

**THE**

**DOCTOR WHO**  
**COMPANION**

**ANNUAL**

**2021!**



# Welcome to the Doctor Who Companion Annual 2021

Welcome to the very first annual from *The Doctor Who Companion*!

Oh, we've been talking about doing this for years. Probably since the DWC was first set up, as a successor to *Kasterborous* back in 2016. But time isn't always considerate, especially around Christmastime, so this has been put off far too often. *Maybe next year, eh?*

2020 has been a bit of an odd one though, hasn't it? It feels right to attempt a project that will hopefully give readers something to smile about.

This first annual is solely comprised of fiction, so we have numerous short stories from across the *Doctor Who* universe, all centred around one theme. We gave our writers one word to interpret. It was up to them how they did so.

That one word? **Companions**. Well, it had to be!

Whether you're a new fan, an old fan, a casual reader, or a dedicated follower; whether this is your first time on the DWC, you visit every once in a while, or you track us down every day: this annual is for you. For everyone. And we hope you enjoy it - all feedback is welcome, and hopefully, if all goes to plan, we'll put into practise the best suggestions for next year's DWC Annual.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the DWC's contributors. And of course our readers: we wouldn't be here without you.

And we've got plenty more coming to the site across the festivities and into 2021. *Revolution of the Daleks* is just around the corner, so we've got all the latest news; but we're also catering for fans of all eras with features published daily over the 12 days of Christmas.

**Merry Christmas!**

Philip Bates,

Editor and Co-Founder of *The Doctor Who Companion*.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO JAMES BALDOCK, FOR CREATING THE  
GORGEOUS FRONT AND BACK COVER ARTWORK.

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# Christmas in Stockbridge

By Liam Brice-Bateman.



“I’m sorry, we’re full,” said the big bearded man over the bar.

“No room at the Inn?” said the Doctor, who turned to grin at Nyssa.

“Why do you keep saying that?”

“It’s a reference to the origin of Christmas. The Inns were all full, so Mary had to give birth in a barn.”

“Mary Who?”

The Doctor’s smile dropped. “Maybe this was a mistake.”

“No, No.” Nyssa really didn’t want him to start sulking. “I said I wanted to learn more about Earth traditions. We end up here so often, I should know these things.”

“Alright. Can you remember what day Christmas occurs on?”

“December 25th, not that I can remember what the other months are called. It all seems very disorganised. A different number of days in each one? We certainly wouldn’t have done that on Traken.”

“No, I suppose you wouldn’t. Shall we try our luck at the next one?”

“Why do we have to stay in a pub?”

“We’re in Stockbridge, Nyssa - we always stay in a pub. I’ll miss the Red Lion, but we’ll find another. Unless they’ve all started shutting down. That’s the trouble with Stockbridge: difficult to pin down the year.”

“Because of all the alien occurrences?”

“No, because it’s the English Countryside.”

Leaving a bemused barman behind them, Nyssa followed the Doctor out. She pulled her jacket tight around her shoulders. There was never any time to dress appropriately for the occasion when you travelled with the Doctor.

“It’s very picturesque,” said Nyssa. A freshly fallen layer of snow covered the little cottages dotted around Stockbridge. In the distance, she could see Wells Wood. She understood why the Doctor liked coming here. It was peaceful and slow paced.

“Yes, perfect for your first Christmas. It very rarely snows on Christmas Day in England. Of course the whole idea of snow at Christmas is a largely Dickensian invention. You have read Dickens, haven’t you?”

“Yes, Doctor. A story about a man who had fallen on hard times and there was something to do with a Circus.”

“Good, good. I’m sure we’ll find somewhere to stay on the next street over. Watch out for the ice there, Nyssa.”

“I’m managing just fine, Doctor.” Nyssa walked past him, making a beeline for the next street. They passed several houses strewn with lights. Slightly gaudy to Nyssa’s eyes. Colours flashed all around. Red and greens, whites and blues. Some in the shape of snow flakes; other some sort of quadrupedal animal. There was even one of what appeared to be a man in a red suit stuck into a chimney.

“What are the Christmas traditions behind those?”

“Ah, well, they can’t all be good. Christmas is often a time of indulgence. Some people do that with food and drink, whereas others push the limit on how many LEDs they can put on their houses. It’s just a bit of fun really.”

Nyssa thought that there were some aspects of Christmas she preferred to others.

“Nyssa, don’t move,” hissed the Doctor behind her. She froze, her eyes darting around, trying to see what had made the Doctor say that.

“Now, stay very still.”

“What is it?”

“There is a robin on your shoulder.”

Out of the corner of her eye, she could see a small bird. She could just about make out brown, white, and red. Presumably its colours warned about how dangerous it was.

“What should I do?”

“It’s a perfect moment for a selfie.”

“A what?”

“Never mind - now, I’m just going to gently get it to move.”

The little bird flew away, landing on a bush covered in red berries. A group of people walked towards them singing. They had big scarves wrapped around their necks which must have impaired their singing, as Nyssa didn’t think it was exactly in key.

The robin was still staring at her. Its head bobbing in time to the tune the people were singing. Something about Good King Wence Last. It swayed from side to side and opened its wings. Then the bird started singing along. Whistling in time.

“I wasn’t aware Earth avians could do that.” She turned to see the Doctor wandering over to the small crowd - bellowing along to the words at the top of his lung.

“Doctor, come on. We need to find somewhere to stay.”

She finally managed to drag him away from the singers, or ‘carollers’ as he had called them; it seemed odd that they were all called Carol. Nyssa wasn’t sure where she was leading him, but away from the singing seemed good.

“Are you sure this is all normal Christmas behaviour?”

“Yes, they’re just letting their hair down. You need to get into the spirit of the season Nyssa. I know, we’ll get you a Santa hat.”

“No, thank you. I’m fine, let’s just get inside.”

