

THE LEGEND OF THE GREEN MAN

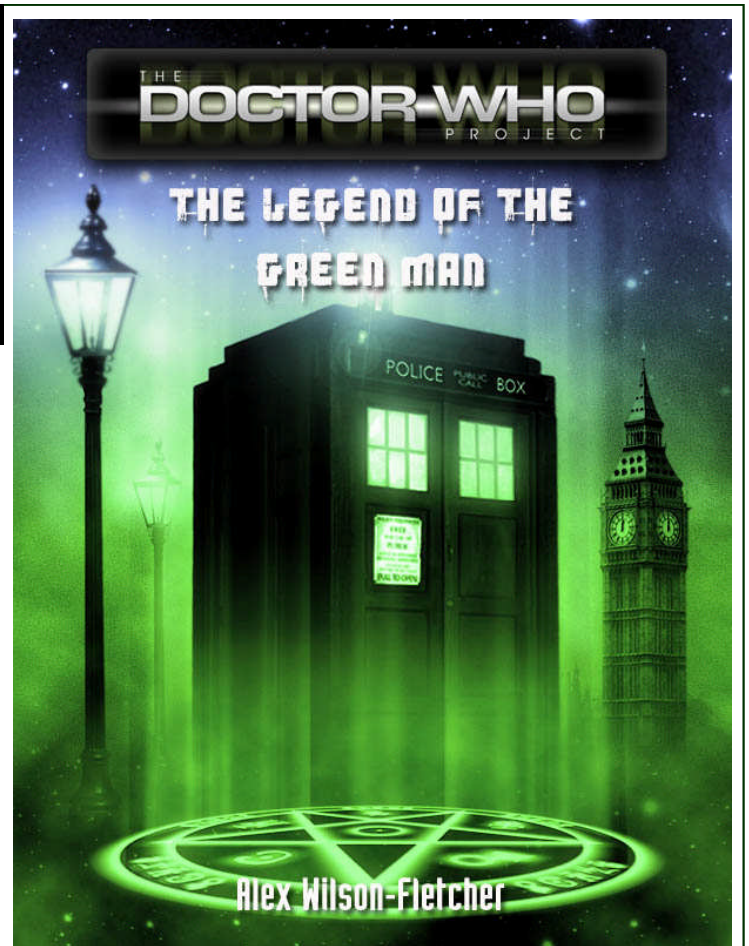
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Season 34/Story IOD
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Regency England is the backdrop to Alex Wilson-Fletcher's occult mystery *The Legend of the Green Man*. Arriving in London at the request of an old friend, the Doctor is confronted with the news that a worldwide rise in occultism threatens global domination. In the meantime, Silver makes contact with Rachael, a woman who looks strikingly like her aunt and who bears the same family name. The plot then diverges with the Doctor and Silver each caught up in a separate story thread: the former visiting his favourite London club to consider the occultism threat, and the latter helping her namesake to find out what is happening to her erstwhile father, a man who is up to his neck in cultish dealings.

Although separating the Doctor and Silver gives the reader the chance to explore the story from two character perspectives, the lion's share of the action is given to Silver: discovering the whereabouts of the Order of Altimira, the cult in which Rachael's father has become caught up, and confronting its leader are all in a day's work for the apprentice time traveler. In an interesting turn of events Silver is faced with a startlingly revelation regarding her identity, and one which is sure to feed into later adventures. The respective plots converge again as the Doctor applies his brains to the problem of facing off another alien threat, and Silver gets to show off her not inconsiderable brawn, albeit with some rather unusual hereditary help. Sadly, in spite of holding all the cards for an exciting finale the conclusion feels somewhat contrived. Instances of *duex ex machina* are hardly uncommon in *Doctor Who*, yet having the Doctor resort to using yet another solve-all gadget to dispatch a bug-eyed nasty doesn't make it any the less unoriginal. This is a shame since it detracts from what is an otherwise perfectly good tale.

Where Alex Wilson-Fletcher really comes alight is in his descriptions of Regency England: exclusive London clubs, sinister cultish chapter houses and the home of the urbane John Martin, each sculpt a model of the past which allows the reader to feast their imagination on a finely crafted backdrop, and one which fits *TDWP's* Ninth Doctor like a glove.

The overarching theme of paganism, which is evident in Lesleigh Force's *Day of the Dead*, is given a distinctly sinister makeover in *The Legend of the Green Man*, with the rural village inn setting of its forerunner replaced by the gentlemen's club and the urban dwelling of Regency London. This



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cityscape, which Alex Wilson-Fletcher paints so very well, contains an unpleasant underside which reeks of the black arts and of those who would be foolhardy enough to tamper with them. Putting paganism on the agenda also provides ample scope for a thoroughgoing examination of the character of Silver, a young girl who has dabbled in the ancient rituals of Wicca, as well as its New Age offspring, and for whom the topic of paganism has a special personal significance.

Silver is not the only character to be given some useful development. The scene in which the Doctor questions his handling of the Web of Time makes for an interesting mental detour. By considering the possible consequences of his interfering in established history this latest incarnation is shown to be mindful of his approach to time travel, and his ponderings give the temporal theorists among us plenty of

food for thought.

The various supporting characters show promise at the outset, but unfortunately become little more than ciphers by close of play. Rachael Silverstein tries her best not to be a damsel in distress but proves to be precisely that, and John Martin drifts from being a useful reason for the Doctor's visit to the realms of the forgotten man in the blink of an eye. The endgame baddie also comes and goes far too quickly, giving the distinct impression that Alex Wilson-Fletcher misses a trick in not giving his villain a little more time and

space with which to play.

Character niggles to one side, this adventure is a solid helping of Who, washed down with enough action and intrigue to keep the reader hooked. What is more, if monsters and mystery, occult happenings and global conspiracies are your cup of tea, you won't go far wrong with *The Legend of the Green Man*.

Rating: 8/10