



REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

BEN AARONOVITCH

BBC

DOCTOR
WHO

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About the Book

With unfinished business to attend to, the Seventh Doctor returns to where it all began: Coal Hill School in London in 1963. Last time he was here, the Doctor left something behind – a powerful Time Lord artefact that could unlock the secrets of time travel. Can the Doctor retrieve it before two rival factions of Daleks track it down? And even if he can, how will the Doctor prevent the whole of London becoming a war zone as the Daleks meet in explosive confrontation?

An adventure featuring the Seventh Doctor as played by Sylvester McCoy and his companion Ace

About the Author

Ben Aaronovitch writes tie-in novels and TV scripts, and wrote the screenplays for the Seventh Doctor episodes *Battlefield* and *Remembrance of the Daleks*. He is the author of a series of audio dramas based on TV's *Blake's 7*, as well as the acclaimed *Rivers of London* series. He also works as a bookseller.

The Doctor Who 50th Anniversary Collection

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Gary Russell

The Silent Stars Go By
Dan Abnett



REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

BEN AARONOVITCH



*To Andrew who opened the door,
and Anna who pushed me through it*

I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion, Cheated of
feature by dissembling nature, Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent
before my time Into this breathing world, scarce half made
up, And that so lamely and unfashionable That dogs bark at
me, as I halt by them; Why, I, in this weak piping time of
peace, Have no delight to pass away the time.

Richard III, I.i

INTRODUCTION

When *Doctor Who* script editor Andrew Cartmel told me that publisher WH Allen would, perforce, offer me first refusal on the novelisation of *Remembrance of the Daleks*, I was filled with enthusiasm. Hurrah, I thought, not only did I luck into writing the Daleks on my first ever TV gig but I also get paid to learn how to write prose. It never occurred to me that turning my script into 40,000+ words, roughly twenty times the maximum length of any other of my prose outings, would prove difficult. I charged in with all the empty-headed mad enthusiasm of youth. Like many a first work, my novelisation can be seen as an amalgam of diverse influences, most of them from science fiction. Consequently, there are the portentous quotes from imaginary books, à la Frank Herbert, the supercharged cyberpunk imagery of the Dalek-on-Dalek battles, cf. William Gibson, and the flash memories by characters in extremis which I'm fairly certain I lifted from somewhere, even if I can't remember exactly where.

Producer John Nathan Turner, catching wind of my reckless charge into the literary breach, asked me to at least try and make sure it matched the TV episodes as they were broadcast. There was a plaintive note in his voice - I think he had been burnt before.

One thing was certain, it wasn't simply going to be the script with 'he said' or 'she said' added at the end of each line of dialogue. My characters were going to have an interior life and my fictional worlds would have some

depth. Well, perhaps not depth exactly, but definitely not suitable for unaccompanied children under five.

It never occurred to me to do it any other way.

Fortunately there were precedents, and indeed precedents that I was familiar with from my childhood, in the form of the novelisations by Malcolm Hulke. I was given a copy of *Doctor Who and the Doomsday Weapon* (adapted by Hulke from his own screenplay *Colony in Space*) by my mum. She approved of Hulke because she knew him through the Party (that's the Communist Party of Great Britain, by the way), which outweighed the fact that the book was science fiction – a genre she despised.

Hulke, too, had imbued his characters with backstory (particularly the evil commander) and beefed up the special effects while retaining both the form and spirit of his story. With his example in mind, I plunged into my first serious venture into prose. In the process I learnt two important lessons. One was that 40,000 is really a large number of words while, weirdly, not really being enough. The other was that the biggest difference between prose and scripts is the way you handle transitions from scene to scene. In TV you can rely on the visual cues to tell the audience who's in a particular scene, but in prose you've got to find ways to remind the reader who is in the scene and, more importantly, who exactly the scene is focused on, dramatically speaking, and why the reader should care about them.

I haven't read *Remembrance of the Daleks* since it came out in the early 1990s. I find it hard to read my own work, and in any case I'm never objective about its quality. I thought the book was good stuff when I wrote it, and it was well received and people seem to enjoy it. Which is all you can ask for in a piece of work.