“Excellent idea. Be good to dry off my shoes.”

“I’m sorry?”

“Dry off my shoes! These trainers aren’t the best for wandering through the snow.”

“No, I suppose not. It’s just that, my shoes are dry.”

“That can’t be true - your toes must have got numb from the cold.”

“I’m serious, Doctor. I’m completely dry and so are you. It’s not even that cold if you think about it.”

“It is, it’s Christmas day. Chilly snowfall and all that.”

“You told me it rarely snows on Christmas Day!”

“Yes, but it sometimes does.”

“I think there’s something else going on here, Doctor. It’s all too neat. You wanted to show me a perfect Christmas and here we are.”

“You really should be less cynical, Nyssa.”

“And you should have seen the singing bird. Doctor, there is snow falling that doesn’t actually exist. We go to get a room and find ourselves playing out some ancient Earth Christmas story. It’s too perfect here. Surely you can see that.”

“I’m... not sure.”

“You’re too caught up in it, Doctor. So is everyone here: you are expecting certain things to happen at this time of year, so they are. In fact, do you remember what the weather was like when we left the TARDIS?”

“Snowy, obviously. Well, actually no, it was more...” The Doctor trailed off, looking like he was thinking very hard about a simple question about the weather.

“Doctor, don’t move. There’s a robin on your shoulder.” The little bird hopped, pecking at the Doctor’s lapel. It looked at the Doctor, then Nyssa, then back to the Doctor.

“I’m sorry,” said the bird, “I think this is my fault. I just wanted to blend in. Christmas is what everyone was thinking about when I arrived, so I chose to portray that. I might have over done it.”

“Maybe a little,” said the Doctor, who did not seem fazed by a talking robin.

“Our ship does the same thing,” said Nyssa. “I’m not sure it helps much either.”

“I can remove the illusion if you like.”

“I think that’s for the best.”

With a flutter of the bird’s wings, the Christmas cheer slowly ebbed away. The snow vanished, the lights dimmed. The carollers were even more out of tune.

“You’re still a robin,” said Nyssa.

“I quite like the form: easy to move about. I’ll be heading off soon anyway.”

“Oh, there’s no need for that, is there Nyssa?”

“No, not at all.”

“You don’t need Christmas to be perfect. Nyssa and I were trying to find somewhere for Christmas dinner. Do you like Brussel sprouts...?”

# Hic Manebimus Optime

By James Baldock.



Rory thinks: *This will be the last year.*

He looks out. The tail end of the winter sunlight has bled away, leaving the sky a deep Prussian blue, like the cloth of a military uniform. Somewhere beyond the exosphere, there are stars, although the house is in a well-lit terrace and you can't really see them. Rory scratches his head to think that he might, at some point, have visited some of those stars, or at least their nearest neighbours. The man from Leadworth, skipping across the universe in a double heartbeat. Not to mention his other life, half-remembered and best forgotten: 2000 years of plastic solitude, hiding behind a locked door.

In his quieter moments he allows the concept to overwhelm him. And then there is a snap and he is back in the room. In his head, he can hear the Doctor. *Don't be ridiculous, Rory. That's Iota Trianguli. I'd never take you there; they worship carrots.*

He still remembers his encounter with the octopus barbers of Cirrus Minor; how they'd crooned in Gaelic while they snipped and trimmed. He had only gone in to ask for directions, but there had been a cultural misunderstanding and the next thing he knew he was being suckered to a plastic chair. Walking back to the blue box, where the others were waiting, under the twilight of a topaz yellow sun. They had offered sympathy and condolence, and then hidden all the mirrors.

*Amy is much better at this stuff,* he thinks to himself.

Rory has always felt two chapters behind, as if the Doctor and Amy were discussing plot points he was yet to reach. There are conversations about the travels they had without him, in the days – weeks? months? – before they started travelling together, the failed attempts at piloting the TARDIS, the bedroom with its matching Transformers quilts and electric train set. And then they were here, and the chapter began anew, and still he often feels as if there are pages he has neglected to read.

From the next room: laughter, the sound of Eric Morecambe menacing Arthur Lowe with a replica pistol. Then applause, and the familiarity of *Bring Me Sunshine*. Rory would quite like to be watching it, but he is keeping an eye on the stuffing.

Amy enters from the shed, carrying something metallic and roughly cylindrical. “This the one?”

“We have more than one blowtorch?”

“I found three. I think two of them may not be ours.” She rests the one she's carrying on the kitchen worktop. “So. How does this improve the pudding?”

“Caramelisation. It's like doing a crème brûlée.” Rory picks up the blowtorch, dusting it with the sleeve of his cardigan. “I saw it on YouTube.”

Amy purses her lips very slightly and gives him the fish-eye. “Just don't set fire to the kitchen. You know. *Again*.”

Rory feels his own eyes involuntarily roll. He puts down the torch and goes back to the cutlery drawer. Pulls out two knives, two forks, two spoons. The cutlery glints by the light of the kitchen.

He hesitates, looking over at the table. Then back at Amy, who has just finished pouring herself another glass of Shiraz. “Are we – ?”

She looks over at him, at the silverware in his hand. “What? Oh. Yeah. Definitely!”

It is a tonal shift from confusion to incredulity, managed in four words. Communication failures are the loose tiles in the marital roof, he has always thought, and this is one of them. He broaches the matter every Christmas. For Amy, it is a question that need never be asked. But they have never really resolved this, and thus it lingers, hanging in the air like an invisible stalactite, made of glass.

Rory reaches into the drawer, rummages, and pulls out another set. He sucks in his teeth.

“I can hear you doing that.”

She does not look round. Rory sighs. “I just – ”

“What? I mean, he's our friend.”

