Cassie, and a big grin spread across his face. "Good morning," he said.



With time, my listeners became my readers.



"What would you like?"

"Breakfast. A change of clothes. An explanation," she said. The Doctor gestured. Two places were set at the table. A clean pair of jeans and an X-Files t-shirt were neatly placed on one of the chairs.

"They're Sam's, but they should fit," the Doctor said, waving her to the seat. "She's not a morning person, so for the time being, it's just you and me."

Cass dumped the clothes on the floor, and sat down.

"Croissant?" The Doctor set down a tray, laden with croissants, butter, jam and vegemite.

"Explanation." Cass took a croissant and began to butter it.

He reached out and took her hand. She felt like she'd touched a live wire. Then a tide of information, emotions and little details began to flow into her mind. The Brigadier was superstitious; the Doctor had cried 209 times; the TARDIS-

and suddenly she knew what the Doctor wanted. The ocean began to retreat back into the Doctor's mind, taking some of her flotsam and jetsam with it.

The Doctor let go her hand, and looked at her. "It started with a pillow fight," he said. "Then you and Alex were arguing, and she accidentally hit you."

"And I had a nosebleed, and I ran out of the house, and I went to the Brewery." Cassie agreed. "Which is where you found me." She picked up the clothes and headed for the bathroom. "Give me ten minutes."

Nine and a half minutes later, she had showered, and was sitting at the table again, gulping down her croissant. She brushed a few crumbs off her lip, and looked up at the Doctor. "Let's get this over with."

The Doctor reached out, and took both her hands in his. "Thank you," he murmured shyly.

Cass stared into his eyes - blue, flecked with green and gold - and then there was the electric shock, and his eyes were getting BIGGER, and it was all she could see, and suddenly

and suddenly she was standing on a beach, sand stretching in either direction. The tide was out, and the beach was covered in footprints. She looked down at them. Old feet, young feet, high-heels, boots, sneakers. The tracks wove in and out of each other.

She found one set of prints, bare feet, that seemed fresher than all the rest. She followed them along the beach.

"What's up, Doc?" Sam bounced into the kitchen.

"Your sense of humour, for a start." The Doctor was staring into space, looking at the empty seat across from him.

"Where's Cassie?"

"Would you like some breakfast?" He waved absently at the food set out in front of him. Sam dropped into the chair. "Please, don't try and distract me. I know this routine. You promised last night that you'd tell me what was going on. So tell me."

The Doctor glanced at his wrist. "Oh, is that the time?" He got up, and headed into the TARDIS.

"You're not wearing a watch!" Sam called after him. But he was gone. She picked up a croissant, and wandered into the living room. She switched the TV on, and watched as Shane Warne took a hat trick against Sri Lanka.

Cassie plodded along the beach. At first it had been hard going, trying to distinguish these footprints from all the others, but gradually the rest of the tracks had petered out. Now there was just one line of footprints going across the beach. Funny, the footprints

seemed to be getting damp. As if they were wet. She knelt down, and touched a blob of moisture that was sitting in the indentation. It was sticky.

The Doctor wandered out of the TARDIS, just in time to see Sri Lanka's last man get run out. He sat down next to Sam.

"Well?" Sam said, raising one eyebrow at him.

"No, not really." He looked at Sam. "Have you noticed anything different about the TARDIS lately?"

Sam switched the television off and looked back at him. "What?"

He sighed. "At first I thought she was having a bad day, or still trying to get used to all the design adjustments I made before I regenerated. But lately she's seemed -"

"Malicious?" Sam ventured. He nodded. "You've felt it, too?"


She shrugged. "Yeah. My room gets rearranged. All my food disappeared from the kitchen and turned up in the waste bays. Last week I was trying to get to the library, and I swear it was changing the layout as I went along. The lights went out, and I tripped over something." She looked at him. "It giggled, Doctor. Something was laughing at me."

Alex. Why did she keep thinking about Alex?

Cassie sighed. Things had been building up for months, neither of them willing to talk about what was bothering them. She was scared that things were going wrong, but scared to talk. She'd hated herself for being scared. She'd hated herself for a lot of things. A tear wandered down her cheek.

Images of Alex flickered in and out of her mind. Her birthday, when Alex had surprised her with a huge bunch of carnations. That weekend they'd gone skiing, and ended up spending most of it in front of the fire, telling each other their life stories. The day they'd

They no longer sit in a circle



moved in together, and Alex showing up with her collection of teddy bears and toy animals.

Where did I screw up? Cass thought. She shoved the thoughts away, and kept walking. In the distance, there was a dark shape on the beach.

The Doctor looked away, his voice distant. "The last time I regenerated was somewhat different. All the other times, I was in the TARDIS, or close enough; or there was another Time Lord there."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"A Time Lord's mind is blended with that of his TARDIS. At the moment of regeneration, it's crucial that the link is renewed."

"And yours wasn't?"

The Doctor shook his head. "I was alone, and afraid. There was no-one there to see that the link remained intact."

"So it's loose, then?" Sam asked, leaning forward.

The Doctor shook his head. "Worse."

"How?"

"When I died, my oldest enemy was adrift in my TARDIS. He eventually found a new body, but he left traces of his essence behind. The TARDIS bonded with that, instead."

Instinctively, Sam glanced over at the TARDIS. It sat quietly in the kitchen, humming to itself. She looked back at the Doctor. "What do you mean?"

"The TARDIS is possessed."

Ssssssoooooooooooooo, something hissed in Cassie's brain. You think to cast me out from what is mine.

She was standing in front of a giant sand castle, sculptured and moulded to look like a gothic fortress. Tendrils of slime and seaweed trailed down the sides, and in the central courtyard was a large shell. Cassie stretched out a hand to it.

Something half man, half snake slithered around the base of the castle, and hisssssssed

at her. She drew back.

You are nothing, the naga said. Worthlesssssss.

The tears began to run down her face again.

"Cassie. Where does she fit in?"

The Doctor was wandering around the lounge room. "Cassie is clinically depressed. That comes from an imbalance, a chemical difference in the brain. I needed someone to restore the link between me and the TARDIS. You couldn't do it, you've got too much artron energy in your brain."

"And you thought she could?" Sam's voice was cold.

He looked at her, despairingly. "Her altered brain structure meant that she could travel along my neural pathways to the TARDIS. Last night she was suicidal. If we hadn't intervened, she would have been found dead at the bottom of a cliff three hours later."

Sam swallowed. "Where is she now?"

The Doctor pointed at the TARDIS. "Trying to save her soul," he said wryly. Neither of them laughed.

The naga stared at Cassie. Cassie stared back. The naga drew itself up so that it was almost level with Cassie. Its tongue flick-flicked directly in front of her eyes. Sssstop fighting.

It sounded like a tempting prospect, but then she thought of the Doctor, how nice he'd been to her. Maybe she'd screwed her life up, but she owed him something. She shrugged at the naga. "I don't think so."

Yessssssss, it insisted. Its fangs glistened. A black drop fell from one of them and sizzled on the ground.

Cassie took a deep breath. She thought of Alex, on the night they'd exchanged rings and promised to love each other forever. "Love you, babe," she murmured. She kicked down a wall of the castle, and grabbed the shell. As

she reduced the castle to a pile of sand, she felt the naga's fangs bite into her. She screamed, and fell away into blackness.

She blinked back into existence on the floor of the lounge room, still clutching the shell. She held it up to the Doctor, and slumped back.

"Do something!" Sam yelled.

The Doctor held the shell up to his ear, and listened. Instantly, relief spread over his face. Then he glanced down at Cass. He reached out a hand, and a black spark leapt from her forearm to his fingertip. He winced momentarily, then relaxed again.

Sam was helping Cassie to sit up. She met the Doctor's gaze, and grinned at him. He smiled back at her, and brushed some sand off the leg of her jeans.

"Thank you," he said.

"Ditto," Cass whispered.

Just for fun, the Doctor and Sam went for a ride on the Stockton ferry at sunset. They sat outside, eating fish and chips, and watching as the setting sun glistened red off Newcastle's CBD.

Inside the ferry, the only two other passengers were whispering to each other, smiling and laughing and sometimes crying.

"I'm sorry -" Cass murmured. Alex placed a finger on her lips. "I'm sorry, too," she said. "I don't want to lose you."

"Yeah," Cass said. She rested her head on Alex's shoulder, and reached out and took her hand.

The ferry continued on.

Footprints of the Soul

© Susannah Tiller 1997

instead they sit apart

SCHRÖDINGER'S BOTANIST

[ian mcintire]

[SCHRÖDINGER'S BOTANIST]

"Hello. I'm the Doctor and this is my friend, Grant."

"Are you going to eat that pickle?" The cylindrical object lay neglected on one side of the Doctor's plate. He looked up at me.

"No. Here you go." He deposited the vinegary cucumber on the side of my plate.

"Do you want a bite?" I asked, holding out a forkful of my entree. He looked up.

"Tempting, but it's not vegetarian." I looked down, confused.

"It's only pasta."

"Grant, when was the last time you saw pasta that was **segmented**?" I pushed the plate away, and took a large sip of water.

Time passed.

In a jail cell somewhere....

"Passionate?"

"Check. Well, sort of. Passionate, yes. But also somewhat fickle. Self-assured?"

"Hmm... Check. Energetic?"

"Check. Vegetarian?"

"I think so. Weird taste in clothes?"

"Oh, yes. Definitely. Hmm... Brave?"

"Check. Easily fascinated?"

"Not really, no. Not often, at any rate."

"Oh well, people change."

"Yeah. Scared of the Valeyard?"

