

I picked up my copy of **The Doctor Who Project Season 30** with an equal mix of guilt and trepidation. Guilt because I was behind in reading previous seasons of 'The Project' and trepidation because fan fiction can be a painful thing to read. The material waiting for me was a labour of love by a friend. He was waiting patiently for a promised review and I didn't want to have to sit down and write that I was disappointed by what I'd read.

I chose **Tomb of Shadows** by John-Gordon Swogger because it looked to be about ancient Egypt and I knew John-Gordon was an archaeologist. 'He wrote what he knew at least', I thought as I settled in to give it a go.

The bells of Thebes' Coptic churches echoed a far-away midnight peal. 'Wow', I thought, 'that certainly sets a mood.'

That opening sentence wasn't just a lucky configuration of words. As I continued to read, words and mood, setting and action, ideas and story all flowed easily off the page. I knew that I was reading something I would not have to give a totally bad review of. In fact, I knew was going to be able to say I liked it.

I liked "*Tomb of Shadows*". It is a well thought out and realized story perfectly suited to the Doctor Who Universe. The Doctor and Tamara find themselves not where they expect to be - as usual. They soon find themselves embroiled in a history that never was, unexpected glitches in the time-space continuum, alien technology, a megalomaniac Nazi and the Curse of Tutankhamen, all of which add up to a threat to the entire universe. What more could a fan ask for?

John-Gordon's writing flows easily and confidently; it's obvious he knows where his story is going and how he's going to get there. The pacing is good though it did seem to lag a little in the middle. The descriptions of Egypt, its ancient artefacts and history had the weight of John-Gordon's expertise behind them but he did not abuse his knowledge to burden the reader with long and unnecessary treatises on arcane points with no bearing on the story. A very pleasant surprise was the obvious care he'd taken in his descriptions of multiple quantum-universes. Reality and fiction are rubbing shoulders in the world of quantum physics lately and it's clear to me that John-



Gordon has interests beyond archaeology.

There were weaknesses in the story though. Nowhere is the Doctor adequately described. This for me is a key weakness in a series that wants the reader to identify with a particular incarnation of the Doctor- one the Project creators and writers have conceived specifically for their Doctor Who Universe. It could have been any Doctor at all in this story; no distinct sense of his personality ever emerged. Tamara was a likewise vague shadow of a person. One passing reference to her skin colour does not a description make, I'm afraid. I can forgive John-Gordon these flaws, as he hasn't lived and breathed these characters for years. I'm disappointed though that the editorial staff didn't offer to help John-Gordon bring the Project's Doctor and Tamara into better focus. They are great characters and deserve a better showing than they got this time 'round.

When all is said and done though, *Tomb of Shadows* is a damn fine read. I hope John-Gordon has more stories up his sleeve for *The Doctor Who Project*.

Reviewed by Terry Baker