And it did teach me to write prose – or at least point me in the right direction.

So, if you plan to read the rest of this book, I hope you will be gentle in your judgement of it. It was my first time, and if it seems a bit rushed, a bit earnest — and occasionally up itself unto its third knuckle — then there's a simple reason for that.

If you can't be all those things when you're young — what's the point?

Ben Aaronovitch
August 2012

PROLOGUE

The old man had a shock of white hair pulled back from a broad forehead; startling eyes glittered in a severe high-cheekboned face. Although he was stooped when he walked, his slim body hinted at hidden strengths. Light from the streetlamps, blurred by the gathering mist, glinted in the facets of the blue gem set in the ring on his finger.

He paused for bearings by a pair of gates on which the words:

IM FOREMAN
Scrap Merchant

were barely visible in the night, before carefully picking his way through the junkyard towards the police box at its centre.

A common enough sight in the England of the early 1960s, the dark blue police box was strangely out of place in the junkyard, and even more oddly, this one was humming. The old man stopped by its doors and reached into a pocket for the key.

‘There you are, grandfather,’ said a girl’s voice from inside.

His sharp hearing picked up a woman’s whispered response from behind him. ‘It’s Susan,’ said the woman.

The old man’s face creased with irritation as he sensed that he was about to be delayed for a long time. But then time was relative, especially to someone such as himself.

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SHOREDITCH, NOVEMBER 1963 FRIDAY, 15:30

One, two, three, four,
Who's that knocking at the door?
Five, six, seven, eight,
It's the Doctor at the gate.

Children's skipping chant

'WHAT'S SHE STARING at?' demanded Ace, balefully staring at one of the many girls that clustered around the entrance to Coal Hill School.

'Your clothing is little anachronistic for this period,' said the Doctor, 'and that doesn't help.'

Ace defensively hefted the big black Ono-Sendai tape deck to a more nonchalant position on her shoulder and continued to stare at the girl. Nobody outstares me, she thought, especially some twelve-year-old sprat in school uniform. The girl turned away.

'Hah,' exclaimed Ace with satisfaction, and turned her attention to the Doctor. 'Is it my fault that this decade's got no street cred?' Ace waited for a reaction from the Doctor, but she got nothing. He seemed to be gazing intently at a squat ugly van parked opposite the school.

'Strange,' murmured the Doctor.

'Oi, Professor. Can we get something to eat now?'

The Doctor, however, was oblivious to Ace's question. 'Very odd.'

'Professor?'

The Doctor finally shifted his attention to Ace. His eyes travelled suspiciously to her rucksack. 'You haven't got any explosives in there have you?'

'No.' Ace braced herself for the 'gaze'. The Doctor's strange intense eyes swept over her and then away. Ace slowly let out her breath – the 'gaze' had passed on.

'What do you make of that van?'

Ace dutifully considered the van. It was a Bedford, painted black, with sliding doors and a complicated aerial sprouting from the roof.

'Dunno,' she shrugged. 'TV detector van? Professor, I'm starving to death.'

The Doctor was unmoved by Ace's plea for sustenance. He shook his head. 'Wrong type of aerial for that. No, for this time period that's a very sophisticated piece of equipment.'

In this decade, thought Ace, a crystal set is a sophisticated piece of equipment. 'What's so sophisticated about that? I've seen CBs with better rigs. I'm hungry.'

'You shouldn't have disabled the food synthesizer then,' retorted the Doctor.

'I thought it was a microwave.'

'Why would you put plutonium in a microwave?'

'I didn't know it was plutonium, you shouldn't leave that stuff lying around.'

'What did you think it was then?'

'Soup.'

'Soup?'

'Soup. I'm still hungry – lack of food makes me hungry you know.'

'Lack of food makes you obstreperous.' The Doctor applied his much vaunted mind to the problem. 'Why don't you go and buy some consumables? There's a cafe down there.' He gestured down the alley where they had landed the TARDIS. 'Meanwhile I will go and undertake a detailed

and scientific examination of that van which has so singularly failed to grab your attention.'

'Right,' Ace turned and walked away, feeling the 'gaze' on her back. The Doctor called after her and she turned sharply.

'What?'