"The what?"

"Never mind."

Silence for a while.

"Carmen?"

"Yeah?"

"Does he ever talk about me?"

"He's pretty quiet about his past."

"Oh. Do you think they'll get us out of here?"

"No doubt. If I had a grotzit for every jail cell the Doctor's gotten me out of, I could buy a largish moon. And with two of him..."

"Point taken. Do you think he'll ... they'll be much longer?"

"Dunno."

More silence.

"Grant, have you seen any guards?"

"I can't see anything."

"Okay, have you **heard** any guards?"

"Nah. Nothing since they brought us in here."

"I hope some show up soon."

"Why?"

"No reason."

Silence.

"So, how did you start travelling with the Doctor in the first place?"

"I was the captain of an Ellerycorp shipping vessel. Well, my rank was captain, but all I really was a glorified grease monkey." Carmen laughed. "I used to say that to LEO, and he'd say 'That's not true. When have you ever been glorified?'"

"LEO?"

"I'm getting ahead of myself. LEO was the only other crewmember. AI. A human alone couldn't possibly handle all of the necessary jobs on the ship, and AIs alone would go insane. One of each was the most cost-effective pairing. Anyway, we were six months out when the Doctor arrived. LEO tried to kill him immediately. When he stopped, I invited the Doctor to dinner. LEO still tried to get rid of him, but he was a lot more polite this time. As time passed, the Doctor worked out that LEO was in charge of a behavioural experiment run by Ellerycorp. I was his guinea pig. They were trying to figure out how humans could retain their sanity on long voyages, and were planning on incorporating that ability into an AI. Cost-cutting."

"Hmm." I said. I'd hoped I'd incorporated just the right amount of understanding, cynicism and disapproval into that quasisyllabic word.

"LEO denied it all, and I asked the Doctor to leave. He did. A few days later, LEO tried to kill me. 'The results have been corrupted,' he said. The Doctor was there to stop him, and I left with him."

A loud, high-pitched growl came from Carmen's general direction. I sprang towards her, saying "What was that?" I grabbed her and pulled her away from what I thought might be a huge carnivorous beast, trying to shield her with myself. Her hair smelled - just, **wow**.

"My stomach." I felt exceedingly



and one knows nothing about the other.



foolish.

"Sorry. I thought you might be in some kind of danger."

"Don't worry about it."

Silence.

"I have to confess something, Grant. That's why I asked about the guards."

"Huh?"

"I'm **really** hungry. I haven't had anything to eat since the Doctor and I left Vancouver."

"Didn't you get anything while you were in the TARDIS?"

"Nah. I can't stand using that food machine. All it gives out are dry biscuits, even if they do taste like strawberry parfait."

I rooted in a pocket. "I've got an apple I saved from Fletrone's banquet. You can have it if you want." Her hands brushed against my chest and followed the curve of my shoulders into my hands. She took the apple. A few moments later, I heard munching noises.

"Thanks!" she said between mouthfuls of Rome.

Munching noises.

"Carmen?"

"Nyuh?"

"I've got a confession of my own to make."

Swallowing noises, followed by "What?"

"Have you seen - er, felt - I mean, **noticed** anything in here along the lines of a..." I trailed off, incredibly embarrassed.

"What?"

"A uh latrine?"

Laughter. I was **beyond** embarrassed by this point.

"No, Grant. I can't say that I have.

"I'm sorry I brought it up."

"No, don't worry. The floor is dirt, so it'll probably absorb any ... uh..."

"Yeah, but I'd still feel weird, going in front of you."

"It's not like I can see anything."

"Yeah, but you can still hear, can't you."

"Alright then, I won't listen."

Dear Carmen: Hope this comes in handy in case you ever get hungry again.

-Grant.

I attached the note to the stasis box, and checked to make sure all the food (**real** food - nothing dry or biscuity) that I'd gotten from Fletrone's cook was inside the field limit. I activated the stasis field, and placed the box on the floor of the furthest TARDIS corridor I could find. The food would be perfectly preserved until the field was turned off. I trusted the TARDIS to make sure that she would eventually come across it, two regenerations and who-knows-how-many years from now.

Time passed.

"YOU-ARE-AN-EN-E-MY-OF-THE-DAL-EK-RACE! YOU-WILL-BE-EX-TER-MIN-AT-ED!" The eeriest thing about the chant was the way the Daleks chanted it in complete unison. When humans are on the battlefield, it's often every man for himself. Even if a soldier is part of a specific charge or manoeuvre, he or she still only really thinks about him or herself. Shouts are random, chaotic, and above all, individual. The Daleks chanted their battle cry in unison, every thirty seconds or so. I got the impression that they didn't do it at exactly regular intervals so that the humans wouldn't know that it had been prearranged. Ten thousand Daleks, repeating a mantra of genocide. You got the impression that you were fighting not just alien soldiers, but a single, huge war machine, one with thousands of redundancies. A fallen human soldier could never truly be replaced, but the Daleks were just interchangeable parts in a machine. And while there could never be another Private Gregory Unger, there would always be more Daleks.

"Major Sexton!" I screamed over the deafening barrage of military sounds. I could see the major only a few meters down the trench. A pair of guards blocked my way, until Sexton said "Let him through. He's one of the Doctor's friends."

I handed him the data crystal. "Here" I panted, out of breath. "The Doctor said to upload this into the Daleks' com systems." He took the crystal and handed it to an adjutant, whispering a few hurried instructions. A few moments later, it started. The Daleks' chant was no longer in unison. Sexton smiled.

Time passed.

"Build me up/ Tear me down/ Like a skyscraper/ Build me up/ Then tear down these joining walls/ So they can't climb at all." The music was so loud that I could feel the vibrations shuddering in my body. **Well, you only live once** I thought as I threw myself into the mosh pit.

Time passed.

"Grant! What are you doing in there? You have to get out now!" I could see the Doctor's face on the viewscreen in front of me. It was strangely distorted, like FRANK's had been when I'd still been on the opposite side of the computer interface.

"I'm helping FRANK fight the virus, Doctor. We're making some pretty good headway, so please don't distract us."

"No, Grant. You've got to leave. **Now.**" Had I been on the other side, I probably wouldn't have dared disobey, but in here, the Doctor's persona wasn't as potent. I juggled the life-support subroutines and tweaked the atmospheric shield integrity. "How's it coming?" I called to FRANK. The AI was busy combatting the virus. To my eyes, it looked like it was wrestling with a dragon. I had agreed to take over the autonomic functions of the mainframe so that it could devote its run time to fighting the Phracton virus that had invaded the system. FRANK had explained it fairly accurately: "The average human uses only about ten percent of its total brain capacity. If you can jack into the system, I can use your excess memory space to run my autonomic functions. As soon as I've finished with the virus, I can take over again and you can jack out." Since the only other alternative was to let FRANK die, which would cause the atmospheric shield to de-res and kill every miner, archaeologist and time traveller inside the dome, I agreed.

Dimly, I was aware of my real body, sitting in a chair in front of a computer console somewhere in the complex, electrodes accessing my brain functions. For a few moments, I could have sworn that I felt the Doctor's arms shaking my shoulders, trying to get me out of

I am an old man with a brittle voice



the system. I was familiar with the dangers of direct jacking, but I knew what I was doing.

Direct jacking lets a computer system interface directly with your brain. Occasionally you hear stories about guys who get disconnected from the computer before they're ready, and whose minds get left in the computer. Impossible. Any information taken from your brain is copied, but not erased. Your mind never really leaves your brain, but information from the system does go to your brain. That's the real danger; having leftover computer information in your brain. Before you jack in, your brain is like a glass that's one-tenths of the way full (or nine-tenths empty, depending on how you look at it). When you jack in, the rest of the space gets filled up with another liquid, so that your glass is almost full. The computer always leaves some extra space, just in case. If you jack out before all of the info is removed, the two liquids of your mind and the computer info are mixed together inseparably. That's the real danger of jacking in.

I looked over at FRANK. The virus seemed bigger than last time, and somehow rounder. It was as if it was no longer a dragon, but more like a giant balloon model of one.

"Is there some kind of problem out there, Doctor?" The programs I was handling took a fair bit of concentration, but I was still able to split my attention enough to hold a conversation with the Doctor.

"Yes, but I'd rather not talk about it via this means of communication." Behind the Doctor, I could see my real body, twitching slightly as my brain handled the data from the mainframe.

I looked back at FRANK. The virus was now a huge, shiny sphere. FRANK had given up his sword, and was now simply pushing against it, trying to stop it from rolling forward and crushing his world.

"Doctor, I'm sorry, but what I'm doing here is vital to the survival of the dome. I'll come out as soon as I'm finished." I shut the screen off. A few moments later, I heard a strangled scream from FRANK's direction. The AI had been crushed by the virus sphere, which was now steadily rolling toward me.

I barely had time to scream before it

hit me. My last sensation was a wave of cold wind sweeping over my real-world body, as the atmospheric shield collapsed.

D(2-hvarua)o(bzlurlqa)c(anoaie9a)t
(hnlasjse)o(irhnlaw)r(9817hbay)?
(rou8493)C(oiujrnan)a(890nb034)n(n8iah3s)
(aougnra83)y(qointi32)o(ao84093hn)u
(ahorin345) (3hng0/a9)h(.z[p03973)e(/);=-
JGA)a(aoir03/.,)r(*&GJGha87) (298bakuu)
m (4 3 8 h ? n 8 3) e (9 2 3 4 0 n g s k) ?
(043nalr94)D(*854423=)o(rioenatk)c(39hal-
ntk)t(3847hnalr)o(u3489hab)r(inariung)?