“Yeah, and he never shows up. Because he thinks *we think* he's dead.” Rory takes a split second to process that sentence, checking it for coherence. He decides that it works, despite being somewhat haphazard. Later he will decide that this is probably how Amy views him.

“Except that River knows we know. And she'll tell him. And he probably told her knowing that she'd tell us, eventually. So he didn't tell us because he knew she would, probably

because he told her not to. Hey.” She flips the tea towel she has been using over her shoulders as if hoisting a knapsack. “It’s what he does, isn’t it?”

Rory has not been this confused since the poison scene in *The Princess Bride*. It pops into his head now, fully formed. He says, “Right.”

Amy sighs; it is a hand-thrown-to-the-air sigh, which is never a good one. “I know you think it’s pointless, but I’m not giving up.”

Is it pointless? Rory muses on this as he polishes the cutlery, fetching an extra plate from the cupboard to warm with the others. They have waited for the Doctor’s return for years; for some reason Amy always expects him at Christmas, “Because it’s the most inconvenient time, and so that’s exactly when he’ll show up”. He pulls at the oven door and then slides the plate inside: there is the scrape of glazed earthenware. The same ritual since Demon’s Run, since they got this house, since a parallel anomaly that he can no longer fully remember. Every December. This will be their third.

“I don’t like to see your hopes – I don’t know. Dashed. Every year,” he tells her.

“Don’t make this all about me. Besides, it’s Christmas. Christmas is about tradition.”

Rory thinks: *So is seppuku*.

Rory says: “I just don’t understand why anyone would voluntarily choose to have dinner with their in-laws.”

“Well, maybe not yours.” She tips him a wink; Rory is thrown by the sudden playfulness. A smile momentarily crosses his lips – *The Princess Bride* is back, the flirting of Buttercup and Westley.

Then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, he jolts at a repeated word: inconceivable, its dual meaning spiked with black venom. The other thing they do not discuss.

Rory looks away. Amy says “Is that spoon going on the table? Or do you – do you just like holding it?”

The sentences are losing cohesion, which means that Amy is more upset than she is prepared to admit. Rory is suddenly struck with something he will later determine was guilt; in the moment, it feels rather more like a desire to hug his wife.

He puts down the spoon, and then puts his arms around her, trying to somehow press out the anger, squeezing it away like the juice of an orange. Amy buries her face in the wool of his cardigan. It is only the side of her face, indicating a partial acquiescence to his affection as opposed to the total surrender he would prefer, but it will do for a start.

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Amy pulls away, seethes. “Who! Who does it today? They're supposed to show up on cosy winter evenings when you've just finished wrapping the presents. Bit of *Holly and the Ivy*, mince pie, and then on to the next house.” She is storming across the kitchen; now she reaches up to a shelf, pulling down the yellow plastic gun that is usually kept in reserve for next door's cat.

The sink tap is turned on, and then off again. From the lounge they can hear the theme to *Pointless*, and then a second knock. Amy's battle cry echoes as she marches down the hall. “If that is more carol singers, I have a water pistol!”

There is a Jewish tradition at the Passover Seder: an empty place left for Elijah, longed for and anticipated. And there are other stories, too, of unexpected stars, of unlikely gifts received with bewildered gratitude, of barren women who eventually bore prophets. There are choices and consequences and the two do not always match. *We're all stories in the end*, he can remember Amy telling him once, although she couldn't recall quite where she'd heard it. He wonders how this one will finish, and what choices he might have to make, and whether the two of them will ever be on the same page.

Rory wanders out of the kitchen to see who was at the door.

# A Christmas Star In Her Eye

By Andrew Hsieh.



“I don’t think they’re mine,” said Bill, wiping the tears from her eyes as she followed the Doctor and Nardole back to the TARDIS. But they were soon ambushed by a Dalek, at the other end of the corridor.

“*Exterminate!*” It fired a single blue laser bolt at the Doctor, only to hit another figure who suddenly got in the way. Nardole shrieked, cowering behind Bill.

“We got you covered,” called a Movellan, rallying her fellow surviving troops beside their dead comrade, before immediately firing back at the Dalek.

“Thank you,” said the Doctor, fleeing with his two companions.

Without turning back, they could hear the terrifying screams of the Movellans getting exterminated. Heading round another corner, dodging the sparks and flames, they found the TARDIS covered in rubble and debris. “Get in, quick,” he ordered them both, as Nardole unlocked the door. “2017 needs us.”

“Alert,” the same Dalek announced, “*The Doctor is escaping!*”

A single explosion crashed down at one end of the junction, while Bill and Nardole rushed inside the ship. Only the Doctor remained outside, leaving the door ajar. In a matter of seconds, he watched two Daleks glide towards their main target while keeping a good distance away. “Oh no, no, no,” the Doctor gasped, shaking his head.

They gradually made space for a third in the middle. A tank without either an eyestalk, or a manipulator arm; just a cannon twice the size of a regular gunstick.

“What is it?” Bill asked, from behind.

“This is much worse, an abomination like no other,” he growled fiercely. “A Special Weapons Dalek.”

It aimed its cannon at the TARDIS and boomed in a deep electronic voice, "*The Doctor will be exterminated.*"

"Nardole," the Doctor yelled, swiftly closing the door, "Put up the force field, and step on it!"

The Special Weapons Dalek fired a single yellow laser beam, causing the entire area to erupt in a flurry of sparks. Except for the TARDIS which had successfully escaped.

In flight, the Doctor and Bill were already knocked to the ground by the blast. As he got up, he checked her pulse and said, "Bill? Bill, are you alright?"

She wasn't dead. She remained unconscious with another teardrop in her eye.

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### **Earlier.**

"But if someone's gone, do pictures really help?"

Acknowledging Bill's question, the Doctor turned to glance at the framed photos of his granddaughter, Susan, and his wife, River Song. He remained silent until the door opened to reveal Nardole walking through, in his knit cap, munching on some gingerbread men.

