

VORTEX



ATA GIRL 2
CHOCKS AWAY!

DRACULA RETURNS
WITH SOME GUESTS...

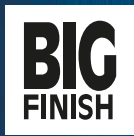
THE SEQUEL OF THE DALEKS!

DID YOU THINK THE DALEK INVASION OF EARTH
WAS THE SECOND DALEK STORY? THINK AGAIN...!



BETTER TATE THAN NEVER!

DONNA'S BACK IN THE TARDIS –
AND SHE HAS A FRIEND IN TOW...



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COMING SOON

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR STRANDED!

OVER THE past few years we've seen the Eighth Doctor involved in intergalactic conflicts between the warring Daleks and Eminence in *Dark Eyes*; he's taken on a collective of rogue Time Lords in *Doom Coalition*; and more recently he's defeated an ancient Time Lord menace, as well as several incarnations of the Master, in *Ravenous*.

This year Paul McGann's Time Lord will find himself involved in a new range of stories in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures – Stranded**. With the TARDIS badly damaged at the conclusion of *Ravenous*, he now finds himself confined to his home in Baker Street, in one place (London) and one time (2020), in a situation that could be described as 'domestic'.

The Doctor is joined by companions Helen Sinclair (Hattie Morahan) and Liv Chenka (Nicola Walker), and also new friends Tania Bell (Rebecca Root) and Sergeant Andy Davidson (Tom Price, reprising his role from *Torchwood*).

Producer David Richardson explains: "Stranded is a brand new start for **The Eighth Doctor Adventures**. There's no epic mission to save the universe – this is about a group of people living in a house in London in 2020 and their struggles to find a role in this world. But of course there will be aliens and strange threats along the way!"

The first box set of the **Doctor Who: Stranded** range features *Lost Property* by Matt Fitton, *Wild Animals* by John Dorney, *Must-See TV* by Lisa McMullin and *Divine Intervention* by David K Barnes. Out for release in July. **VORTEX**



EDITORIAL

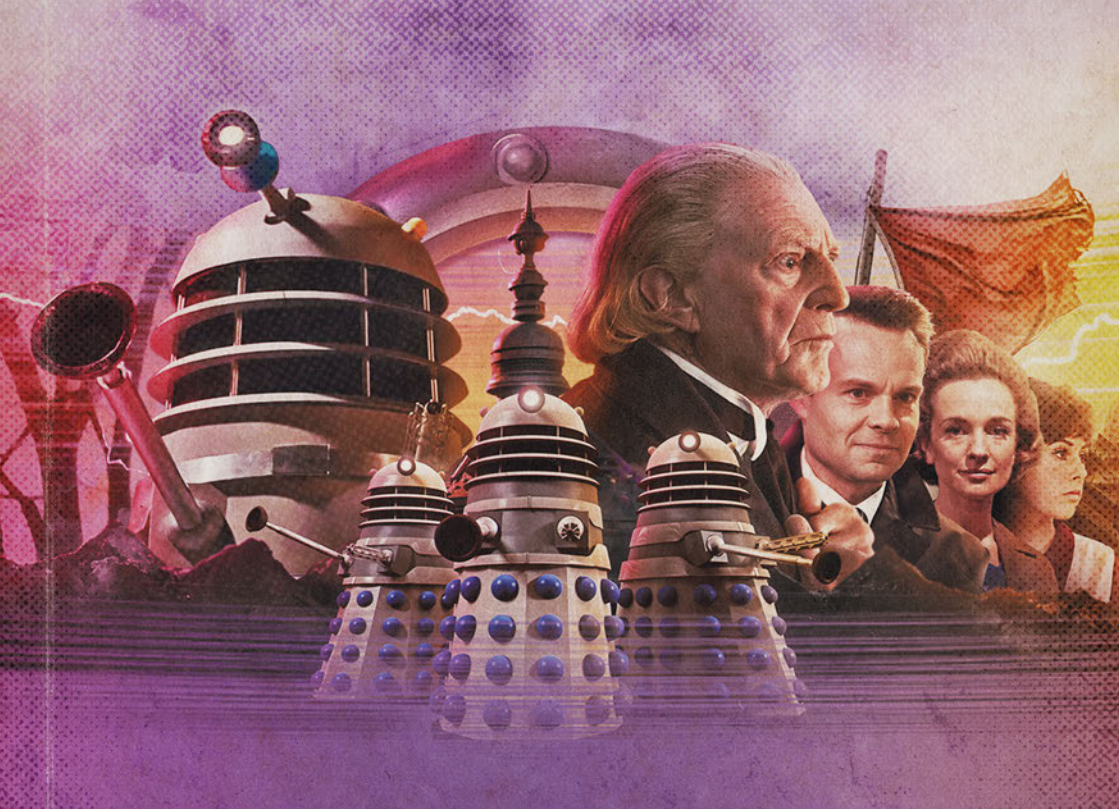
THERE'S ALWAYS something interesting about the familiar but new – and that's very much the case with new releases *Donna Noble – Kidnapped!* and *Dracula's Guests*.