Time passed.

Sometimes, consciousness can be a bitch. It's like an alarm clock. "Please," you say to yourself, "I don't want to face the so-called real world. I want to stay in oblivion for a while longer." But you always get up eventually, and that's when the real world bares its fangs. Your joints crack, you discover that you've been sleeping on your arm, you remember that something horrible happened the previous night, whatever. For me, it had been the smell that herded me towards the outside world. Antiseptic. Institutional. Sterile.

I was in a hospital. I tried to move, but discovered that I wasn't even strong enough to lift my own head. It took almost an eternity to lift my eyelids, and even then, I couldn't really discern anything through the blur. My mouth was dry, and I could barely talk above a whisper.

Something moved into my field of vision, and I managed to croak "Doctor?" I felt a hand touch my forehead - a hand that certainly wasn't the Doctor's

My vision gradually cleared to the point where I was able to discern a middle-aged woman bending over me. "Rest," she said in an accent I couldn't identify.

"Where....?" I managed to whisper.

"You've been brought to the Bi-Al Foundation. You were suffering from a combination of memory compression, hypothermia, and exposure to vacuum. You're still probably a bit weak, so don't try to move around too much."

I let my eyes close. "Who....?"

"I'm Doctor Mortigne. Grant, listen. You're going to be fine, but right now, your body needs a lot of rest. Get some sleep."

"Wait. Is there... anyone here for me?"

"Not at the moment."

"What?"

"There was a man who brought you in, but I haven't seen him for several hours. He didn't leave any address or way of contacting him. He'll probably be back. He did leave you a note." I felt Mortigne place an envelope in one of my hands. "Sleep" she ordered, leaving the room.

I did sleep, rather fitfully, for about 5 hours. Throughout the entire period, though, I never once let go of the envelope. A few times, I would feel my fingers relaxing and snap awake. I don't know what I would have done if the note had fallen on the floor.

Eventually, I felt strong enough to sit up in bed and read the letter. My glasses were on the table next to the bed. When I slipped them on, they'd never felt so heavy. I opened the envelope.

"Dear Grant I'm sorry that I couldn't be there for when you regained consciousness, but the doctors tell me that you should make a full recovery. There is a bank account in your name on Iapetus that has 90,000 credits in it, which should be enough for you to make a life for yourself. Your best bet for employment would probably be Yetlish Industries, which is a programming company based on Triton. There is documentation for you (fake birth certificate, working papers, high school diploma etc) available in the Tethys archives. I know you'll be fine.

The Doctor."

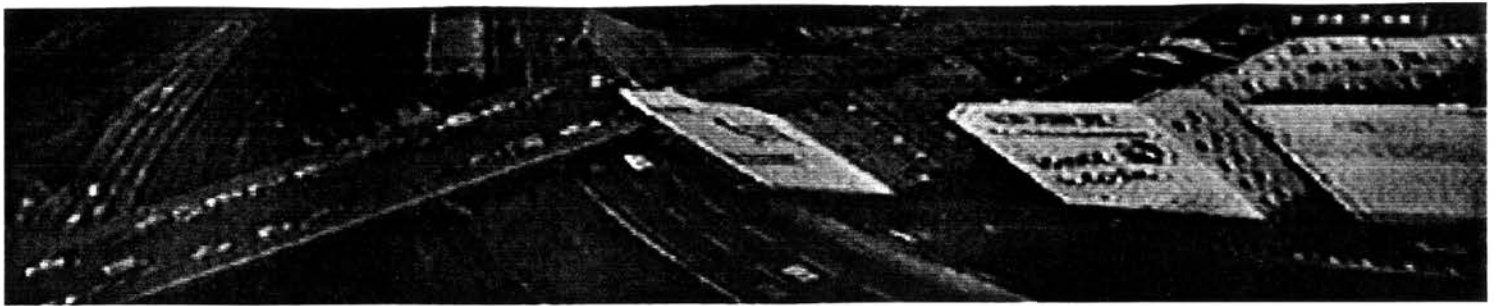
My head fell back against the pillow.

A great deal of time passed.

It wasn't quite quitting time, but since I'd gotten a call from Becky, and it was Friday, I let everyone go home early. We'd just finished the Butler project, and done a damn good job, if I say so myself.

"I really don't know. I wish I did. It's not ticking, is it?" Becky said something in

but the tale still rises from deep down



response, but I didn't hear it. The door to my office had opened, and he walked through. He looked exactly the way I remembered him; tall, imperious, catlike. His mop of blonde curly hair still refused to obey any kind of style, while his clashing coat insured that no one could ever forget seeing him. My jaw hung open.

"Grant? Grant?" Becky said from the other end of the comline. Her voice, and the note of concern in it, snapped me into reality again.

"Beck, I've really got to go now. I'll be home soon." It wasn't until I talked to her that night that I realized that I'd just hung up on her.

He didn't say anything, just walked toward my desk. I couldn't say a word. I wanted to yell at him, cry, act coldly angry, but I just couldn't get over the shock. I had imagined a thousand scenarios for why he never came back for me, and I was about to find out why.

He picked up the picture of me, Becky and Emily that I kept on my desk. He gave it a cursory glance and said "Attractive family. It's good to see that you finally overcame your fear."

"She's a musician. A cellist. You'd probably like her."

He nodded. Silence.

"Grant -"

"You could have told me to my face. I could have taken it. 'Grant, you've become a nuisance. Grant, I don't want you to travel with me anymore.'"

"It wasn't like that."

"Then why? Huh? Is that what you do to all your companions? Cut them loose without any explanation, any goodbye, any choice?!"

"Grant!" He silenced me. He slumped into the chair in front of my desk, the place where dozens of my clients had sat previously. His shoulders were slumped, and it looked almost like he was trying to take up as little space as possible. At this moment, I could believe his claim that he was almost a thousand years old, but he also reminded me of an adolescent; moody, volatile, and only just realising how cruel the world could be. Hurt once too often, and doing his best to grow a protective shell around himself. All my anger at him melt-

ed into pity.

"What happened?" I asked calmly, pouring him a glass of water.

"I just -" He stopped himself, afraid that he might get carried away by his emotions. He took a sip of water, and continued. "I just looked down at you lying there, and I saw Adric. And Peri. And Kamelion and Icthar and Aleka and everyone who's ever died because of me." A human would be crying, but the Doctor didn't. "And I said to myself 'No more. No one else dies.' I can't do it anymore, Grant. I can't ask you to lay down your life for me. I can't ask anyone that anymore."

"Is that what this is about? Doctor, you don't have to ask. Yes, people die. It's a universal fact. You can't be responsible for every sparrow that falls." I sat on the edge of my desk and grabbed him by the shoulders, trying to get him to look at me.

"You don't understand, Grant! I am responsible. And I don't want to be anymore."

"What about me? What about my responsibility for myself? Can't I make my own decisions about how I live my life? Can't I decide that you're worth dying for? Sure, there's danger out there, and there's always the possibility that I won't come back. Yeah, I might die because I'm with you, but you might die because I'm not. You shouldn't be alone, Doctor."

"I'm 925 years old. I'm old enough to take care of myself."

"You know what I mean, Doctor. I still remember what you said, about being afraid of the future. About being afraid of him. You said I was your conscience. You said all of your companions were. You need us. If not me, then **somebody**."

"I'm doing this for **you**!"

"But what are you doing for **you**?"

"I won't allow anyone else to sacrifice themselves for me."

"But you've got no problem with sacrificing yourself. What is it that's supposed to make you any more expendable than anyone else? Damnit, Doctor! You're worth dying for! Don't you realise that? You can't just roll over and let a future that you hate gradually overtake you! God, you're such a fucking martyr."

The Doctor looked up. I recognised his expression. He was going to insult me, and

treat me as inferior to insure that I gave him some space. He didn't mean it, but it still hurt, and it usually worked. This time, though, I just decided that it wasn't worth it.

"Well. I've got to get home." I grabbed my coat and boots and headed for the door. The last sight of the Doctor I saw was his face falling, his insulting expression dissolving into one of hurt and loss. "You can show yourself out."

Just before I closed my office door, I heard him say "Goodbye, Grant." In the corridor, I paused for a second, but didn't look back.

Emily climbs onto my lap and says "Tell me a story." I reach for a copy of Winnie the Pooh, but she deflects my hand. "No, Daddy. Tell me a story."

I think for a few moments.

FIN

Schrödinger's Botanist
© Ian McIntire 1996

and the slightly open mouth repeats it

VIRTUAL REALITY

[VIRTUAL REALITY STORY]

[david golding]

There was a kind of night outside, so Brenna guessed that what she found within would be termed nightlife. She had no idea what any of them might really be doing here. Twenty minutes ago she had been walking down a street near home. On a whim she had followed some poor soul, her head down, footsteps heavy. He'd frightened easy, and she'd found herself alone, outside this establishment, ugly 80s neon sign bleeding into the gloom. She'd watched that for ten seconds and then walked in. No bouncer.

It was a bar or club, and Brenna might have been anywhere in the world. Long ebon bar stretching the length of one wall, manned by white double-breasteds, against a background of bottles, a multitude of dubious drinks, seconded by a wall-mirror. Dim lights in banks that maybe promised something flashier later. People on the bar, around small round tables, conversing quietly, or not, or alone, either eyes hungry or nursing a drink. A few couples slow danced, but they were in their own headspace. Brenna was drinking something hard and ill-tasting from a blank bottle, chasing with ubiquitous coke, wondering what she might be doing here.