"Merry Christmas," he said with a mouthful, "Mmm, these are rather delicious. Baked by one of the carol singers outside. You want one, the pair of you?"

"Nardole," the Doctor snapped, rolling his eyes, "What did I tell you about interacting with carol singers?"

"Well, what's your problem with them?"

"Always find them irritating whenever they turn up on my doorstep."

Bill didn't want to get involved with the argument, so she got up and quickly put on her coat. "Sorry, I have to get going. My friend's expecting me in a few minutes."

As she made for the door, and closed it behind her, she couldn't help but overhear the Doctor and Nardole quarrelling.

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The blankets of snow had already settled outside St Luke's University in Bristol. Behind the campus was a girl with long blonde hair, staring at the same mysterious puddle which had been frozen for many days, surrounded by the bed of snow. She looked at her reflection under the night's sky, waiting for her friend to turn up.

"Merry Christmas, Heather," called a voice from behind.

She noticed the mirror image of Bill, peering right next to her. "Oh, hey, Bill."

"How is that puddle still there, even around Christmastime, with all this snow?"

Heather looked at her, equally puzzled. "That's why I came here."

"Really?"

"It's like a work of art; a shard of glass, melted into the snow."

"That's one way of putting it," Bill chuckled, looking down at their symmetrical reflections. "Hey," She spotted a bright round light moving across the puddle. "Did the moon just appear?"

They both turned to look at the sky. It was a shooting star, slowly arcing across the snowy night, aiming for an unknown destination.

"It's beautiful," said Heather. "I wonder where it's headed?"

"Only time will tell."

"Like a Christmas miracle."

"Yeah, like the perfect present."

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Inside the TARDIS, Bill suddenly opened her eyes as the Doctor and Nardole helped her up. "How long was I unconscious?"

"About ten minutes," the Doctor explained. Nardole added, "Quite a shockwave from the Daleks, I can tell you that much."

She wiped her eyes again and asked, "What happens to them now?"

"Who?"

"The Daleks?"

"Oh, they won't always last. They'll just keep starting wars and conquering planets, across time and space, until a certain traveller arrives to stop them."

"And who would that be, Doctor?"

He just smiled. Then finally, Nardole pulled the handbrake on the console, and off they went, back to 2017.

# The Second Setting

By Tony Jones.



The last thing Ci'ana remembered was a light then a sensation of something exploding throughout her whole body. She opened her eyes.

She was in a half-recognised room, strapped to a bed of some sort. Around her, machines pinged and sang to themselves and she saw pale cables connected to her body in various places, making her one with the machines.

Standing beside her looking down was a familiar face. A man. Tall. Bearded. The beard carefully trimmed and dark, matching his jacket and trousers. Matching his dark eyes.

It was the Master.

"What happened?" Ci'ana asked. The Master replied, but only returning the question.

Ci'ana tried to move. Seeing her struggle, the Master leaned over and undid the fastenings, allowing her to sit up. As he did, she spoke.

"Movellans. A group of Movellans attacked us. There was a building. A laboratory?"

"Yes, that's right. It was a factory workshop, but there was a laboratory attached."

Ci'ana swivelled her legs and tried to stand. The Master reached out a hand to help.

"You may feel a little dizzy. Take your time," he said, looking into her eyes closely.

"We were trying to stop them developing something. A new type of force field generator designed to withstand several Daleks at once. We didn't want the balance of the war disturbed."

Ci'ana took a deep breath.

"I remember now. There was a light..."

“Unfortunately a Movellan squad broke in when we were in the workshop. You were planting demolition charges on the computers when they broke through. There were too many of them even for your abilities. You controlled most of them, but one escaped. Before I could get to you to help, you’d been shot. I destroyed the one who’d attacked you while the others were stunned as a side-effect of the charge you’d sustained. An interesting side effect of your natural talents with electrical micro-fields.”

As he spoke, the Master kept his gaze fixed on Ci’ana’s eyes. As his words came out, she began to remember events just as he’d described.

“So what happened?”

“As you can see, we made it out. I had to carry you to my TARDIS, then set the charges off remotely. You’ve been here in the medical chamber for the past three days healing. I have to say it was touch and go at one point.”

Ci’ana smiled. “Thank you. Again. I don’t know what I’d do without you. You could have left me behind.”

“What? And save myself? Preposterous!” the Master cried. “Now. Take it easy for the next day or two while I work out the next stage in our plan.”

Ci’ana spent nearly three days resting, reading, and swimming in the TARDIS pool. She offered to help the Master, but each time he insisted she rest. He was too kind. After the first day, her skin had returned to its normal pale-orange colouring, her sense of taste returned as did her awareness of all the electrical fields around her. She considered growing hair, perhaps even a beard, but last time she’d done that, it had upset the Master so she decided to stay bald.

Towards the end of the third day, as they ate dinner (which he’d prepared), the Master explained their mission. Although they’d stopped the Movellans developing the force field, they were still dominating the Daleks in the quadrant. A stalemate was the best result for the hundreds of worlds caught in the battle lines, and the Master had dedicated his life to balancing out technological advances by removing them from each side and storing them safely in his TARDIS. Ci’ana admired the man’s courage and charity. She looked up to him in so many ways, and not just because he was nearly twice as tall as her. Her people were not the tallest in any galaxy and were always happy when others took it upon themselves to offer them help.

They were on the way to the Orion Wars. A race called ‘humans’ from a planet named Earth were at war with an android race they’d originally made in their own image. Losses were terrible and the Master was afraid it would leave them weakened as and when the Dalek-Movellan war found their part of the galaxy. Again, he had an audacious plan.

A race called the Cybermen (the natural conclusion of cybernetic enhancement) could be persuaded to take an interest and they would be able to fend off the warring races as they

defended the Orion sector. The challenge was to get them interested in that part of space.