They both feature actors and characters whom we know – Catherine Tate as Donna Noble and Mark Gatiss as Dracula – in audios that have already been brought to life by Big Finish. But then they also bring something that's different. We're going to see how Donna copes without the Doctor, and manages with her own companion. And then there's the Count who will feature in a prequel (and later a sequel) to the famous story from Bram Stoker. What was Dracula like before meeting Jonathan Harker and Abraham Van Helsing?

There's another meeting of familiar faces in **ATA Girl 2** with more from the women who kept Britain flying during World War II – plus we find out how the war ended for our heroines.

And finally in this issue we preview the two new stories in **The First Doctor Adventures**, as the fourth volume takes David Bradley's version of the First Doctor back to Skaro to meet the Daleks and to Russia to encounter the Romanovs.

Everything is new but everything is familiar. That's my favourite kind of day! **VORTEX**



AT FIRST GLANCE

DID YOU THINK THE DALEK INVASION OF EARTH WAS THE SECOND DALEK STORY? THINK AGAIN...!



ONE OF the many beauties about Big Finish's **Doctor Who** audio adventures is the ability to answer those questions that have always made us, as fans, think twice. For example, just how did the Doctor and Jamie fit in the television episode, *The Two Doctors*, with events in the sixties? (Answer – try *The Black Hole*).

This March, another one of these conundrums will be answered. There's always been a discussion about how the Daleks were able to invade Earth given that the Doctor, Ian, Barbara, Susan and

their Thal friends had defeated them at the end of TV episode, *The Mutants* (aka *The Daleks* and *The Dead Planet*). The Doctor suggests, almost flippantly, that they are encountering an earlier group of Skaro's meanest – but that doesn't really stand up to examination!

But now prepare yourself for **The First Doctor Adventures Volume Four**. Producer David Richardson says: "We've done three First Doctor box sets without any returning monsters so I decided it was time to take the TARDIS back to Skaro for a sequel

that would recreate the tangible atmosphere of the first Dalek story.

"The genius writer that is Andrew Smith has done us proud in exploring what happened on Skaro in the decades that followed – and there is (obviously!) a resurgent Dalek threat brewing in that long-dead Dalek city. Expect some brilliant world building, exciting set pieces and Barbara Wright at her most resilient.

"And writer Jonathan Barnes provides this set's historical adventure, which I loved from the very first pitch. It's a rich, textured

DOCTOR WHO THE FIRST DOCTOR

... journey through the final days of the doomed former Tsar of Russia, and it doesn't pull any dramatic punches."



THE FIRST story in this set is *Return to Skaro* by Andrew Smith.

A new plan to return to Earth actually takes the TARDIS to another place its crew has recently visited – Skaro – but it is several decades since their previous visit. The Thals have moved on with developing their species yet the shadow of the Dalek city always looms large over them. Venturing into the abandoned metropolis, the Doctor and his friends discover the Daleks aren't as dead as they might have thought... and it isn't only their enemies who have secrets.



Above (l-r): Claudia Grant and David Bradley

EXPECT SOME BRILLIANT WORLD BUILDING, EXCITING SET PIECES AND BARBARA WRIGHT AT HER MOST RESILIENT.

DAVID RICHARDSON



... Andrew says: "David got the idea that the Doctor and his friends wanted to go back to Earth realising they could use the Fast Return Switch from TV episode, *The Edge of Destruction*. I just thought, Wow, what a great idea – I want to do that! And so I leapt at it.

"The last time they tried using the Fast Return Switch it didn't end well, but now they know what the fault is, it's worth trying again – and it works to an extent. Except it only takes them to Skaro, the scene of their final battle with – and apparent destruction of – the Daleks.

"It was great to play with. I think it's been 10 years since I've been writing for Big Finish now, but this one stands out as one of my favourites. This is the new second Dalek story, set between TV episodes, *The Daleks* and *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*, and this story addresses why and how there are more Daleks, when they seemed to have been wiped out. It's never been explained over the years so

DOCTOR WHO THE FIRST DOCTOR

it was great to have the chance to try and do something with that.

“In *Return to Skaro* we have a Thal city built using Dalek technology. This fits in with the end of the final episode of the TV series when Barbara tells Alydon that the Dalek inventions should be of some use, so they adopt and customise Dalek technology to help them.

“One of my first thoughts was that I didn’t need to do a lot of research for it. I always thought I knew *The Daleks*, the original TV serial, really



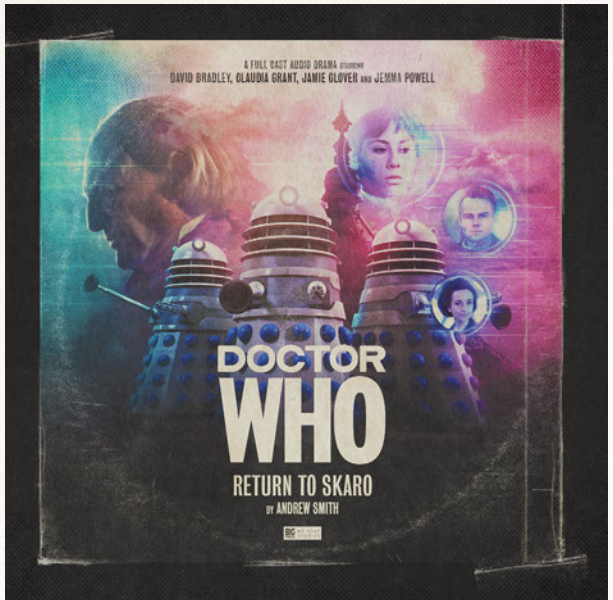
well as a story, so when I sat down to watch it I didn’t think I would take that much away from it. There might be little turns of phrase or something like that. But I watched it, an episode at a time, taking notes where necessary as I usually do, and I finished up with 10 pages of them. Almost 3,000 words.”