Brenna was educated, a virgin of love, of ambiguous occupation, and had retro-viruses eating at her body. But then, she could be anybody. Her hair was long and dark, she had azure eyes, against a fine white face, which she considered assets. Her breasts were too small, her thighs too big, but most of the women and probably half the men in the room thought that of themselves. She lived in a flat several blocks from here, on the edge of this business district (facets, they called them these days, lit up one moment, dull the next, world a sparkling cut gem), with two others and a dog.

She guessed she was drinking to forget.

A lot of that these days. Millennial rot or something. People were waiting for something different. She was drinking to forget, that nothing had happened, was happening. Of course shit was, but then, nobody you knew was ever involved in that, it was always foreign faces on the world news pages; maybe it was made up, some thing in an office spinning it out daily. And anyway, that was just a different kind of nothing.

There must have been, Brenna thought, a time. When there were new things in the world. Bright, terrifying yet exciting, flame on quicksilver. But what has become of it?

Discontinuity, and Brenna found herself in the toilets, jeans round her ankles, staring at graffiti. She had vague memories of uni, talk about words as viruses. That must have been so, once. The wood in front of her was the usual hash of scratches, tags, boy junk, and uni smart. "Call me when you organise the revolution." Oh, yeah.

Dark now, eyes closed, the world tight against her arse, cool against her forehead. She's resting on the bar, but maybe it's all just gone. She could open her eyes and find, instead the kaleidoscope liquor, a forest. In her dreams she'd never find one, too baroque. Perhaps the walls of words, cyberspace dreams. She found it so hard to be bothered with dreams these days. So much effort to recall any details upon waking. Did people dream in words, she wondered. When she thought, she heard words in her head, fucklish commonspeak. Did foreign people think in foreign languages? What of babies, before language, what did they think? What of the deaf, the retarded, the deprived? There must have been a time...

as powerfully as it is effortless.





She found herself thinking of uni again. "There must have been a time when we first became aware of death. It must have been momentous, quite a shock. Yet what has become of it? I'm sure I would remember something like that."

Brenna ponders this, before it is lost to a tide of lateral snatches: "memory's nature to plagiarise and paraphrase," "Brenda, are you listening?" "call me or cool me," "social archaeologists uncover 'taboo'," "fuck fuck fuck," "is sardony a word?" A sigh calms her brain tissues. With only the vaguest realisation she's asleep.

Asleep would be like a virtual reality rig. A dream would be an environment. Something you can move through at will, look at this, pick up that, be waylaid by a smell. Phosphor orange walls are arrayed around her, ammonia in the air, everything blurs as she moves. She feels weight on her head. Brenna sees her hand a block of pixels. Generic fictional corporate logo upper-right corner. In her dream she blinks, and with a small falling msensation, she's returned here, to the bar.

She stares at the labels of bottles, examining intricate borders, anthropomorphisms of someone's idea of style, alcohol content, active ingredients, and type size for these. There's dust on some of those shelves. Two of the white double-breasteds strike up a conversation before her, but she's not interested, probably shop-talk. Brenna doesn't drink for the taste, or the pose, she drinks to get drunk. She wanders the room list-

lessly, drawing no stares, though she pauses close to some groups. Don't they suspect her of listening to their private little scripts? Strangely, the two behind the bar turn up the volume. They must be yelling, but Brenna blocks it out. She's listening to the two chessfans next to her, while she dances with herself. They're talking about sex, the kind without cunts. It seems like they're trying to offend someone, the way they talk, but each listens matter-of-factly.

Brenna wobbles her hips before a hungry one, tempting, then pulls away, and sits at an empty table, considers calling for a drink.

Slowly, with the majestic gradualness of a glacier, Brenna realises she's in a seminar about art.

There must have been a time... (Again. Why those words?) It is hard for us today to imagine the effect. Flatvision has passed from the zeitgeist - for lack of a better word, offhand - along with the narrative. This is a generation born without a story. I see how uncomprehending you all are, and it fills me with sadness. [Jack the Jobber, poor old Jack, Mr Tiberius, Brenna and the kids had always picked on him.] I remember 'Star Trek', 'Days Of Our Lives', all the old greats. Sighs. No, I was wrong, it is impossible for you to imagine. With a delimited two-dimensional environment, the director could control the content made available to the participant. Camera angle, lighting, filters, speed, sound, edits, all these...sighs...all are lost. And that is all,

class.

Brenna understands now, in her dream. Virtual reality is just that. Like life, you wander from this to that, deciding for yourself what is important. Sport or fights, maybe some manipulation is available to the director of these, but otherwise the only tool is to phase out detail beyond a locale. For a moment, flame on quicksilver, Brenna understands what a story might be.

With a shove and a grunt, Brenna finds herself pushed up hard against the cool, then the pressure on her butt is gone, and there's pain, and something warm pushing against her body. When she opens her eyes she's on the floor. Somewhere, somewhen, somepurpose. She tries to remember what she was doing in the bar. Meeting someone? Hadn't someone brought her here? It didn't matter. Some drunk had knocked her from her perch. Her head hurt.

She crawled back her seat. Drank from her bottle. Waiting.

Virtual Reality Story

© David P Golding 1995

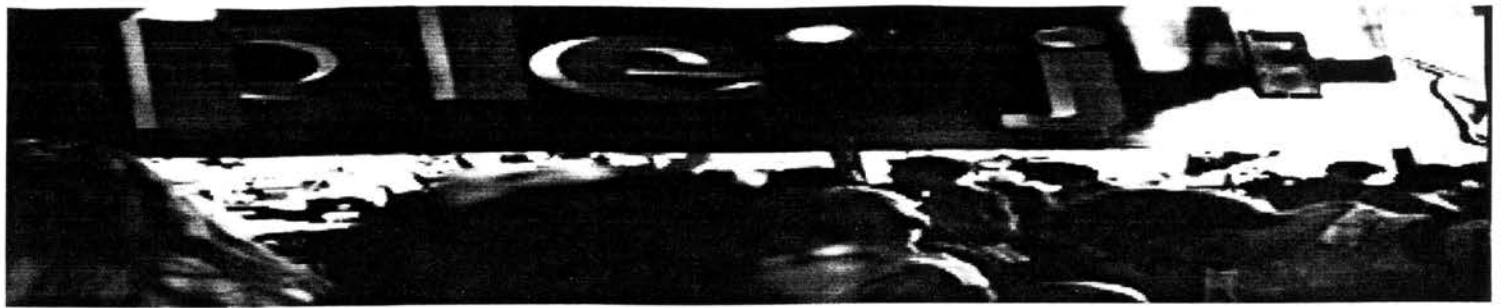


HEROADSWORD
ISSUE 15

TIMEWYRM
myths, legends, archetypes

the crawling civilisation
through to
the end of the world

A liturgy for which no one need be initiated



Virgin

UPCOMING RELEASES - BOOKS

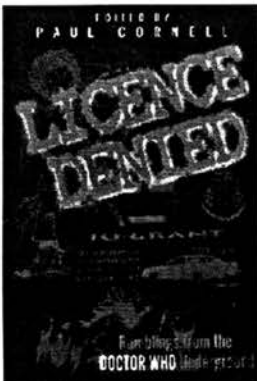


Deadfall
Gary Russell

Jason Kane, Bernice's former husband, is in trouble as usual. Having purloined what he believed to be the location of the legendary planet Ardethe from his ex-wife, he finds himself trapped on a barren rock in a desolate sector. And so, as escape seems quite hopeless, Jason activates the distress beacon he also stole.

Unfortunately, he doesn't quite get the assistance he expected. Instead, Chris Cwej, Benny's old friend, materialises in a bizarre underground chamber, and promptly has his mind wiped by the ancient equipment he has accidentally activated. Jason is still trapped on the planet, and he now has to look after an amnesiac.

However, isolation is the least of their worries. They have inadvertently awakened something beneath the planet's surface - something that feeds on human brains. And when a prison ship full of hard-bitten women convicts arrives in orbit, the situation becomes even more complicated. Someone is pulling the strings and watching people die. It could be any one of the desperate prisoners, the reclusive crew or the suspicious governor. Jason doesn't know who is the true foe, and his trusty companion Chris doesn't even know his own name.



Licence Denied
Edited by Paul Cornell

The untold story of Doctor Who is the story of fanzines: the magazines produced by the artistic and anarchistic culture called fandom. These publications are controversial, intellectual and witty. And often offensive, rude and

scandalous. Their story could only be told unlicensed, making this collection of snippets from fanzines unauthorised, uncensored and unputdownable.

Included are a no-holds-barred interview with Tom Baker, set visits to Carnival of Monsters and The Web of Fear and as much satire, analysis and ranting as any fan could want. With contributions from all over the world and from three decades of fandom, Licence Denied is the book that finally exposes the artistry, rudeness and wit of Doctor Who fandom.

Much to his surprise, Paul Cornell has become a television writer, with credits on The Word, Springhill and Coronation Street. His own series, Wavelength, was recently screened on Children's ITV. He's also written lots of Doctor Who books, and co-written a number of volumes on cult television. He lives in London.



Ghost Devices
Simon Bucher-Jones

Legend tells of the Vo'lach, an ancient people who could travel the stars and see the future. Some say they didn't like what they saw; some say they were devils who hated life. For whatever reason, they destroyed their own biosphere. And, to make sure that their planet would remain a desolate wasteland for ever, they built fearsome machines that would instantly destroy any sign of life or intelligence.

