

The opening story of The Doctor Who Project's Season 32, *NO REST FOR THE WICKED* by Mark Simpson, Bob Furnell and Misha Lauenstein is very much a traditional story, comprised of just about every Whovian cliché in the book and is all the better for it!

The story sees the Doctor and his Time Lady companion Grae arrive on Delta 41 space station, which is really a penal colony on 3rd March 2365. One of the prisoners, Erig Jeggerson, is found brutally murdered and hey-ho, for the umpteenth time in his many lives, The Doctor is falsely accused of the crime by the ship's chief, Benjamin Bartholomew.

Cliché number two arises as Grae manages to escape just as the Doctor is arrested. It is here that the story's great strength comes into play – its development of the Doctor and Grae. As readers of my TDWP reviews will know, I am immensely fond of this Doctor, of Grae, and the recently departed Tamara, whose departure appears to be a cause of mystery for Grae.

Before the next cliché we have a pleasant surprise, although we are not made fully aware of it until quite some time later. As she escapes a woman on a monitor, a woman who appears to know the Doctor, surely not the Rani, watches Grae?

After this intriguing little episode we are back on familiar territory with an oppressed prisoner demanding to see the Governor and the rest being turned down by his deputy, Chief Andersen. The more one reads into this scenario, the more one is reminded of a Varosian scenario, albeit it a much more palatable one.

It's another cliché but the Doctor, now facing yet another trial for his life uses the alias, Dr John Smith. A red-haired female Doctor called Stern believes, it would seem in the Doctor's innocence but Bartholomew doesn't seem to care.

As a reptilian Guard called Grash, and his assistant Lee, look for evidence Grae encounters one Alexander Larsson who seems to know all the best places to hide



on the station. To give Mark, Bob and Misha their due, they certainly know how to create intriguing characters and Larsson is of the type that Season 2, currently airing on BBC1 is desperately crying out for.

Having made the mistake of not having a court defender in *TRIAL OF A TIMELORD*, the Doctor is defended by the Duty solicitor, Justin Graves who is coming to the end of his 12-month stint on the colony. Meanwhile, Grae discovers from Larsson that the colony was originally built some fifty years earlier to house the worst type of criminals, serial killers and war criminal, most of them human.

Listening to Larsson's story, Grae is determined to find the Doctor, but here we have the next cliché, as she and Larsson seem to spend a great deal of time crawling through ducting

The Doctor's trial progresses with the usual assumptions that he has arrived on the asteroid by means unknown, (he refuses to tell them about the TARDIS), and killed a man. The trial progresses in this rather tedious manner for quite some time with Dr Stern believing that the Doctor is innocent (and with very good reason as we will soon discover) whilst Bartholomew doesn't. Later the Doctor is sent before Stern, as he will need a full medical

examination before he can be assigned to a working party. We slowly begin to learn a little about Stern, without a doubt, the most intriguing character in the story, as she gives the Doctor what appears to be a lethal injection. Seen by Bartholomew, Stern declares that the Doctor is dead, but soon after he leaves, the Doctor is once again back in the land of the living.

It transpires that 'Dr Stern' is really a Time Lady with a conscience called Arna who chooses to carry out her experiments in a prison environment claiming that she isn't a cold blooded killer like the Master. Arna is an intriguing character with a lot of potential, it is a pity therefore, that like most of the characters in the story, and she comes over as bland and colourless.

The Doctor and Arna deduce that Larsson is the killer, a fact that is also reached by Grae and as a result of which she is attacked and quite seriously injured by Larsson. Arna and the Doctor try to help her and we learn that Grae cannot regenerate because she suffers from HLS, which inhibits the regeneration process in its sufferers. For a moment one fears that we are about to lose the charming Time Lady and full marks to the authors for making this scene both suspenseful and very moving. The Doctor decides to try and make mental contact with Grae in the hope of saving her. This is very similar to the way in which the Second and third Doctors traded information in *THE THREE DOCTORS*.

For a time it looks quite hopeless for Grae and we see from her point of view her sadness, believing that her end is near that she won't be able to say goodbye to her sister, to the Doctor and again that she never had the opportunity to say goodbye to Tamara. Meanwhile, Bartholomew has started to believe the Doctor's story and Larsson is captured. It's here that we learn who the real killer is.

Grae is by now fully recovered and resting in Arna's Type 70 TARDIS, a type remembered from her vintage and veteran vehicles lectures at the academy. Later as they take their leave, Grae asks the Doctor what happened to Tamara.

He replies that he will tell her when the time is right and I must admit, I'd quite like to know myself.

NO REST FOR THE WICKED is scarcely an original story. It covers much ground which has been covered in both TV and book stories before, but for all that, whilst it may not have the style of its successor, Arnold T Blumberg's superb *THE SOUL MEN*, it is an enjoyable and easy read for a lazy afternoon. The character of Arna makes it quite intriguing and I for one am sorry that she didn't replace Tamara on board the TARDIS. Again, whilst *NO REST FOR THE WICKED* offers nothing radically new I would heartily recommend it as an undemanding read. **7/10**

REVIEWED BY GARY PHILLIPS