The plan was to land on a Cyber scout ship and re-program their navigation logs. The Master also wanted to enhance their sensor arrays to make it easier for them to find the remnants of the humans and androids. Her role would be to provide protection if any Cybermen happened to find them.

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The Master's TARDIS landed in the hold of a Cyber battle cruiser. It currently resembled a marble column and looked in no way as though it should be there. The Master considered changing its appearance but decided against it.

The Master and Ci'ana stepped out into the hold.

"What are all those capsules?" Ci'ana asked.

"Each houses a Cyberman," the Master answered.

Ci'ana looked left, right, then up and down.

"There must be 200 of them! I can't control that many!" As she spoke, Ci'ana's voice went up an octave.

"Have no fear," the Master said with a sardonic smile. "They're in suspended animation. This is only one of several holding areas. There could be 2,000 on board. If the alarms sound, we have upwards of two minutes to get back to the TARDIS. At most, there might be half-a-dozen of them actually awake as this time. We shall be fine."

Ci'ana was unsure, but, as the Master seemed calm, she didn't want to let him down. She followed him to a cluster of machines he identified as a sensor module and she watched as he used one of his devices to trace the components then incorporate his modification.

"Next, the main control centre. Here's where we will probably find two or three Cybermen. I imagine you will find them easy enough to deal with. They won't have met any of your race before — not in this galaxy."

Ci'ana smiled proudly. As anticipated, two metallic creatures similar in the size and shape to the Master but with various machine components incorporated into their bodies, were on duty. She reached out with her electrical ability and easily took over their electronic components.

For the first two minutes, the Master was able to work uninterrupted, then a third Cyberman came onto the bridge. The first they knew of its arrival was a blast from a weapon that knocked Ci'ana off her feet.

She screamed.

Her right leg was almost completely destroyed, and the pain broke her concentration. She saw the Master reach for a weapon, but he was moving too slowly. The new Cyberman aimed. Battling through the crippling agony in her body, Ci'ana reached out with her mind and saw the creature fight her control. The shot it fired missed the Master, striking the deck harmlessly. This allowed him to reach his weapon and shoot. Now there were only two Cybermen to contend with.

Ci'ana tried again to bring them under her control but the pain in her body was too great. She did what she could and it bought time for the Master to defend them with his own weapon. One of the Cybermen set off an alarm before it fell to the ground as the Master rushed to see how she was.

"I've let you down," Ci'ana said. "Just leave me behind. Save yourself."

"Nonsense," the Master said as he applied a tube to her upper thigh. "This will block the pain and there's regenerative technology back on my TARDIS. You just stay alert for a little while longer."

He helped Ci'ana sit back so she could survey most of the control deck, then went back to his task. No more Cybermen appeared, which was as well as Ci'ana was struggling to stay conscious. Almost two minutes later, he came back to see how she was doing.

"It's been too long," she shouted at him as he approached. "I can't walk, you've no time to carry me. Just leave me... please, just go."

The Master stood and Ci'ana saw a strange expression cloud his face. Had she angered him?

He pulled another of his devices from inside his cloak, a black tube with a crystal at the end he pointed directly at her. Was he going to put her out of her pain before the Cybermen found her?

"Choose," he said. "One or two?"

"I don't understand," she said. She didn't want to anger him any more. "Two," she blurted.

He touched a stud on the side of the tube. The last thing Ci'ana remembered was a flash of light and a sensation like an explosion throughout her whole body.

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The Master made it to his TARDIS with only moments to spare. Several sluggish Cybermen in the hold were already moving from their cylinders, and even 20 seconds later would have been alert enough to cause more than a little inconvenience.

He dematerialised then spent several hours updating his own sensor systems with the technology he'd just gained. The Time Lords may be masters of the big picture when it

came to trans-dimensional engineering, but it never hurt to take the smallest of improvements when the chance arose.

He then went to another room in his TARDIS. It was the medical bay where Ci'ana had all too recently spent time. He went to a large cupboard at the back, touched his palm to a biometric control, and watched as the door opened without a sound.

The cupboard was all shelves. Rows of small clawed holders the size of a hand filled the shelves, two-thirds were occupied by toys of some sort. Beneath each was a simple label either blank or annotated in Gallifreyan script. The cupboard wasn't full, but still held over 40 small figurines, each with a unique label.

There was a space on the second shelf down. He reached into a pocket and pulled out a model in the shape of his erstwhile assistant. It was accurate down even to the badly damaged leg. He placed Ci'ana (for it was her) back in her holder then shut the door to the cupboard.

He made a mental note that she would need time to regenerate her leg, were he to need her talents again. He did so dislike wasting useful tools. If only they weren't so noisy with their devoted whining and insistence on talking.

He walked back to his console room. No, this was a far better method and one he was surprised others hadn't deployed. Just keep them back for what humans liked to call 'a rainy day.'

It was just as well he had a second setting on his tissue compression eliminator...

# The Last Room

By Frank Danes.



The drive from Llanfairfach to UNIT HQ usually took about three hours, but Bessie did it in two. The Doctor, barely conscious of the road, had left most of the decisions to her. Bessie nicely judged just when to overtake an articulated lorry on a bend, elegantly nipping back into the lane with at least three quarters of a second to spare before the mini in the opposite carriageway would have reached her. It was dark. The sky threatened, and then delivered, rain. The Doctor, wrapped in his tartan cape, brooded and sighed and noticed nothing. Cliff Jones now, yes, a remarkable man for his Age... he would go on to do great things for the green movement after the green death, so of course Jo would fall in love with him... humans usually did, young companions pairing off like that. Who had been the last to leave him for a husband? Vicki, perhaps, yes, poor Vicky, back in Troy... or was it Rome?