Bernice travels to the primitive and religious world of Canopus IV, where the locals worship the Spire - a kilometre-high tower that bends time - and talk of gods who can see through time. On arrival, she finds that the planet is on the brink of collapse, as military zealots attempt to seize power and spread their faith throughout the sector in a holy war. One thing alone can maintain the stability of the region. Someone must solve the mystery of the Canopu's ancient gods - and Benny is just the archaeologist for the job.

So, to prevent an interstellar war, the

professor and her team journey to the root of the mystery - the dead world of Vo'lach Prime - and face a culture dedicated to the destruction of all life. But it soon becomes clear not everyone wants the truth to be known, and that there is more than one murderer amongst them.



Mean Streets
Terrance Dicks

Bernice receives an unexpected visit from her old companion Chris Cwej - a man with a lot on his mind. He tells her of a discovery made by his late partner, Roz Forrester: years before, while they were searching the mean streets of Megacity, Roz unearthed the first evidence of 'the project', a fiendish criminal scheme which she thought endangered the whole sector. Chris promised he would investigate with her, but her tragic death means he needs someone to step into Roz's shoes, and that person is Benny.

Like Chris, Benny decides to undertake the mission to honour Roz's memory, and the pair set off to a lawless mining colony and the sprawling chaos of Megacity. There they meet an old friend, Garshak the augmented Ogron, and soon all three of them are up to their necks in corruption - faced by a multitude of villainous ne'er-do-wells.

The future of the entire sector is at stake, and Benny must swiftly learn to become a true detective. For they are not the only ones in Megacity engaged on a hunt; those on their trail have had far more practice at it than an archaeologist with the best of intentions - and they see it as a very deadly pursuit.

to the meaning of the words and phrases.



BBC

UPCOMING RELEASES - AUDIO



The Bodysnatchers
Mark Morris

It is London, 1894. Amid the fog, cold and degradation a gruesome business is being conducted: bodysnatchers are at work - bodies of men, women and children are being stolen from their graves for the sinister purpose of a mysterious gentleman.

When the Doctor and Sam arrive, they are witness to a horrifying scene in the evil-smelling fog: something rises up from the filthy waters of the Thames and devours a man - a man terrified for his life and on the run from the devil himself...

Teaming with an old friend, pathologist Professor George Litefoot, the Doctor is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. Together with Sam, they discover there is a far graver threat facing London than just earthly grave robbers. Deadly alien beings the Doctor has encountered before are at work, and they bring a whole new twist to the word 'bodysnatchers'...

Featuring the Zygons, who battled the Fourth Doctor on TV in *TERROR OF THE ZYGONS*, this novel is another in the series of original adventures featuring the Eighth Doctor and Sam. Written by Mark Morris, a highly-respected horror writer, heralded by Clive Barker as "one of the finest horror writers at work today."



The Ultimate Treasure
Christopher Bulis

The seers of Gelsandor foretell the coming of many visitors to their planet, all in search of the lost treasure of the fabulously wealthy Rován Cartovall, who vanished 5000 years ago...

An innocent shopping jaunt for the Doctor and Peri ends in violence and incarceration as they become caught up in a mysterious transaction involving the sale

of co-ordinates leading to Rován's hoard - the ultimate treasure.

But there are several parties heading for Gelsandor and some of them will stop at nothing to find the treasure. Only the Doctor is sceptical: what will they find - and why has nobody found it before?

Gelsandor turns out to be a planet with a whole host of tricks, traps and deadly surprises, testing the Doctor and Peri to their limits.

The Ultimate Treasure is a Fifth Doctor and Peri novel written by Christopher Bulis who has gained excellent reviews for previous Dr Who adventures.



Genocide
Paul Leonard

Years after leaving UNIT, Jo Grant discovers a secret project to travel back in time and observe the evolution of the human species at first hand. Intending to limit any possible damage, she travels with a team of scientists 2.5 million years into the

past to observe *Homo Habilis*, the earliest known humans.

But when the Doctor and Sam visit Earth in 2109, they find no trace of the human race. Earth is the home of the Tractites - a peaceful race who have been living there for hundreds and thousands of years. Astonished and appalled, the Doctor travels back in time to see just what went wrong in Earth's pre-history.

Who has supplied the scientists' time technology - and why? Are the Tractites all they seem? Finally, separated from the TARDIS, the Doctor's last chance to put things right rests with Sam - but has even she turned against him?

This novel is another in the series of adventures featuring the Eighth Doctor and Sam.

Business Unusual
Gary Russell

A security force with no official identity... a managing director with no name... a sinister creature on guard patrol resembling some kind of hellhound... SenéNet is no ordinary multina-



tional company.

The Doctor arrives in Brighton, 1989, travelling alone. He soon discovers his old friend, the Brigadier, has gone missing investigating SenéNet, whose new interactive games console is soon to be released at an absurdly reasonable price. He was last seen at their headquarters - based in

the picturesque Ashdown Forest...

Investigating further, the Doctor becomes more and more entangled in a deadly web of intrigue. Together with Mel, a plucky computer programmer from Pease Pottage, the Doctor must overcome the conspiracy of silence, rescue the Brigadier and save the world once again - something that would be a lot easier if he just knew where to start...

Featuring the Sixth Doctor and Mel, this adventure takes place between *THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD* and *TIME AND THE RANI*.



Kursaal
Peter Anghelides

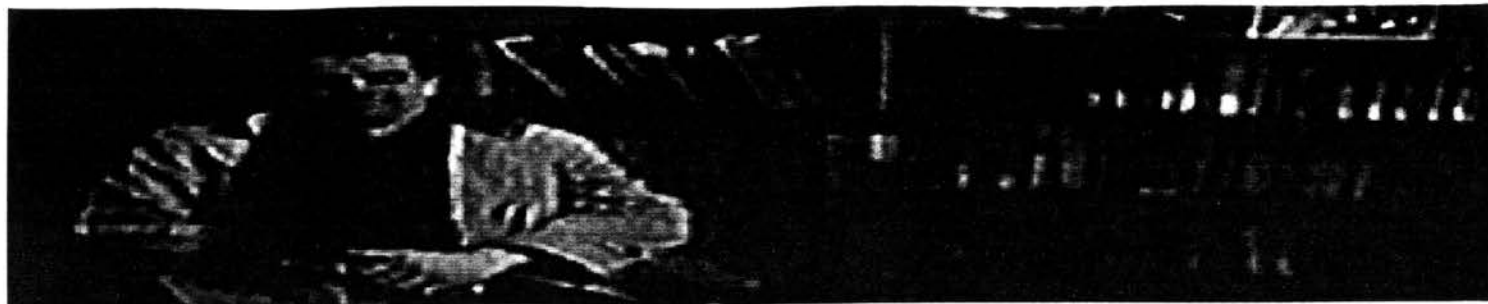
Kursaal is a pleasure world, a huge theme park for the Cronus System - or rather it will be if it isn't destroyed during construction.

Eco-terrorists want the project halted to preserve vital archaeological sites - last evi-

dence of the long-dead Jax, an ancient wolf-like race whose remains are being buried beneath the big-business tourist attractions.

Sam falls in with the environmentalists, and finds her loyalties divided. Meanwhile, the Doctor's own investigations suggest the Jax are not extinct after all.

Cut off from the TARDIS, separated from his companion and pursued for murder, the Doctor discovers Kursaal hides a fate worse than death - and that Sam is being affected by events more than anyone would guess...



A DEVICE OF DEATH



A Device of Death
by Christopher Bulis
reviewed by David
Robinson

After what seems an eternity of very obvious plot twists, an endless assault of convoluted descriptions and an infinity of boring prose, this book takes a completely out of character turn into a *Murder She*

Wrote style ending. Perhaps worse is the constant display of how very clever the story is with

wonderful lines like "No Doctor, it's not that simple.", yet this o-so-clever trick isn't, it is just silly, and not in the nice bouncy way. Dave Stone wrote this book much better, he called it *Death and Diplomacy*.

Although I don't think Christopher Bulis's other books were the state of the art or gold Sgloomi contenders, a degree of consistency was evident: the conclusion followed. This was absent from *A Device of Death*.

Some of the points in this book are befuddling. For example: why give the Doctor (and others) amnesia? Perhaps if this was a regeneration story and the character of the Doctor wasn't clearly defined yet, or perhaps to do something awfully clever with the character of the Doctor,

but no, it was done for the simple purpose of explaining background story to the reader. Perhaps the amnesia was necessary to hide the inability to write for the Doctor.

The characters in this novel are rather bland, including the regulars. Sure the Doctor has the obligatory scarf, sonic screwdriver and tooth grin, but the Doctor is so much more than that. Sarah is more than just a few thoughts about feminism. Harry is closer to the mark, but then again he was never a very interesting character anyway.

This is a plot driven story in which characters are a necessity rather than a complex component of a novel of their own right.

THE DARK PATH



The Dark Path
by David A McIntee
reviewed by Richard
Prekodravac

The Dark Path is the last novel from David McIntee in the Virgin adventures of Doctor Who. McIntee's an almost war machine - he has delivered a barrage of action based novels and has helped to create

the mammoth Doctor Who universe diversified by the New and Missing Adventures. He has written *White Darkness*, *First Frontier*, *Lords of the Storm*, *The Shadow of Weng-Chiang*, the latest novel *The Dark Path*; but perhaps his best novel to date was his New Adventure *Sanctuary*.

It was McIntee who wrote *First Frontier*, he presented the Master evolved from those faded cathode ray memories. In *The Dark Path* McIntee looks at the Master's origins, a chance at a character study of evil at its twilight. There are some interesting observations and revelations but more on that later.