Andrew’s meticulous note-taking led him to notice several discrepancies in on-screen comments. He explains: “I was looking at the geography of Skaro, at where the Lake of Mutations is, and things like how long it takes Ian and Barbara to get round the lake and into the city, which was something like a day. I found inconsistencies like the Thals travelling from their plateau, which they initially said took four days to get there, and then later they say it took four years!

“In my rewatch of the first Dalek TV serial – I think in episode six – I noticed they’ve got a flashlight as Ian and Barbara and a group of Thals are in the tunnels and



Above (l-r): Jemma Powell, Claudia Grant and Jamie Glover





Above (l-r): John Albasiny, Jamie Glover, Jemma Powell, George Weightman, Claudia Grant, Leighton Pugh, Dan Starkey and Alex Tregear

IT SEEMED LIKE THE KIND OF IDEA WHICH ONLY THAT VERY EARLY VERSION OF THE SHOW MIGHT HAVE TACKLED — GRITTY AND HOPELESS, A TOO-REAL HISTORICAL TRAGEDY... JONATHAN BARNES

caverns. Ganatus says at one point, 'I'll take the fire' and he takes the flashlight from Ian. I was thinking, He says fire... is it just Ganatus not understanding electric light? No I don't think it is.

"I reckon Terry Nation scripted it as a torch, intending it to be a flaming torch, but the props department thought it was a flashlight. In the script I've reflected on that, and it's nothing that will be obvious to anyone, but Susan goes into the Dalek city and the Thal she's with has a backpack from which he produces what he calls a 'firelight'. It's just a brief

exchange but it make some sense of that line in the original serial!"



AS SURE as spring follows winter, a science fiction story for the First Doctor is followed by an historical, and in this case we have *Last of the Romanovs* by Jonathan Barnes. *The TARDIS lands on Earth near to an eerie and familiar house... with the only witness a regal man watching from inside through a broken window. Leaving the ship the crew immediately find themselves in trouble – because they have landed in Ekaterinburg early in the twentieth century. The man inside*

the house is Nicholas, the last Tsar of Russia, imprisoned with his family... and one of the most notorious crimes in history is just about to happen.

Jonathan tells *Vortex*: "The brief came in the form of an email from David Richardson (always exciting!), asking for a season one First Doctor pure historical. I pitched him three ideas and three possible settings (the Druids was one) before he alighted on my pitch for a story set in 1918 at the very end of the Romanovs' lives.

"It seemed like the kind of idea which only that very early version of the show might have tackled – gritty and hopeless, a too-real historical tragedy with the only sci-fi element being the presence of the Doctor and his friends."

As with all historical tales it meant a degree of research would be involved for this story, but Jonathan knew the basics before he began.

He explains: "I knew the outline of the story if not the precise detail. The Romanovs have always

fascinated me – a family trying to live as though in an earlier time only to be steamrolled by the twentieth century. There's a lot more that I'd have liked to have included.

"Rasputin is such an intriguing figure. But I also felt that we had to strictly follow the historical order of events. Hopefully, the TARDIS crew have been inserted seamlessly into the actual events (well, -ish!).

"I read quite a bit around the subject. Robert Service's *The Last of the Tsars* was especially useful.

"The process was very smooth. The form of those early historicals is pretty clear, I think. The biggest difficulty as a writer (and this is far from an original observation) is to ensure that all four of the regulars



Above: Jemma Powell

RETURN TO SKARO WAS
QUITE STRAIGHTFORWARD
WHEN IT CAME TO CASTING
BUT LAST OF THE ROMANOV
WAS TRICKY. KEN BENTLEY

have plenty to do. There was also an issue of tone here – these murders were so horrific that it could very easily seem tasteless or crass to build a *Doctor Who* story around them. Hopefully, there's a gravity to the way in which things are written and played which avoids this."

And was Jonathan happy with his script in the end? He grins: "I think so! I certainly hope it fulfilled the brief pretty well. My aim was to stick strictly to what might actually have been attempted at the time by the production team of 1963/4 and I hope that commitment to authenticity comes across.

"I was lucky enough to attend one of the recording days. David Bradley and the rest of the cast were sounding great and director Ken Bentley was, as ever, committed to making the drama sound as close as possible to a lost television soundtrack."

Ken concludes: "*Return to Skaro*

was quite straightforward when it came to casting but *Last of the Romanovs* was tricky. There's a perpetual debate about when accents should be used in audio, which I won't go into now, but I think accents are very useful in helping paint the picture.