Jo had been his closest friend on Earth for three years, first as his assistant in his exile and then as his companion when the Time Lords had restored his freedom to roam in time and space. He had taken her for granted, of course, roared at her when she ruined his experiments, patronised her when he should have realised she was quite capable of looking after herself. No wonder she had found someone else, nearer her own age, and of her own species too. The Doctor's eyes started to fill again and he wiped them angrily. I should look at the road. Good lord, that motorbike came a bit close there, well done Bessie old girl, just get us home. If wishes were horses, Jo would have stayed with me, replaced the wife I never trouble to remember; Jo should have stayed and grown old with me. Of course not, stupid and selfish thing to wish.

Here's UNIT HQ now.

The car park attendant spotted the Doctor's yellow roadster and raised the barrier. Bessie nipped underneath it, executed an expert three-point turn and parked herself, front forward-facing, in her usual space. The Doctor jumped out and strode off, through the entrance - grunted in acknowledgement of the doorman's greeting - and down the corridors, banging through the double doors of the laboratory. With the instinct of the animal returning to its burrow, he made for the comfort of the TARDIS. Unlocked the door,

hung his dripping cloak onto the hat stand, and activated the controls which would spend him spinning away into the time vortex...

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Thomas the innkeeper surveyed the chaos in his lobby and tried to hold down his temper. All day long, the stream of humanity barging up to his table. *Had he got a room? How many beds? Was there sufficient stabling? When is the evening meal, my wife has specific dietary needs and must have spiced pomegranate three times a day.* Well, you won't find it here, chum: Miriam makes a cauldron of stew which she keeps bubbling all day and it serves all comers. Not good enough for the toffs, of course, who turned up their noses and sought some other establishment. Well, good riddance to them, thought Thomas. Not good enough either for the Roman citizens who apparently expected him to lie down on the earth floor so they could use him as a doormat... and his place was, apparently, too expensive for the poor. Well, they could get lost and go and sleep in the fields with the shepherds. To hell with Caesar and to hell with his taxes: the business rates had made profits as slim as Miriam's inedible unleavened bread.

Now it was evening and the end of a long day. The sky was unnaturally bright with stars; the lobby was full of dust, people, complaints, and, damn it, three bloody goats now! Thomas aimed a kick at one and addressed himself to the paupers in front of him.

"No we don't do budget rates; no, I won't give you a room out of charity; and it's no use you giving me the doe-eyed imploring look, lassie: hard cash is what counts here. Now hop it." Despairing, the young beggar couple moved off, the bloke giving Thomas a venomous look. "And the same to you, mate. Next!" Thomas wiped his hands down his shirt and belted, "Miriam, get those bleedin' goats out of here, will you?" Miriam, 65 and bent with age, grunted and made a shuffling run at the goats. They bleated and moved a good three paces, then stopped, quite happy with where they found themselves.

A punter moved up to Thomas' table. Thomas glanced up. Oh, here we go, another toff: fancy get-up, soft trousers in some cloth Thomas couldn't name, a beautiful slate-grey coat tricked out with red embroidery, some sort of puffy blouse – not silk, not leather, not wool – what? "Yes, squire, what can I do for you?" His wife had once told him not to be sarky with punters, but who cares, he'd had a long day.

"Just a room for the night. Somewhere to rest." The customer spoke quietly and Thomas had to strain to hear him.

"Just one room? And you can actually pay for it, I take it? Not like some of these sods. *I told you,*" he raised his voice at the beggar couple, who were sneaking round the entrance again, "*there's nothing for you here. This isn't a charity. Get out!*" He turned his attention back to the man in front of him. A curious ornament – silver? – on a leather lanyard, hanging round his neck. Tall, white hair, a mighty nose. A Roman? A toff anyway. Thomas noticed how exhausted the man looked. Bags under his eyes as big as purses. He softened

his tone a little.

“One room left, sir. Only one bed. That suit you? Evening meal thrown in.” He named a price. The new customer nodded, delved into his jacket, and fished out a coin. He tossed it to the Innkeeper, who caught and inspected it. Augustus’ face on the back and the denomination – whaaaat?

“I can’t give you change for this, it would clear out my till!”

The man opposite him snapped suddenly, “Keep the change, man - it’s only money. Got no use for the stuff.” Thomas recoiled from the authority in his voice. The coin would have paid for a year’s lodging, let alone a night’s. This guy was talking his language. Clearly a man to be reckoned with. Thomas called to Miriam, now shuffling more aimlessly than the goats around the lobby. “Miriam! Show this gentleman to the single.” Never got a moment’s peace, not even to stir the stew and drink her wine, Miriam swivelled on the spot. “This way, my lord,” she mumbled. She led the way to the stairs. The tall stranger followed her.

“A very remarkable star in the sky this evening,” he said, following her up the narrow stairwell. “Is it a recent phenomenon or does it appear every year?”

“Couldn’t tell you, sir, I’m sure” Miriam mumbled.

“And why is the place so crowded? Unusual for an inn at lambing time, isn’t it?”

Miriam looked round at the man as if he were mad. “Census, innit?” she said.

“I beg your pardon?”

“All the world has to be enrolled. Caesar’s orders. You goes back to your place of birth and get censured.”

“And you?”

“Not me. I was born here, wasn’t I?” They arrived at the bare door of an upper room. Miriam pushed it open. “Here’s your room, my lord. Not as grand as you’re used to, I dare say, but comfortable. I prays as you sleep well.” Hoping for a tip, she held out her hand. The stranger shook it absentmindedly. Resignedly, Miriam shuffled downstairs. There was that miserable git Thomas, dealing with another couple, wanting a room, of course. The husband was much older than his heavily pregnant wife. Miriam inspected her without much interest. That baby wouldn’t be long in being born. Miriam heard Thomas explaining, more gently than was his wont, that there were no rooms left. They could have the stable. Huh? Losing interest, Miriam made her way to her stool by the fire and her beloved wine.