McIntee's novels have always drawn out strong reactions from his readers, simple because they find him to be far too dull. Sylvia Thomas

wrote in her review of *Lords of the Storm*:

"What drives the nail into the coffin is McIntee's infamous plodding prose. One gets the feeling that he's trying too hard. The reader is subjected to poetic descriptions based on spectrograph readings, technobabble that is incomprehensible even by technobabble standards, and the world's record for the number of times the word 'trapezoid' is used in a full-length novel. While wading through the adjectives, the reader is likely to daydream about stealing McIntee's thesaurus and signing him up for a class in minimalist theory."

Take however David Robinson's review of *Sanctuary*:

"David [McIntee] has the ability to write about every part of a scene, not to the magnifying glass level of Warlock, but instead to a slightly different level... it gives a very deep feel to the book on [the] whole and succeeds in producing a feeling of sympathy for things that happened close to a thousand years ago."

These two passages illustrate some kind of strange creature who writes with one hand prose that is sweet, and on the other its plain its dull.

McIntee has chosen a style which involves complex description very much in the tradition of writers such as Herman Melville and J.R.R. Tolkien. The style evokes strong images of landscapes and emotions; the technique not only describes the scene but sets the tone created by

the language of the writer, as David noted in his review for *Sanctuary*. However for a writer to employ this technique the effect is not always guaranteed.

There's a great deal of difficulty following the story in *The Dark Path*. McIntee chooses to tell the story from the point of view of his characters, as a character study it's appropriate. However the problem with *The Dark Path* is with the change from one character's perspective to another character's perspective. McIntee moves too suddenly. Descriptive writing by its nature is heavy and heady, the reader needs to devote a great deal of time to understand and experience. By moving too quickly McIntee fails to give the reader that opportunity. Where the reader would liked to have lavishly enjoy the prose, the reader is bashed over the head.

The writing also has to maintain some kind of interest. For *Sanctuary* the style is effective because the writing is romantic and regal, magical and frightening:

"Meltwater bubble in the dented iron of an old helmet, chinks of rabbit-flesh bobbing to surface. A rough and scratched hand added a few small dead twigs to the cooking fire, which whipped around in constant danger of being blown out, despite being built in the lee of a fallen tree-trunk in a copse. Draping an old cloak over a branch as an impromptu windbreak, a tall man, hair flapping heavily around his shoulders,

The world seems to be sinking into dusk

walked out to the edge of the small copse and looked downslope, his arms folded and his legs braced against an icy rock." (p. 7)

The piece evokes something archetypal, its melancholic interest is maintained. In *Lords of the Storm* the opposite is evident and is rather sad, we're given stock clichés of the jewel like planets:

"The planet was not alone in its orbit; a necklace of sparkling jewellery encircled it and its tiny moon. Huge sheets of icy crystal like diamond butterflies swooped around the even larger clusters of gemstone minarets and buttresses that were laced together with glassy lace as fine and fragile looking as a glass spider web. (p. 146)

In *The Dark Path* McIntee also has the problem of maintaining consistency with this style and by the fiftieth page all this disappears.

It should be clear that despite these problems it is dependant on the appropriateness of the style. The writing style can often be magical as for fantasy novels such as the *Lords of the Rings* trilogy and the epic sea adventure of *Moby Dick*. It is perfect for the medieval setting of *Sanctuary* but loses perspective for the space battles in *Lords of the Storm* where fast action not meditative reflection is called for. *The Dark Path* however falls between the two, there's plenty of action, space battles, ground assaults

etc. *The Dark Path* also has to trace the evolution into evil for the Master, the thoughts of the characters have to be open to the reader, that is, a character study.

The characters are written fairly well up to a point. Their behaviours and speech mirror their television counterparts. The Doctor is represented well, so is Victoria. Ailla the Master's companion is fascinating, acting at times like an ersatz Benny although with charm and grace and less wit than her New Adventure double. The secondary characters are likeable and enjoyable, they complement the primary characters but there's no sense of care... they fine but not memorable.

The Master is a Master evolving. Other reviewers have commented on the transformation from good to evil but I don't see it. I saw the Master as someone who was bad to begin with, who developed into a far more evil character through a painful journey of love lost and love betrayed ("We've met before?", *Lost Highway*).

I credit McIntee with an excellent Master, there he has a growing desire to control and create order. There seems to be an underlying illness as found with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. That potential is however wasted as is the psychology of most of McIntee's characters.

In *The Dark Path* McIntee gives us a chance to look into the minds of Victoria and the

Master several steps above cardboard ciphers. Their thoughts are original and true to the character. However these moments of reflection always stops short from a fully thinking character. Its believable its just there's not enough of it.

Its about a man who gets tempted by fate and greed. As time progresses he becomes self-consumed with evil. He ignores warnings and in the end seals his own fate. If you've read *The Dark Path* this is perhaps a simplistic summary of the Master's beginnings. If you perhaps looked it from my perspective, you would know I was talking about *Macbeth*. I would have enjoyed the Master's evolution if it were much closer to *Macbeth*. Perhaps that may be another story waiting to be told.

This story is a McIntee classic: fascinating, exciting, thrilling and thoroughly enjoyable. McIntee has an excellent mind. The 'Darkheart' the focus of the novel is truly brilliant, definite edge of the seat stuff.

That's precisely McIntee he can create an excellent fascinating story, a Sontaron - Rutan battle, Master - 50's sci-fi, the voodoo and espionage, romance and tragedy; but McIntee fails to make his writing more accessible to his readers.

Sylvia Thomas has kindly allowed me to use her quote. The full review of *Lords of the Storm* can be found at Rebecca J Anderson's Web page.

THE WELL-MANNERED WAR



The Well-Mannered War
by Gareth Roberts
reviewed by Grant
Watson

As the regularly restated anecdote goes, last year the BBC refused to renew Virgin Publishing Ltd's license to produce Doctor Who novels. While the New Adventures range continues without the Doctor's presence, with the Missing Adventures it simply was not as easy.

Put simply, *The Well-Mannered War* is the last Missing Adventure of them all.

Virgin could not have picked a better author to write the final Missing Adventure than Gareth Roberts. The author of two previous (and immensely popular) books in the series, his styl-

ish attempts to capture seventeenth season Doctor Who have made him by far the most popular Missing Adventure author there is.

Capturing the style of the much-maligned season is precisely what Roberts is good at. The fourth Doctor, Romana and K9 arrive on the desolate world of Barlow: the site of a peculiar war between an Earth colony and a small force of Chelonian soldiers. Naturally things are not as the seem, and while the Doctor makes his way from one force to another, Romana follows K9's attempts to become prime minister of nearby Metralubit. The story is, on first inspection, rather silly. Incredibly silly, in fact. Displaying all the overt wit and camp humour of the time, *The Well-Mannered War* follows the author's previous books precisely, in that the story extends beyond mere jokiness and actually includes a very good, extremely serious story as well.

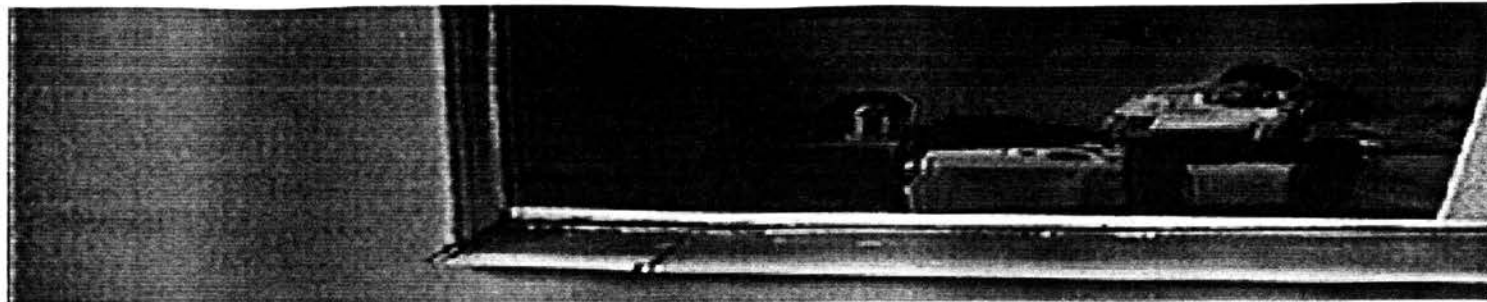
Including the Chelonians within the book is a stroke of genius. After their debut in *The*

Highest Science, the Chelonians have rapidly been established as the only real classic monster of Virgin's output. It is nice to see them pitted against the Doctor one final time, before they and the roving Time Lord part ways forever. Roberts also includes more than one other returning element, but to reveal any more would be to spoil the story.

Some of the details included are just as nice, including the division of the novel into four parts like the TV series, an extremely funny (if a little controversial) conclusion and a brilliant change of outfit for Romana. You can see it on the cover. (Also of interest on the cover is the uniform of Admiral Dolne, more than a little reminiscent of another science fiction TV series!)

The Well-Mannered War is hugely enjoyable. While it lacks the grandiose spectacle that marked the Doctor Who New Adventures, it instead presents an exceedingly well-written and immensely satisfying story. That is, after all, what Doctor Who novels are all about.

but I tell the stories



THE ROOM WITH NO DOORS



The Room With No Doors

by Kate Orman
reviewed by Richard Prekodravac

This may seem naive and confused but I don't care it is what I feel:

I just feel that I can not do any justice to the book, it is too damn brilliant.

Its beyond comprehension, beyond words and thoughts. You could write a piece of music, film the most evocative imagery, write the most intense words and I would still be short off the mark. I can feel *The Room With No Doors*, I can hear the music, I can imagine those scenes, I can read those words but I can't express it. So this review is a collection of thoughts haphazardly put together; there is no planned direction, nothing to prove, illustrate or demonstrate.

