

OGOPOGO

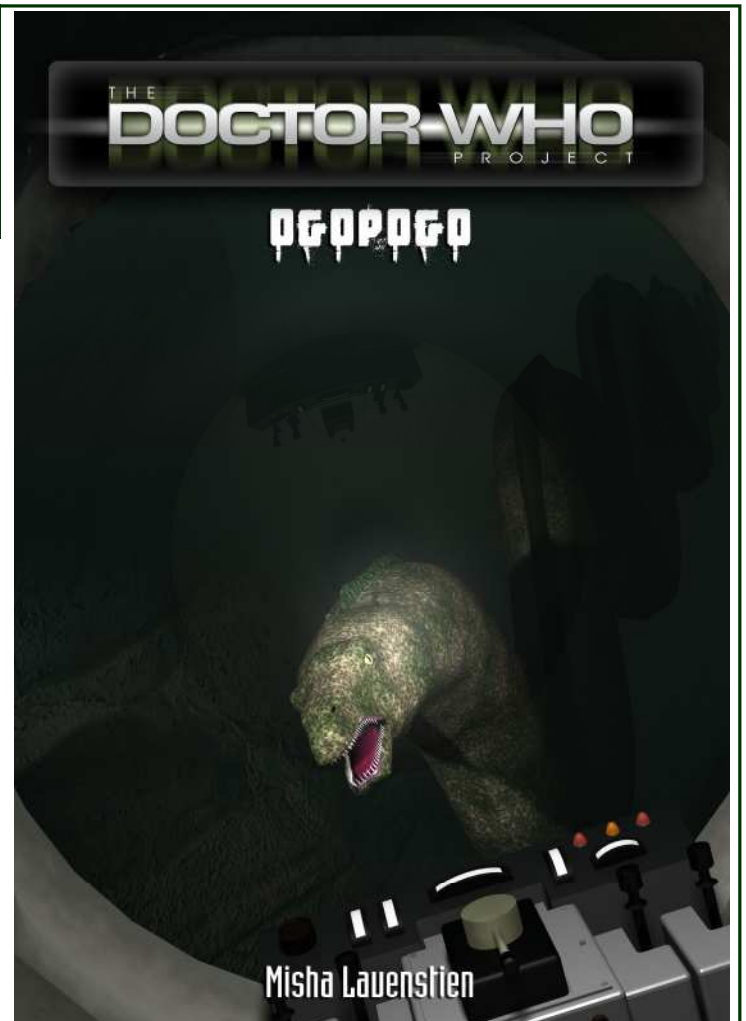
Written by: Misha Lauenstein
Season 35 ▪ Story 10R
Reviewed by Jez Strickley

Misha Lauenstein is a writer who knows his way around a good *Doctor Who* adventure, and after his whodunit masterclass in Season 33's *The Orion Express* it is great to have another story penned by one of *TDWP*'s founder members. In *Ogopogo* the reader is taken on a journey into the dark depths of Lake Okanagan, where an age old alien secret lies hidden beneath its waters.

Things get off to a cracking start with a near collision in space which sees an inter-planetary scout ship hurtling out of control towards the Earth. This is quickly followed by farmer Dan Hinton finding his quiet end-of-the-day hay-stacking routine deafeningly interrupted by an extraterrestrial object, crashing with incredible velocity into the nearby lake. Moments later and the Doctor and Silver are navigating their way around an inside-out TARDIS, intent upon finding their way back inside the topsy-turvy time machine.

Such a meshing of extraordinary story lines shows what a veritable box of delights the *Doctor Who* format can be for an inventive writer, and Lauenstein takes his opportunities in both hands. Interestingly, the TARDIS-based problem facing the Doctor and Silver appears not unlike the potentially infinite regression of TARDIS Police Boxes which faces the Fourth Doctor and Adric in the opening episode of 'Logopolis'. Plus, if you take the first letter away from 'Logopolis' the result is not a million miles away from 'Ogopogo'. Now, there's a thought. Or perhaps not, since for those a little more clued up on Canadian lakes and lake monsters, the name 'Ogopogo' should come as no surprise, since it is the title of the creature alleged to inhabit Lake Okanagan in Kelowna, British Columbia. Unsurprisingly, the downed spaceship at the bottom of the lake, along with its reptilian crew and their precious cargo of eggs, makes for a perfect science fiction-cum-lake monster mystery story, and the Doctor is intent on getting to the bottom of it, if you'll excuse the pun.

Soon enough the Doctor and Silver break out of the dimensional trap caused by the inside-out TARDIS, and find themselves in Hinton's farmhouse. There they meet the rather confused farmer, who is also being visited by a university professor of meteorology, Mark Chalmers.



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Chalmers is investigating the meteorite activity which Hinton was witness to, and the self-assured scientist explains that a submarine is being dispatched to locate the object which has sunk to the bottom of the lake. With Chalmers less than appreciative of the Doctor's offer of help, the Time Lord sets himself the challenge of separating the befuddled TARDIS from the guestroom of Hinton's farmhouse, whilst Silver is sent off to enjoy the lakeside resort of Kelowna, and investigate its various bookstores.

Events then move forwards five days, and the Doctor has successfully infiltrated the meteor diving group as a back-up team member. The diving group itself reads like a typi-

cal demographically-sensitive list of local representatives, including an expert on Ogotopog and the winner of a local radio call-in contest, the prize of which was the last seat on the sub. In amongst these scenes there's a particularly amusing moment when Chalmers realizes that the team's so-called 'meteor analyst', Steven Ross, is in point of fact a 'media analyst', whose strong Australian accent had caused his less accent-tuned fellows to confuse his area of expertise. With Ross out, the Doctor joins the group, and in a nice twist the radio call-in winner is revealed to be Silver. With the group now ready to go, the sub makes its dive into the lake.

Having submerged his wonderful assortment of submariners Lauenstein triggers another twist, for it is revealed that the spaceship which fell to Earth travelled backwards in time as it crashed – echoes of 'Earthshock' – meaning that its crew are long since dead, and its cargo of precious eggs have been left to hatch in ignorance of their true origins – origins which will be all too familiar to fans of a certain race of Martian warriors. In good time the Doctor

manages to wrap up the puzzle, leaving the inhabitants of Kelowna to return to the crafty business of stoking the Ogotopog legend.

Lauenstein is a writer who tends to opt for the quick-fire approach when it comes to *Doctor Who* story telling, and *Ogotopog* is another excellent, racy effort. Aspects of 'Terror of the Zygons', a smattering of deep-sea adventure film motifs, and an alien menace right out of the early years of *Doctor Who* all come together to give *Ogotopog* a pedigree which sets it apart from the majority of monster romps. Still further, it raises more than the odd lighthearted moment amidst an inch perfect portrayal of the stereotypes found amongst a part-science part-monster-spotting diving team. In all, Lauenstein once again delivers a story which will make you smile, as much as it will keep you hooked until the very end.

Rating: 9/10