'Money,' said the Doctor holding out a drawstring purse.

Just what did I think they were going to take, thought Ace as she took the purse, Iceworld saving coupons? 'Thanks.'

The Doctor smiled.

From the gateway of the school the sandy haired girl that had earlier stared at Ace watched as she turned and walked away.

Ace followed the alley until it came out onto Shoreditch High Road. Across the road and facing her was the cafe. A sign above the window proclaimed it as Harry's Cafe.

Food at last, thought Ace.

Sergeant Mike Smith pushed his plate to one side, leaned back in his chair and turned to the sports page of the *Daily Mirror*. The jukebox whirled a record into place, the tea urn steamed, and the music started.

Mike luxuriated in the cold weather, his memories of the wet, green heat of Malaya fading among the cracked lino and fried food smell of Harry's Cafe. He was content to let them go, and allow the East End to bring him home from the heat and boredom of those eighteen months abroad.

The cafe door banged open and a girl walked in. Mike glanced up at a flash of black silk – the girl was wearing a black silk jacket with improbable badges pinned or stitched to the arms. She shrugged a rucksack off her shoulders revealing the word 'Ace' stitched into the back. Something that surely could not be a transistor radio was dumped casually on a nearby table.

The girl approached the counter.

Mike watched as she leaned over the counter and looked around. She didn't move like any girl he knew, and certainly she didn't dress like anybody he had ever seen.

She banged her knuckles on the worn Formica counter.

'Hallo,' she called. Her accent was pure London.

The Doctor frowned at the aerial. It represented an intrusion into his plans and the implications of that worried him. He noticed a ladder giving access to the roof of the van and within moments he stood there, balanced perfectly by the aerial. One part of his mind solved a series of equations dealing with angles, displacement, and the optimum wavelength, while another part of his mind began re-examining important aspects of the plan.

The first answer came swiftly; the second cried out for more data. The Doctor sighed: sometimes intuition, even his, had limitations. Quickly sighting down the length of the aerial, he looked up... to find himself staring at the menacing Victorian bulk of Coal Hill School.

Ace banged the counter again. 'Hallo,' she yelled, louder than intended. 'Service? Anybody home?' There was no response.

'Not like that,' said a man's voice.

Ace twisted round sharply to find a young man standing close to her – far too close. Ace backed off a little, gaining some space. 'Like what, then?'

The man grinned, showing good teeth. His eyes were blue and calculating. 'Like this,' he said and turning to look over the counter bellowed parade-ground style: 'Harry, customer!' He turned back to Ace who cautiously removed her hands from her ears. 'Like that.'

A voice answered from the back of the cafe.

'See,' said the man, leaning in again, 'easy when you know how.'

A short squat man with the face of a boxer emerged from the depths of the cafe. Presumably this was Harry. 'Give it a rest, Mike,' he said to the younger man, who laughed and went back to his table. 'I had enough of that in the war.'

Harry turned to Ace. 'Can I help you miss?'

Ace considered the state of her stomach. 'Four bacon sandwiches and a cup of coffee, please.'

The Doctor stepped carefully through the gate, dodging children who were eager to be rid of their school. Drained of its inmates Coal Hill School loomed dour as a prison over the deserted playground.

Movement caught the Doctor's eye. The girl who had been watching Ace was there, chanting as she skipped from one chalked box to another. Around her, black circles were etched into the concrete. The four of them were in a square pattern like the pips on a die. With a quick sideways lunge the Doctor stepped close to the marks and stooped, running a finger along one of them. The finger came up black, sooty with carbonized concrete.

He looked up at the girl and for a moment their eyes met; then she whirled and was gone.

Rachel was lost in the mechanics of detection. The interior of the van was cramped with equipment, casting bulky shadows in the glow from the cathode ray tube. For a second she lost the signal in the clutter caused by the surrounding buildings, but with deft movements she refocused. There, got it, she thought. Behind her the back doors opened and the van rocked as someone climbed in. She knew it would be Sergeant Smith.

Rachel kept her eyes on the screen. 'You took your time. Get on the radio and tell the group captain,' she looked back, 'I think I've located the...'

Intense grey eyes met her own.