[thought]

There is something about Japanese culture which is fascinating. There is a perfection from detail, there is perfection from imperfection, perfection from confusion and perfection from understanding. Japanese culture is all about the beauty from simplicity.

Take for instance the Japanese tea ceremony. It may be defined by strict rules but look at the movements they're simple and elegant, like the beauty of clockwork, the movements are careful and streamlined and all this takes place around a tiny tea cup handled gently in the palm of your hands. That's *The Room with No Doors*.

[thought]

It is oddly amusing that for someone like Kate Orman who has probably done the most to change the face of Doctor Who she has always and still does humbly respect the Doctor Who universe. I can only imagine Kate as a person gazing out into this universe with childlike imagination and curiosity. I can only think of one other person who does this.

[thought]

I'm reminded of *Battlefield*. There's a reference to the Doctor painting *The Death of Arthur*, Merlin has a smiley badge. It was in Marc Platt's novelisation of *Battlefield*, Marc mentioned the Doctor's fear: That the Doctor knows that he

would have to regenerate. I can only recall my own thoughts of death. I know how Chris feels.

[thought]

Plot- Chris and the Doctor venture to Japan of the 16th century, their cover story is to investigate a time disturbance but perhaps its more about Chris's journey of self-discovery. They come across *Return of the Living Dad's* Joel Mintz and 19th century inventor Penelope Gate.

Penelope is fascinating. Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey* was Odysseus's wife, they had a son Telemachus The Latin name for Odysseus is Ulysses... wasn't that suppose to be the Doctor's father? Other reviewers mention that the story could have taken place anywhere. But so could *Madame Butterfly*.

Penelope is also Kate. Only Penelope can justifiably question the Doctor's methods. It seems like its Kate who is asking the questions. But perhaps its Kate asking herself. She helped to create the Doctor's methods. Perhaps its true.

[thought]

I was talking to a friend (who doesn't read the New Adventures) about *Room*. I explained to him about Time and Time's Champion, about the sixth Doctor and the Valeyard, about the room with no doors. It's quite an interesting mythology, very rich and personal. It seems too personal in *Room*. Perhaps that's why its so special. Like death I'm reminded of *Hamlet*.

One critic of *Hamlet* mentions Hamlet's struggle to find truth. But I see a struggle with life and the meaning of death.

What a piece of work is man... what is this quintessence of dust.

(*Hamlet* II,ii)

Ashes to nothing. Dust to nothing.

(*Room* p).

... But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscovered country, from whose bourn

No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

(*Hamlet* III,i).

Death's the one door you can't close.

(*Room* p258).

[thought]

There are other moments and quotes:

The greatest masterpieces, are created

directly out of our own natures... (p251)

I can let go of my past without letting go of who I am. I release myself from the burden of hating myself for things long since done. I free myself from the task of being perfect and handling everything. No more prisoners. No more self-accusation, self-flagellation, self-castigation. I don't deserve it. None of me does. (p213)

The Doctor held the precious cup in both hands, carefully. He shut his eyes and breathed in the steam. When he opened them again, the Roshi was giving him a questioning look.

He dropped the tea cup, and it broke into a hundred pieces.

The Roshi smiled. (p246)

[thought]

People often talk about bookends with the New Adventures. *Revelation* in retrospect was the first New Adventure. At the other end some people nominate *Human Nature*, others prefer *Lungbarrow*. For me it's *Room*. I was reminded recently of the progression of ideas and representations of the Doctor in the New Adventures. It was Kate who kindly put up with my confusion about *Room*, and gave a new focus. She wrote:

I think there's been an overall progression in the NAs, from some initial confusion about the Doctor's character, to the quite dark character circa the Future History Cycle and the Alternative Universe Cycle, to a less dark, more open, perhaps more *human* character in the later books. That was more a matter of consensus than intentional plan, I think. But there's an obvious trend in the last few Virgin books to move towards the TVM, and the Doctor's reconciliation with himself in *Room* is a deliberate part of that. He's getting ready to start over." (Kate Orman)

[thought]

The Doctor facing his end. Chris facing a beginning. About self-evaluation coming to understanding. About death.

as in the beginning with my sing-song voice,

LUNGBARROW



Lunbarrow
by Marc Platt
reviewed by Jonathan
Blum

And so it ends, and begins again.

Marc Platt is the mad genius of *Doctor Who*. This is a man who Ben Aaronovitch describes as dancing to opera inside his own

head. In *Lunbarrow*, he's woven a tapestry out of elements from the TV series and the previous novels, and produced a work of fiction full of rich images and more resonance than a low-budget TV show or a series of pulpy novels should ever be expected to have.

It hit me, while reading this book, how astounding it is that a novel like this could ever be published as part of a series. I can't think of **any** other TV tie-in novel line which would **dare** to come up with its own definitive answers to the show's questions like that, or tell a story with such far-reaching consequences. To say nothing of how I can't picture any other shared universe coming up with such a deeply personal, visionary, poetic work.

The cleverness of Platt's plotting has already been commented on - the way he takes a few little throwaway details over the course of the series, from the end of *Invasion of Time* to Susan's passing mention that she made up the name of the TARDIS to the infamous Morbius faces, and weaves something mythical out of them.

But what impresses me most of all is the skill of the execution. The wordplay... throwaway phrases referring to cousins and kin of all sorts pop up in the most unexpected places. The amazing pictures Platt paints of the House and its furniture - Disney's *Beauty And The Beast* as designed by Neil Gaiman or Dave McKeown. And most fundamentally of all, the roses, which keep cropping up again and again... a symbol of the fractal complexity of life, they make this book into a companion volume to *Timewyrm: Revelation*, a true bookend for the New Adventures.

One moment which positively made me gush with joy is one which will never be paid off:

Ace's mention of a trip to go see the premiere of the *Rite of Spring*. The Doctor mentions that he thinks he might have gone there - he probably would have been off-stage counting out the beat to the dancers over the ruckus... In fact, in the original first chapter to *Vampire Science*, the eighth Doctor takes Grace to that performance, and even waves to (an unnamed) Ace. He's not trying to run the show; in fact, despite all the distractions and chaos, he's sitting back and enjoying it. I'd completely forgotten that we'd even mentioned our idea to Marc, and to see it made flesh, even in this incomplete form, was a joy.

Of course, Platt can still be deliberately, maddeningly oblique in places - but *Lunbarrow* has a much greater sense of plot clarity than *Time's Crucible* or even *Downtime*. I was impressed by how much was flat-out explained.

The one bit he doesn't say explicitly is that the Other is half-human on his mother's side. But with all the talk about genetic anomalies being passed down to the Doctor, it's made pretty clear. Since the Doctor now has his memories about such matters, which he didn't know before, the comments in the telemovie make perfect sense - he's remembering **other** memories than the ones we knew about.

And of course, Platt doesn't say one thing, not a single word, about what the Other is on his **father's** side...

A few passing notes:

- I love Platt's throwaway zings at favourite fan obsessions. Sathralope dismissing the ornamental hermit the Lungbarrovians kept on the mountainside, and the explanation of the Terrible Zodin both gave me a grin. Gimme this Zodin over Jean-Marc's megalomaniac of the week any day.

- The story of the first Doctor's departure from Gallifrey, told in a few fragments, is lovely. Instead of the bog-standard Hero's Journey routine trotted out in the Leekley script, cliches disguised as archetypes, here we get slightly similar material in a new and different form. The young hero is already an old man with some wisdom of his own, not a callow youth; the Call to Adventure isn't a call to a quest, just an uprooting from routine life into an unpredictable days-like-crazy-paving world with no fixed goal except what you find on your own; and there isn't a the-making-of-a-hero journey tacked on, because Platt recognises that we've already seen

the Doctor become a hero in a cliché-avoiding way, over the course of the first year of the TV show all those years ago. This isn't a story you can say you've seen anywhere before. These senses of wisdom, and unpredictability, and fresh imagination, are in my opinion what makes *Doctor Who* Doctor Who, and Platt nails every one of them.

- Cousin Innocet. A fascinatingly ambiguous character. After seeing what being Housekeeper had done to old Sathralope, I couldn't help but wonder why Innocet would even want the position, but I'd love to find out...

- Leela. An absolutely spot-on characterisation. Every so often, she comes out with a single gorgeous line which shows how she can connect with the heart of the situation: her simple observation on how sad it is that the Doctor has died so many times since she knew him comes to mind.

- Ace. You're reminded, after all this time, that Marc is one of the men who defined Ace as we know her, way back in Season 26. He continues the process of weaving together all the different threads binding Old Ace and New Ace, with the wonderful confrontation between the two. And her big speech on page 157 is laser-sharp — summing up all the inner conflicts which have driven Ace since her beginning.

That wasn't enough though, was it? She kept on at me. She was me and I was nothing. And she was me too. A right vicious little bitch. All the worst bits slung together. She had all the facts, but she didn't understand them. I could see right through her. She'd got all the lurid details, but she didn't know how I felt or what I imagined and that's what I hung on to. If she needed to know, then I must still be me. And she went on and on, always coming back to the Doctor. Who was he? And why and what was he? And that's what I hung on to. 'Cos I believe in him and she didn't know why.'

The teacup cracked into a dozen pieces in her grip.

If there's ever a DWM-style listing of the top ten moments which make the New Adventures special, that scene is right up there for me. It perfectly sums up the fire, the rage, the idealism, the confusion, and the love for the Doctor which have made Ace at her best one of the strongest

which sustains me,



characters in all of the New Adventures. It's magic.