"For instance, in *Romanovs* there are Russian and English characters. To my ear it's important the listener can easily distinguish between the two and so the Russian characters speak with a Russian accent. I like to be as authentic as possible so I always try to cast at least one actor who can speak the language and who has lived in the country in question. That way there's always someone in the room we can ask about pronunciation or dialects." **VORTEX**



DOCTOR WHO:
THE FIRST DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: VOLUME FOUR

■ RELEASED: MARCH 2020
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD



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DOCTOR WHO: THE ENGLISH WAY OF DEATH

BIG FINISH has taken a novel approach to **Doctor Who** since the release of *The Sirens of Time* in 1999 – and that’s continued to be the case ever since. And of course that became a literal meaning with the introduction of the **Novel Adaptations** range, taking **Doctor Who** stories released in the wilderness years of the 1990s by Virgin Publishing and bringing them to audio life.

Two of the most anticipated novels, *The Romance of Crime* and *The English Way of Death*, were released as audio dramas in 2015 starring Tom Baker’s Fourth Doctor, Lalla Ward’s Romana, and John Leeson as K9 – back together to capture the fun of television season 17.

Producer David Richardson reveals: “The aim with these was to recapture that television soundtrack feel. I was one of a generation of fans who recorded **Doctor Who** from the TV onto cassette tapes (as this was pre-video)... Ah, if only I could send these back in time for my 16-year-old self to savour!”

Adapting the novels for audio was John Dorney. He admits: “When I knew I was going to adapt *The Romance of Crime* and *The English Way of Death*, I could see that *Romance* was the shorter novel but more tightly plotted than *English Way*. And I could work out the sub-plots I could drop for *English Way*, which were more of a challenge on *Romance*.”

John was particularly delighted to be adapting Gareth Roberts’s work for audio. He says: “*The English Way of Death* is probably the most highly-rated of all the missing adventures. It feels like an

episode that you remember actually seeing on TV as it’s a great story, you know how it works and it has a brilliant villain.”

Adapting the lengthy novel for audio meant that several cuts had to be made to the text. John explains: “The biggest thing I remember having to do was trim the car chase from episode two, but it was really hard to take that out and keep the story working. It leads the reader to the image of the possessed policeman on the beach which is on the cover of the book. It was tricky finding a way to get that image back, to give listeners the pivotal moments they are expecting.

NORMALLY, WHEN YOU’RE ADAPTING SOMETHING, JOKES ARE THE FIRST THING TO GO BUT THERE ARE SO MANY GOOD ONES IN IT I DIDN’T WANT TO LOSE THEM... JOHN DORNEY

“The book is so well written, I needed to find a way of cleverly reducing it. Normally, when you’re adapting something, jokes are the first thing to go but there are so many good ones in it I didn’t want to lose them, especially as they give the story such an energy.

“The novel is already in four parts, so that gave me the structure straight away, and I already knew the marker points that I needed to hit for the adaptation.

“Quite a few of the early scenes were there just to help establish the characters and their relationships but you need to find the balance between keeping it moving and cutting it back, without running out of storyline.”

John concludes: “I’m very happy with it and I’m delighted that people have enjoyed it so much. When you’ve got such a strong story from Gareth to work with, you don’t want to mess it up!” **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: THE ENGLISH WAY OF DEATH

- RELEASED: JANUARY 2015
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD



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Count your blessings

*Dracula has risen from his audio grave
as horror's greatest creation once
more haunts our imaginations...*



Above (l-r): Mark Gatiss and Scott Handcock

I couldn't resist the idea of going right back to the medieval beginnings, showing Dracula at the height of his influence.

JONATHAN BARNES



DRACULA IS a name we've heard a lot recently what with the BBC adaptation of Bram Stoker's legendary novel. Produced by the former **Sherlock** team of Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, they have proved that there's still life in this centuries old cadaver! Mark Gatiss also plays the titular character in the **Big Finish Classics** audio version of the novel released in May 2016, and now he's back in the, erm, coffin, reviving the part once again.

The production team behind *Dracula's Guests* – writer Jonathan Barnes under the guidance of producer/director Scott Handcock, Big Finish's very own king of horror. Scott reveals: "The idea for more came about entirely because of Mark Gatiss. I was working on the final block of **Sherlock** up in Cardiff, when he clocked me on set and took me aside for a bit of a gossip!

"This was in 2016 and Big Finish's *Dracula* release was still quite recent, and obviously Mark posed the question: 'When are we doing more?' Of course everyone asks that but when I realised he was serious I spoke with the powers-that-be and Jonathan Barnes, and very quickly got a green light to develop two new storylines.

"Originally executive producer, Jason Haigh-Ellery, wanted two four-



disc sequels but it seemed odd to me to have releases that were longer than the original adaptation. So I suggested we stick with two three-disc releases as that then provided a more equitable beginning, middle and end.

"Also, rather than sequels, I wanted to bookend the original novel with a prequel as well as a sequel, as it struck me there was a great opportunity to explore the character's backstory in more detail. Obviously there's Bram Stoker's own novella, *Dracula's Guest*, which Jonathan did a lot of research

into and used as a basis for the opening episode, but I also couldn't resist the idea of going right back to the medieval beginnings, showing Dracula at the height of his influence."

