

THE WANDERER

Written by: Lynn Clark
Season 37 - Story 11B
Reviewed by Callum Ford

"The key to any good mystery is the slow reveal of information – just enough to keep a reader or viewer hooked, and not enough to spoil the entire experience."

I started with a quote from an article that I was reading at the time of writing this review and I feel it helps sum up what I felt about this story. The story is *The Wanderer* by Lynn Clark and it's the opener of the 37th season from the Doctor Who Project fiction series, which deal with the adventures of an alternative Doctor, now in his ninth incarnation.

The story introduces two new companions, Val Rossi and Tom Brooker, and is set within the not too distant future. It deals with the first companion we are introduced to, Tom Brooker, and his encounter with the beautiful and mysterious Anna Cross.

To note, the first page is fantastic. The character of Tom Brooker is well established and likeable. He's not a dashing hero or cunning rouge, just an ordinary bloke with a rubbish boss and a quick heart for a pretty woman, very relatable. The hacker side of the character sometimes comes across heavy handed and forced, but its a minor note that might will hopefully bear fruition in stories to come.

The story sets up very well but its where it goes next is where I feel its let down. We go from Tom, straight to the planet Sparana Prime, where the Doctor arrives after being summoned by The Chancellor, who is after the Doctors help in tracking down the last member of the royal family, after they have all been killed. The last member is the youngest daughter, who has left the planet due to the pressures of being royalty. Going back to the quote at the beginning it is this scene that is the problem with the story.

It doesn't take much to put two and two together and you can probably work out what's going to happen next in the story. The writer tries to throw a curve ball at one point, and while it's handled well, it doesn't forgive the story for handing out nearly all the information at the beginning. I feel this story, with its introductions to the new companions, should have kept its focus on them, rather than dealing with the Doctors perspective. It could have possibly been better had we been introduced to the Doctor through the characters, rather than the narrative, and have him give the information of what's going throughout the story, rather than one big section.

It doesn't spoil the story, but it makes the story incredibly predictable which is a shame as its very well written. The pacing is spot on, keeping you reading as it moves along without too

many slow parts, the handling of moving between character viewpoints is never confusing, with the kidnapping section being a particular highlight and ideas and de-

scriptions of the Hestian bounty hunter and the alien culture do, in what I think is the most highest comment I can bestow here, conjure up in my mind, exactly what I would see in a live episode of Doctor Who. Nothing is not too out there or fantastical, and I could see how all these things could be adapted to screen as I read. In terms of aliens, the story hits a correct tone.

One of the strongest parts of the story is the characterisation. They are all well developed throughout, and everyone's actions ring true. Despite my feelings of misplacement, The Doctor gets a great introduction, and being a first time reader to this series, I feel I got a good sense of what this particular incarnation of the Doctor is like. The little asides that the writer uses throughout the story are effective, giving us a look into the character while never becoming a distraction to the ongoing narrative.

Overall, it all comes down to plotting. The mystery is too laid out, and the story quickly becomes very run of the mill. The main villain behind it all at the end doesn't real feel threatening and once you've done reading you probably won't take anything away from the plot. What it does do, is set up the series nicely, and coming from someone whose started with this story, it makes me want to read on to see how these characters get on. The actual writing is brilliant, and I would love to see this writer tackle another plot with these characters down the road. **7/10**