The Doctor inspected his room briefly, noted it was Spartan in comfort but reasonably clean, and threw himself onto the bed. His mind was churning: Jo’s engagement party, her

face when she said goodbye, the Brigadier's speech of congratulations, a dark and wet road, UNIT HQ, the faces of Jamie and Zoe at his trial, Liz leaving without a word, his granddaughter in the ruins of London and, further back, much further back, another woman he had lived with and loved and left, anxious to see the universe, enraged with the stuffiness of his own people and their ridiculous restrictions. Her imploring face as he had stormed out at the end of another argument...

Dimly, he heard the conversations from the lobby, the man's quiet insistence, the woman's few words, the relenting tone of the landlord. Then his waking dreams returned. Was he never to have peace? The Doctor tossed and turned on his bed, desperately seeking the sleep that eluded him.

Hours passed. There was some sort of disturbance from outside. Some animal noises, scuffling, a shout for help and then – a child crying. Then silence. Quite suddenly, the Doctor's mind was stilled and his body flooded with a sense of well being and peace. He slept.

He walked back to the TARDIS in the early morning, declining Thomas's offer of stew, letting the ship carry him where it would. Back to UNIT HQ, naturally – where else? - and the Brigadier greeting him as he stepped out of the old girl's police box shell.

"Ah, Doctor, there you are. Been off somewhere in that confounded contraption, have you?"

The Doctor stretched. "Just a little holiday, Alistair. Little more than a day trip."

"A holiday, eh? Jolly good idea. Do you the power of good. Now, something quite curious has come up. I want you to take a look at these reports. Eminent scientists are disappearing from a conference. It looks as though they're being abducted, one after the other. Just up your street. Give you something to take your mind off things."

"A scientific conference, eh? Who's in the chair? Anyone interesting?"

The Brigadier glanced at his clipboard. "It says here, a Dr Lavinia Smith."

"The virologist! All right, Alistair. Leave the report with me. I'll have a good look at them."

Refreshed by his little trip, the Doctor gave his full attention to the papers.

# Journey in Two Times

By Peter Shaw.



Nurse Joan was enjoying a pleasant winter's evening manoeuvring her favourite visitor around the care home in his wheelchair. He was always jolly, even though she felt a deep sense of loss in his eyes sometimes. But today, Wilfred Mott was the life and soul of the Christmas party.

"And I said, 'Course it's not Sunday, I'm playing football Sunday!'" Wilf threw back his head as he delivered the punchline. His novelty reindeer antlers clinging for dear life to his grey, balding head.

"You are a card, Mr Mott," Joan replied, as she swept him into another resident's room.

"Come on, call me Wilf, sweetheart. Now, what have you wheeled me in here for?"

"There's someone I think you'd enjoy spending some time with," Joan indicated a kind-looking lady in an armchair. She had more than a twinkle in her bright eyes, and was smartly dressed in a brown check inverness cape. It was worn more as a statement, than to keep her from catching a chill.

"Really? Someone wants a chat?" said Wilf. "No one speaks to me anymore. They all think I've gone crackers! Do you think I've gone crackers?"

"No, but you can have one," Joan paced a Christmas cracker in Wilf's hand and indicated towards the lady. "Nothing like a bang to break the ice, Mr Mott."

"You're naughty, that's what you are," he winked. Then turned to the elegantly-dressed woman. "Hello, my dear...?"

She looked Wilf up and down and replied: "Lou."

"Not just yet, I've only just got here!" The quip was met with mild amusement. She was all right.

“My name’s Louise. Everyone calls me Lou.”

“Wilfred. But everyone here calls me Mr Mott. I prefer Wilf.”

Louise was taken aback: “That’s not right.”

“Eh? Isn’t it?” Wilf was pretty sure that was his name, then again he’s been wrong before...

“You’re not a Wilf,” Louise stared at him incongruously. “You’re a... oh my brain’s gone again.”

“Join the club, sweetheart. That’s why they stick us here. Go, on, grab the end of this.” Wilf offered the other end of the cracker to his companion. After a short, rather embarrassingly -protracted strain, it let out a snap.

“There, you’ve pulled,” exclaimed Joan. Wilf winked again. Louise was less amused.

“Yes, very funny. We’re not simpletons, you know.”

“Far from it. I’ll leave you two at it.” With that, Nurse Joan scuttled out. She glanced back before exiting. She was pretty sure what was about to happen next...

“Have I seen you before?” asked Louise. “Are you a resident?”

“No, just serving a few days. My daughter, Sylvia, she’s having a little break from me before Christmas. I’m afraid I’ve become a bit of a burden ever since both knees went. Plus they think I’ve got the old...” Wilf tapped his temple with his index finger. “But I’m fine in the head. I remember everything.”

“Oh, do you know where I put my glasses?” Louise was only half joking.

“Sorry, lost my train of thought...” Wilf indicated to his wheelchair, “It’s this bloomin’ go-cart I can’t stand.”

“Yes, I was in one for a while. People pushing you through doors, leaving you in corridors...”

“It’s not that. They remind me of them,” Willf looked up out of the window to the stars in the night sky. “Them things. Those monsters with one pokey eye. Took a pot-shot at one once. They tried to invade Earth, those metal swine.” Wilf thinks he’s gone too far again. People usually make excuses at this point. But Louise was hanging on his every word, like she understood. “They say I’m daft. But I remember. How come no one else does? Alien bloomin’ pepperpots.”

“You don’t mean... *the Daleks*?” Louise gave him a knowing look.

“That’s it. That’s the one. Angry little salt-shakers. But how come... when I mention the

aliens to anyone else... But, you— you believe me?”

“Of course I believe you. I was there when they conquered the earth. And you...?”