Jonathan was delighted to write for the Count once more, not only for *Dracula's Guests*, but for the sequel, *Dracula's War*. He says: "Adapting Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, for Big Finish back in 2015 was a fantastic experience and I fell in love with the book all over again. The final production was terrific, directed by Scott with a wonderful, dedicated cast. In fact, I was so sorry to leave it all behind and move on to the next challenge that I started writing a detailed, full-length sequel to the book in the style of the original – *Dracula's Child* will be published in May by Titan Books. I was about half-way through this project when Scott got in touch to suggest doing more with the Count at Big Finish...

"The brief was wonderfully open-ended: two three-hour box sets to feature characters and situations from Bram Stoker's world. The details were largely up to us and we were given a huge amount of leeway.



Above: Mark Gatiss

My first thought was to come up with a pair of interlinked projects – the first a prequel to *Dracula*, the second a sequel set further into the future. The prequel deals with events leading up to what we see unfold in the book; the sequel happens in the midst of *World War One*, after many of the original characters have passed away.”



LOOKING BACK at his first performance as Dracula for Big Finish, Mark Gatiss tells

Vortex he does so: “With great pleasure! Lovely cast and it was delightful to finally play the old boy. I had a very croaky voice at the time which suited it hugely. It was great to record it so close to the mic – whispery and sinister. A dream come true!” And how did he find returning to play the Count once again? He laughs, sinisterly: “An unexpected bonus! I thought the scripts were really inventive and spooky. As we know, Dracula has a habit of coming back (especially in the Hammer films).”

Having already heard Mark Gatiss’s interpretation of the Count helped Jonathan during the writing process as he had the actor’s voice in his head.

Jonathan says: “Mark is a terrific Dracula. His performance



Above: David Bamber

in our adaptations is spot-on – magnificently underplayed and full of low menace. For such an iconic villain, the Count himself is absent from much of the original text. He thrives at the edges of things, watching from the shadows. The challenge this time around was to give the character more to do without unnecessarily diluting his sinister unknowability. It’s a particular challenge writing dialogue for Mark to speak as Dracula – he’s a great Bram Stoker



expert and enthusiast who, with Steven Moffat, has unleashed his own lavish, big-budget adaptation on the world. No pressure, then!”



JONATHAN WAS also delighted to flesh out the back story of the Count. He beams: “It was a huge thrill, of course. I was pretty much thoroughly immersed in all things Transylvanian by this point (my wife and I even travelled there in 2016!) so there were plenty of questions and loose ends which I wanted to explore and follow up.

“The first third is a fairly faithful adaptation of Bram Stoker’s odd, disconnected short story *Dracula’s Guest* (published by his widow after his death) and it grows from there, as we encounter other familiar figures in the months before the original narrative. It was a particular pleasure to delve deeper into the backstory of RM Renfield, personified once again



Above: Ian Hallard

by the superlative Ian Hallard.”

As for the story arc, Jonathan says: “It’s pretty ambitious. It spans centuries and I’m hoping that it’s full of unexpected connections. The first box set feels properly Victorian, I think, whereas the second plays a little more in the vein of a bumper-length Hammer Horror.”

And has the leading man enjoyed the premise of the series? Mark adds: “Very much. As I say, when he comes back, people often struggle to know what to do with the Count but

The second episode, focussing on the Count's medieval past, is deliciously wicked and brutal at points. SCOTT HANDCOCK

these new stories really rise to the challenge! I used to read the comic *Dracula Lives!* when I was a kid. There was one issue where a group of torch-wielding villagers confronted the resurrected vampire with the words, "We only brought you back to life so we could kill you again!"



SCOTT ENJOYED the time in studio, saying: "The recording sessions were great, though quite intense as the box sets for both this and *Dracula's War* are hugely complex, and scheduling meant we were leapfrogging between scenes not even in the same episode but sometimes separate box sets. So on any given day I could be recording material from all six different scripts. "It's taken a long while to record this – Jonathan completed the scripts in 2017 – but we've had to wait for Mark to become free. We also recorded his parts in *The War Master* and *Masterful*, so there was a lot to keep my head around in that week of recording! But it all came together and was enormous fun.

"Mark is brilliant as ever as the Count, and we have a fantastic guest cast joining us, particularly David Bamber who does a lot of

the heavy lifting as Jeremiah Hart in the first story. We also have familiar faces like Ian Hallard as we explore RM Renfield's backstory more, and Deirdre Mullins in the forthcoming *Dracula's War*, returning as Mina."

Mark added: "I missed having the whole cast this time as I had to record most of my new bits alone. But it was lovely to be back at Big Finish in its anniversary year – 20 years after first recording *The Sirens of Time* and *Phantasmagoria!*"

Scott continues: "It's really difficult to pick a standout moment as Jonathan's scripts are so rich, and each character so beautifully drawn. The second episode, focussing on the Count's medieval past, is deliciously wicked and brutal at points. But I have to say, one of my favourite things about this set is the brilliant team who have pulled it all together. It's a stunning collaboration of strong scripts and great cast, with Joe Meiners's thoughtful sound design and a truly filmic soundtrack from Rob Harvey. It feels like an age-old tale, despite being a collection of original stories written specially for us. I can't wait for people to hear it all!"



DRACULA HAS made such an impact on our psyches over the years. *Vortex* asks the team why they think this is the case. Jonathan says: "Dracula is such a versatile character; there are so many different ways in which his story can be approached and interpreted."