And last but not least, the seventh Doctor. His speech at the end does a wonderful job of summing up the two sides to his nature throughout the New Adventures, and at the same time clearing the decks so that future books don't have to deal with this book's revelations if they don't want to.

'And what will you teach us with your manifold wisdom?' said Ferain. 'Whoever you are or were?'

The Doctor met the old man's eye. The wind stilled.

'What do you want, Ferain? What do you want me to be? Shall I reveal my blazing power? Might that not fry you to a crisp? Shall I sweep away evil and chaos? Reorder the stars in their courses? Banish burnt toast forever?'

He paused.

'Well, I won't. I wouldn't if I could. Who do you think I am?' He thumbed his chest. 'I'm me. The Doctor. What I have been, someone might have imagined. What I will be, how can I tell? I'm not immortal.'

Beauty. Sheer beauty. This is what sets the Doctor apart from all those he fights against, in just a few simple sentences: Care as he does about what he believes in, fight as he does to do what he sees as right, he is never a tyrant, never in love with his own power, never out of touch with the small beauties and disappointments of life.

Even after the ending to this book, I really can't believe that it's all over, that these characters will never be seen again... The book isn't a funeral, isn't a careful putting-away of all the pieces which have filled this game board for the

past five years, it's a celebration of the continuing life of the series. And that's how it should be.

I want Marc to write the next Gallifrey story for BBC Books. He'd have the rights to use the Looms and the whole back story he's created; even if he doesn't get to deal with the Doctor's personal past, I'd love to have him show us what a post-reunification Gallifrey would be like. What it means for the future. And I want to see what that kid turns out to be like. Marc Platt has taken Gallifrey from being the ultimate pit of fanwank, and created what feels like a living breathing world out of it.

I love the New Adventures. Fundamentally, I love *Doctor Who*, no matter what form it takes. And *Lungbarrow* has reminded me just how good *Doctor Who* can get. It's a labor of love, a work of imagination and inspiration, and it leaves me with a wonderful sense of expectations fulfilled.

THE DYING DAYS SO VILE A SIN



So Vile A Sin

by Ben Aaronovitch and Kate Orman
reviewed by David Golding

So Vile A Sin...in which we conclude the Psi Powers series, in which we wave goodbye to Roz, in which we return to the Thirtieth Century. Unfortunately, this is a deeply flawed book, primarily, I suspect, due to the circumstances in which it was created.

Pages flash of brilliance: in particular the interludes, the body on page one, Roz's first and final chapters. But these moments are disjointed. They make me suspicious of a book which would have been much denser, much more fast-ly paced.

The regulars are characterised well. As are the other characters. But I tire as I read what seem like long expositions of scant source material. This book is too slow, too flaccid. I liked it, but I expected more. I expected an epic and got, perhaps, a giant novelisation of a flawed jewel. The Brotherhood, who naturally have been built up in our minds, are rather flatly dealt with in this novel. Anticlimax. This may have worked, had not the novel continued to build up our

expectations.

I think this book could have benefited by the excision of some material: the Doctor's alternatives, though brilliant, do not confront him in any meaningful way. The epilogue, and Kadiatu and Bernice and Jason, seem tacked on. Didn't we have enough paper angst earlier in the series? And didn't we have enough Ancient Gallifreyan Stuff too?

The Doctor is in mourning for Roz, and we are in mourning for this book. There should have been thunder and lightning...



The Dying Days

by Lance Parkin
reviewed by David Golding

Okay, I'm going to be heretical. Lance Parkin is not god. This book is not perfect.

Portions read as if they're first drafts (and they probably are, given Lance's interview in *Broadsword* 12). Some of these portions have a crude diamond urgency and brilliance. Others seem to cripple excellently conceived scenes. Then there are inconsistencies: the Martian Lord seems to change his politics by the moment; how do the resistance use the Internet when all soft-

ware has been erased? Unimportant, but they jar. Occasionally continuity bogs down the narrative. Occasionally the narrative suffers from lack of internal continuity: characters disappear for large stretches.

Worst, to my mind, was the postmodern inclusion of fandom. The New Adventures have had much of this, some cringe-worthy (*Head Games*), some walking a fine line (*The Room With No Doors*), some excelling (*Sleepy*). *The Dying Days* flops it. It's a cringe for the fans and silly for non-fans.

All of which is to ignore the fact that this is a competent, well-conceived, stylish send-off from a fine author. The eighth Doctor is struck pretty much right - with one notable over-the-top clanger. Benny is Benny. Even UNIT, as an entity, is characterised right: walking the line between excellence and stupidity. This is a novel that, more than any other in the line, revels in televised *Doctor Who*. But there is also an emotional depth that could never have been conveyed on television.

This is the New Adventures' last hurrah - and it is rather good.

protected from the tale by the troubling present.



THE DEATH OF SELF

[THE DEATH OF SELF]

(richard prekodravac)

Triest

The half forgotten memories faded. Zamina picked at the Kola nuts that were scattered on the table. It had been the only place she could find that was adequate, a half trumped up floozie bar, soul-less and bland, the smell from the Malasian Lasang was lost in the thick carbon air. For some reason the management thought no one would notice the fire damage — scorched walls and melted plastic; then again floozies operated anywhere they could find. Zamina picked at another nut.

Reflecting - nothing changes. Even if the Stop had disappeared. Zamina messed the nuts on the table laying them in a spiralling circle. Maybe things did change. A noise at the back of the bar — she knew that Matt was watching her. Maybe things did change. It would still feel like a circle - the same pattern, but you would only notice right at the end that everything had changed. And your worse off then when you started, and your worse off because you didn't feel it happen to you.

Matt had been staring at her for almost an hour. He was hiding in his dark corner of the bar. Zamina allowed herself to grin back at him - he was Roberta's younger brother who came onto the streets a year after she died - no she didn't die - Roberta died - after a year of doing the same job she might as well have been dead. Fuck, she forgot Matt. The boy or rather man was doing the same area as her, most of the time his youth got him better jobs.

Zamina remembered the first day when the black-haired youth, broad-chested, muscled body with leather pants that hung down to his crotch slumped against a wall and waited, not long, for his first. She grinned again - only those kind of memories were worth remembering. It was probably one of the last clear memories she had. The rest were half-forgotten. Memories were for the soul not for sex.

Someone crawled out from Matt's dark hole. A fat late middle-aged man tightened his belt in the light nearby. He brushed his stubbled chin and spat something onto the ground.

Matt offered something special for his customers - he gave them the risk of having sex out

in public - it was an electric thrill, something he often whispered into Zamina's ear. This grossly fat man would have just paid twice what she could offer in some hotel room. As he walked passed her he snorted again, grabbed his crotch and looked at her. He licked his lips and grunted in a thick French-American accent "Hey baby". He went away. He'd be back.

The angel Francine had been sitting at the same blackened table the day before telling her about the rules of business. "One: they want young, attractive and something daring - that was Matt. Two"; sipping from the glasses of brown water; "They want nothing to change. That's why you and I am still here." Zamina stopped and looked at Francine through her blind eyes. "Maybe it's because we want to stay here."

Zamina finished the thought in her own mind. That's why we like the needle tracks up our arms. Or the feeling of cold concrete when pushed up against the wall, or the taste of a Kola nut turn bitter in your mouth.

Zamina supposed that things were harder now after the Kadiatu business. She saw hope for a second and it faded away, that was the half-forgotten memory. And it didn't matter what somebody did for the Stop, because the Stop became Mars, it became Melbourne and now it was Triest.

Francine was right. They want things to stay the same. Yeah. and Francine was dead.

Matt had been standing beside her, he was buttoning his fly. Zamina held her gaze at his crotch.

"Hey Zammy," he spoke in a cheerful voice. She never asked him why he always sounded that way.

"Charming friend. I'd swear he wanted me to join you two."

"There's always room." Matt sat down on the chair the dead angel had been sitting in the day before, he grabbed hold of her hand gently kissing her skin. It felt cool.

Zamina looked at his chest, "Aren't you cold?" Matt was hadn't put his shirt on. That pissed off Zamina because he looked so fucking good.

"Never after sex," he grinned, "and never before."

Pause.

Matt had been with Francine this morning. He still fucked after that business. That was a part of the risk she supposed.

"Look Zammy, I have a friend who's pretty interested in you." Matt grabbed something out of his back pocket ... It was a picture of a black man standing in front of one of those tourist places in Paris.

"Cute. How much does he charge."

"He's not into that."

"How much did you charge him?"

"What ever I could get from the guy. He's the type of person who's looking for death, self-destructive. To him it's all needle tracks, sex and that bitter kola nut."

Zamina shivered.

"He wants to know if your looking for a way out. Maybe there's some money you want."

Zamina froze. It was like he was cutting into her skin and took out from her what she wanted to hear. Only when he put the gun onto the table it was as if he was pushing her to believe in things she didn't want to say.

"Let me guess. Guns, banks, bars and aliases.

Matt nodded, taking the gun and gently touching Zamina's face, handling it like a floozie.

"I've always wanted to call myself Anna Karenina."

"And I've always wanted to..."

"I know."

They didn't speak. That was another story.

Somebody crawled out from that same dark hole at the back of the bar. Something which probably never belonged there. It dragged itself up from the dirt. It crawled itself out into the light. And it fashioned itself into something that didn't exist, someone who had died. It wondered why it called itself Roz.

and protected for the future.

If I do give up,
mankind will lose its storyteller.
And once mankind loses its storyteller,
then it will have lost its childhood.