“Yes, I was there.” Hang on, Wilf pondered; that doesn’t quite fit. “But we stopped them. Well, he stopped them. And my wonderful Donna. But this is marvellous! You remember! You’d think everyone would remember all those planets in the sky. Must have only been 10 years ago...”

“No, it wasn’t,” she insisted.

“Well, maybe a little longer.”

“It was 2150.”

What’s she talking about, he puzzled. “I could never get my head round those digital clocks. What time d’you say it was?”

“The year! I remember it distinctly: 2150 AD. In the future,” Louise wondered how this ‘Wilf’ would reply. This is usually the point where people change the subject.

“You what? Well, maybe we’re talking about a different invasion... What would you say if I mentioned a ‘little blue box’?”

“I’d say it’s not that little.” This is much more like it, Louise thought. “Not when you get inside.”

“Oh my sweet heavens! You’ve been in it too!” Wilf’s eyes glazed with burgeoning tears.

“Yes, I travelled in *Tardis*.”

“So have I. In the TARDIS. Just the once - although my daughter...” Best not to go there, Wilf thought, as it all gets too much. “But that means you know him? The most wonderful man!” If Wilf could rise from his chair, he would stand and salute.

“Oh, so very well. Yes, I know Dr. Who.”

That wasn’t quite what Wilf was expecting. Never mind. “The Doctor? I’ve always known him as the Doctor. Dr. Who? He never mentioned a name.”

“Well, I probably know him a little bit better than you,” Louise gave Wilf a knowing smirk.

“It’s not a competition... Well, he did do a wonderful thing for me. He saved my life. He said it was an honour.”

“That’s so like my uncle.” It was Louise’s turn to gaze out at the stars.

“What? Are you sure you’ve got this right. The Doctor? The Doctor, the time and space traveller... he’s your uncle?”

“Yes. I’m surprised you can’t see the family resemblance,” Louise turned her head a little to show her profile.

“So, you're a... one of them? A Time Lord?”

That was unexpected. “*Time Lord?!?*”

“Oh, my days, I never thought I’d meet one of you again!” Wilf suddenly remembered the last frightening encounter with others from the Doctor’s race. “‘Ere, you're not one of those dangerous ones, are you, with the robes and the spitting?”

“I can’t say I’ve got the slightest clue what you are on about!” She wondered how this man could get so much right, as well as so much wrong.

“But, the Doctor. My Doctor was an alien. A time-travelling alien. A Time Lord from the planet Guildford, or some such...”

“My uncle, Dr Who. He was a brilliant man, a pioneer. An inventor. So way before his time, it’s impossible. But he was a human. A person, just like you and me, Tom.”

“Tom?” Now she has lost it. “What do you mean by that? Thomas is my middle name. I’m not Tom, am I?” It was sometimes hard for him to grasp reality from fantasy.

And she had a revelation: “That’s it. It *is* you: Tom Campbell, Special Constabulary. K Division, if I remember rightly.”

“No, you got me mixed up. I was a private. 6th Airborne Division. British Army!” Wilf wondered who on earth she was getting him mixed up with. Then something fired in his mind. “Hang on, you’re right. I did spend a few months as a copper. But I was invalided out. I tried to stop a bunch of villains robbing a jewellery store. Wrong place at the wrong time. They gave me a right old whop on the bonce.”

“Yes.” Louise was relieved he was back in reality. “But we took you back, Tom. In *Tardis*, Dr Who put you back a couple of minutes before the robbers struck...”

“No, no! The Doctor. My Doctor. He said you can’t do that. I thought we could go back a day and catch that villain, the Master. But the Doctor said he can’t go back within his own timeline, or something.”

“Why ever not?” Great, Louise thought, we’re back in la-la land... “Then what’s the point in having a time machine?”

“Well, the casual necklace... you probably end up in another universe or something. A parallel universe. You know... One where it’s like the same. But everything’s slightly

different. You take the wrong turn... I've seen it on *Star Trek*. People without beards suddenly have beards. Good people are rotters who wear, I don't know, eye patches..."

Louise was having none of this. "I think you must be very confused; maybe that blow to the head all those years ago!"

"Look miss... whoever you are," Wilf was not going to stand for this. He couldn't for one thing... "Contrary to what people think, I have not got soft in the head."

"I wasn't saying that..."

"No, but you thought it!"

Hearing raised voices, Nurse Joan whipped her head around the door: "What's up with you pair? Can't I leave you alone for five minutes?"

"Well, she said that her uncle..." Wilf stopped, as he knew he would sound ridiculous. As usual.

"Whatever it is, I want to hear no more about it. It's Christmas, good will to everyone and all that. Let's just drop the subject,' Nurse Joan surveyed them like naughty school children. "If it's the same silly argument you always have, I don't want to know. Aliens and blue boxes..."

Wilf looked at Louise, who stared back at Joan and said, "I thought we'd only just met."

"Oh, we're not going through all that again." Best to distract them before it all goes weird again, thought Joan. "Did you even look in your cracker? Was there a riddle?"

"Oh, yes. Here it is." Louise unfurled the tiny paper. Finding her spectacles perched on her head, she squinted at the tiny writing. "One for you, Tom... er, Wilf... 'Knock, knock.'" Wilf just stared back, confused. So Louise repeated: "Knock, knock!"

"Four times! You knocked..." Wilf felt a shadow fall over his past.

"Don't look so alarmed, it's only a joke."

"Sorry. Who's there?"

"Doctor..."

"You what?" cried Wilf, incensed. "I'm not saying it!"

Louise Who and Wilfred Mott took a glance at each other, then to Nurse Joan. It turned into a snigger. Then a giggle. Then raucous laughter, as they all wished each other a "Merry Christmas". Then they turned to wish the same, "To all of you at home..."



**Merry Christmas to all,  
And to all, a good-night...!**



*Merry Christmas  
from  
the DWC*