Scott agrees: "It's strange. It's a character who's introduced to most of us at an early age – whether through books or film or just seeing the image of a vampire around Halloween when we're growing up. He's part of the collective consciousness and, in terms of vampires, the absolute standout. And when you think about how certain legends repeat through different cultures, there's something eternal about the idea of a vampire. People want to prolong their lives – death scares us all – and Dracula embodies that: a creature who prolongs its own life by stealing that of others. I think that's probably why it endures, because it presents us with a dilemma. We're torn between the idea of an unnatural lifespan, living forever; but equally we want the human characters that we relate to more immediately to succeed. It brings up a lot of mixed feelings."

Mark concurs: "Bram Stoker's great gift was to synthesise vampire myths into this one, totemic character. Then many generations of talented people have added to the legend to create the irresistible, aristocratic uber-vampire that we love today." **VORTEX**



BIG FINISH CLASSICS:
DRACULA'S GUESTS

- RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2020
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD



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Noble Deeds

Donna's back in the TARDIS – and she has a friend in tow...



EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE

time-travelling temp Donna Noble is back for a new series of adventures. However, this time she's left her best mate, the Doctor, behind, as she is whisked away for four new tales in space and time.

Catherine Tate returns to play Chiswick's finest with Jacqueline King reprising her role as Donna's mum, Sylvia, and Niky Wardley playing Donna's best pal from school, Natalie.

Producer David Richardson recalls: "When we approached Catherine

to see if she'd like to do more Tenth Doctor adventures, we also pitched the idea of Donna having her own spin-off series – and Catherine was hugely enthusiastic about the idea. We weren't planning to record it for some time, but, as it was already in the works when David Tennant and Catherine were in studio together recording **The Tenth Doctor Adventures Volume Three**, we were able to record some insert scenes of them together ahead of time. Wind forward almost a year and **Donna Noble: Kidnapped!** was then recorded with the lead cast.

"Niky was our first choice for Donna's best friend, Natalie, not only because we love working with her, but her long-standing creative relationship with Catherine just inspires truly golden moments. They fire off each other with such ease that it's quite breathtaking to listen to, and this permeates all of the production. Even in the extras you will probably hear me howling with laughter as they improvise around my questions. What an absolute treat this was to work on."

Script editor Matt Fitton adds: "When Big Finish first got a licence



Above (l-r): Anthony Howell
Jacqueline King, Isla Blair,
Niky Wardley and Dan Starkey

Don't get me started
on TV episode *Turn
Left* or I'll never
stop. She gives up
her life!

JACQUELINE RAYNER

for the new series of **Doctor Who**, this range was one of the early pitches as we looked at doing something solo with Donna even before **The Tenth Doctor Adventures**. Then, once Catherine had been into studio recording with David Tennant, David Richardson kickstarted the whole project again and we went back and fleshed it out.

"The idea was to give Donna an adventure on her own, using Sylvia as well, to see what she gets up to when the Doctor's not there."



THE SET opens with *Out of this World* by Jacqueline Rayner, which sees Sylvia invite Donna's schoolgirl BFF Natalie round to get reacquainted. Jac says of her brief: "I think it was basically that Donna was to become a sort of Doctor in her own right with her own companion, and this set out the way the season would go – the villains and so on."

"It's not Donna's Big Finish debut, but there's still a little remnant of that excitement clinging on. Plus writing the first episode is always the fun one because you get to set things up and them hand them over for other people to play with.

"*Out of this World* is set after television episode, *Forest of the Dead*, and it's about Donna trying to recover from that, how it's really shaken her confidence and caused a wound that's not healing easily. Sylvia tries to help in her own sort of way, bringing in an old schoolfriend and sending the pair off speed-dating – with unexpected, and let's hope sometimes amusing, consequences. Everyone in it is projecting an image, concealing what's really going on – for self-preservation or for more sinister reasons..."

Jac especially enjoyed writing for Donna. She says: "It was a huge deal for me. I love writing for companions. I love getting in there and exploring what's really going on inside them. But Donna? Not only is she right at the top for me (vying with Sarah Jane and Vicki as my all-

time favourite, and most of the time she gets the number one slot!) but she's funny. She's really funny. And she's real. That bit in the TV episode, *The Poison Sky*, where she's trapped in the TARDIS and can't work out what the Doctor wants her to do. That's her being real. Or, 'But I've been dieting!' in *Forest of the Dead*.

"I love her for those things so much (and don't get me started on TV episode *Turn Left* or I'll never stop! She gives up her life. She actually sacrifices herself for the world – while never believing herself to be anything but ordinary – and she is so extraordinary, but still one hundred percent real). How could I possibly write for her? But how could I not try? And on top of all that, writing for a writer is incredibly daunting. When you're writing for a really, really good writer, it's downright terrifying."



Above: Catherine Tate

There was a certain trepidation as this was the first time I'd had a go at Donna, but as soon as I started I had a real ball. Once I'd written the opening scene with her pretending to know how to fly the TARDIS and how it all works, it was just so much fun."

John was also delighted with the cast, recalling: "I was only able to pop in to the recording very briefly as my mum was in hospital at the time, and I remember Catherine sending her love to my mum, which was lovely. It was great having Phil Cornwell as Mr Parsnip, the villain – he was full of praise for the script which was very pleasing

Doctor permission to enjoy being the Doctor again. The Doctor also made Donna brilliant. She'd spent her entire life being put down, told she wasn't good enough, never allowed to flourish. And here was a man who gave her the universe.

"It's a story about how a small lie gets out of hand. Donna's showing off to her friend Nat. They arrive in a medieval castle besieged by burning knights and someone thinks that Donna is Merlin, and Donna can't resist going, 'Well, maybe I am...'. Because Nat's always been the friend Donna's measured herself against, and she can't, just can't, pass up the chance to show off. And meanwhile

It's effectively a story where the main bad guys are not the aliens! It's very much a satire about our modern times.

JOHN DORNEY



DONNA AND Nat have been stolen – along with the TARDIS – and they find themselves crash-landing on alien planet, Valdacki, in *Spinvasion* by John Dorney. John says: "I went to my file where I keep my story ideas, and had noted this idea of aliens hiring a PR company to manage an invasion, and I thought, Yup, that's ideal for Donna to get involved in. It would work perfectly for her, coming from a temping background, as she'd be able to fit in and find her feet straight away.

"It's effectively a story where the main bad guys are not the aliens! It's very much a satire about our modern times.

"It was a lot of fun writing for Donna and her friend Nat. The reason we give some characters a spin-off is because they are strong and interesting in the first place.

when you've got a full-scale satire legend performing your work."

Trying to get home, Donna and Nat arrive in the right place at the wrong time ending up in the Middle Ages in *The Sorcerer of Albion* by James Goss – and Donna is mistaken for Merlin...

James says: "Donna was such a smart choice for the third companion in the new series. After two wonderful people who treated the Doctor with careful wonder, Donna was the first to tell him that she Was Not Impressed, but who you also know secretly adored every single moment. Martha and Rose couldn't help telling the Doctor he was the most wonderful man they'd ever met. Donna would always have some little thing to point out.

"The Doctor and Donna were best friends and she gave the

Nat has problems of her own that she's not letting on about and she's finding history is really hard going."



THE SCHOOL friends are returned home in *The Chiswick Cuckoos* by Matt Fitton, and Sylvia couldn't be more pleased to see her daughter finally getting on with her life – just as the world needs saving.

Matt says: "This one has an interesting emotional story to explore, right after TV episode *Silence in the Library* and what Donna has been through there. It's quite a wrench to have left that computer-generated world where she gained a whole family, a perfect life, which was then ripped away from her.

"Even though it wasn't real, there's real emotional fallout, so we thought we would have Donna




Above (l-r): Lydia West, Niky Wardley and Sebastian Armesto

wanting to take a bit of time out, to just go home, see her mum and have time to come to terms with it. A bit of space away from the Doctor before we next see them in TV episode *Midnight*.

"My script is the last one and it shows what the aliens have been up to during the course of the previous adventures. Jac has the opener with Donna doing detective work, a bit like TV episode *Partners in Crime*. She's investigating odd disappearances and expects to run into the Doctor, but instead ends up being kidnapped by a group of aliens who have their own purpose for being on Earth. The middle stories see what happens when Donna flies the TARDIS through space and time, before finally returning to Earth in the finale, a few weeks after she left.

"It's great when you've got people like Catherine and Niky working on your script and making it funnier and making you weep. There's such joy in studio to see them working their magic."

 **THE DIRECTOR** for the series is Barnaby Edwards, who says: "It's always thrilling to be entrusted

with a new spin-off series. It's like weaving a fresh colour into the tapestry of **Doctor Who** history. You get the joy of building a new universe of adventures, but you also need to make sure you don't muck it up. Donna Noble is a much-loved character and you tamper with that at your peril! Thankfully, we had four glorious scripts to work with – each one expanding upon Russell T Davies's magnificent creation. What impressed me most about the writing was how all four stories managed to achieve that tricky thing of manoeuvring a sidekick into being a lead. These are Donna's adventures and she totally owns them."

Barney's happiest memories from the studio sessions come courtesy of the cast. He grins: "I adore this cast. Niky Wardley makes a sensational travelling companion for Donna and their chemistry still makes me wriggle with delight. Jacqueline King is back and better than ever! Plus Isla Blair, David Schofield, Lydia West, Phil Cornwell, Sebastian Armesto, Dan Starkey, Anthony Howell, Nisha Nayar, Tim

Bentinck and James Joyce. These are some of my very favourite actors, and every day of the recording was a joy." **VORTEX**



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TAKING FLIGHT!

TO MARK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2020, THE LADIES OF ATA GIRL ARE BACK



"FOLLOWING THE success and universal acclaim for the first set," says senior producer, David Richardson, "it was only a matter of time before we would return to **ATA Girl** – and this time it's in a new format, a two-hour movie for audio."

In 2018, Louise Jameson devised **ATA Girl**, based on the lives of the women who had served in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), playing

their part in the British war effort during World War II. As well as creating the range, Louise acted in and directed the first series, with Helen Goldwyn producing. It was very much a female-led production, appropriate for its launch date. And now, two years later on 8 March, the stories continue.

David says: "At the time of writing I've neither read the scripts nor heard a moment of the audio, which

is very exciting because it means I get to sit down with everyone else and immerse myself in this gripping drama that Louise and Helen have woven. Their passion for the project and their creative brilliance means it's going to be unmissable."

ATA Girl 2 contains two new stories: *The Hardest Day* by Helen Goldwyn and *Au Revoir* by Louise Jameson. Louise admits: "I was absolutely thrilled to get the phone

(l-r) Kate Copeland and Helen Godwyn



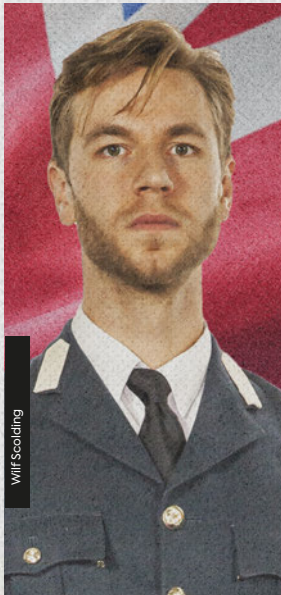
IT'S A BIT LIKE TENKO, IT'S WOMEN IN ADVERSITY AND HOW THEY COPE...

LOUISE JAMESON

call from David to say Big Finish wanted to do more. It's only two episodes this time so Helen and I decided to write one each; she did the first, I did the second.

"It's a bit like **Tenko**, it's women in adversity and how they cope in those circumstances. There's some rat-a-tat-tat battles going on, especially in the first episode, but it's mainly to do with the relationships – who loves who, who's helping who, where the survivors are, where the ones that give up are – telling the stories of these amazing women who didn't have their songs sung at the time. These are stories you can put anywhere, whether the Rover's Return, or during World War II."

Helen agrees: "When Louise and I first heard from David that Big Finish wanted a second series of **ATA Girl**, we were delighted and nervous in equal measure. We'd set the bar so high in the first series and it had required so much research from all of us, it was a little daunting to embark upon it all again.



Wulf Scolding

"But so exciting to think of all the possibilities in terms of storylines and character journeys. Having two episodes commissioned this time meant that Louise and I could share devising and writing duties (along with the ever-brilliant contribution of script editor John Dorney, of course). As it turned out, because we had done so much research last time and knew the world so well, it was surprisingly easy to slip back into it all and just wonderful to hear some of the characters in our heads again."

Louise and Helen are joined once again by a talented ensemble to portray the main characters. Kate Copeland reprises her role as Pauline Gower, the real-life engineer and pilot who initially proposed the formation of the women's branch of the ATA. She is joined by Amy Downham as Tilly, the present-day granddaughter of series one lead, Amelia, who is making a documentary about the pilots. And Holly Jackson Walters and Elinor Lawless play international third officers, Felicity Moreaux and Rhiannon Geary, respectively.

The first series of **ATA Girl** was nominated for a BBC Audio Drama award in 2019, and Claire Wyatt won Best Female Radio Drama Performance at the One Voice Awards 2019 for her portrayal of Second Officer Mina Lauderdale.

FOR THIS new series, the timescale looks towards the end of the conflict. Louise says: "We've decided to pick the darkest day, the heaviest day of the Blitz bombing, and then the very end of the war with the announcement that hostilities had ceased. I don't want to say it was the day we won, because I don't believe anybody ever wins a war. We originally called them *The Longest Day* and *The Happiest Day*, but even with *The Happiest Day*, there was still so much tragedy around, it felt like the wrong title. I changed it to *Au Revoir*, which actually means 'to the next time' and not goodbye, so we haven't closed it off completely."

Helen continues: "My script for series two was born out of a historic walk I decided to go on at Kenley airfield which is very near where I live. The Kenley Heritage Project

offers free tours around the airfield with history experts, talking about the archaeology around the site.

"I almost didn't go in as I couldn't find the entrance and there was a heatwave that day and I'd forgotten my sunscreen, but I'm so happy I decided to go for it. It was the most fantastic two hours of inspiration in a wonderful setting.

"As soon as our tour guide, Linda Duffield, mentioned 'The Hardest Day' I knew that was my story setting. I mean, talk about handing me the idea *and* the title on a plate!"

Moving on to her tale, Louise adds: "My script started off as the celebratory one, so we have a New Year's Eve party, an engagement party and the end of the war, but because Helen's ends on a murder mystery, we decided to use that as an umbrella over the two stories and, hopefully, our



baddie gets their comeuppance, and we'll find out whether he or she gets away with it!

"They are standalone stories but for the diehards, I'm tying up a story that started in episode one, way back, as well as the murder mystery, so there's an A and a B story as well as a C story, with a contraband story in there too, which we haven't really touched on before."

(l-r) Cory Chambers and Eilidh Lawless



WORKING WITH LOUISE AGAIN WAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST PLEASURES OF THIS WHOLE PROJECT.

HELEN GOLDWYN

AS THE series' creator, Louise admits that she is quite particular as to how each episode is realised. She reveals: "I was thrilled with the reaction to **ATA Girl**, it got a lot of positive reviews and comments. I'm so proud of it – I'm like a clucky hen! I'm so precious of it all, I must drive our poor sound designer Iain Meadows mad! I'm asking for things like, 'Can that pause be just a second longer?', 'Can you make those footsteps a bit faster?', or 'Can you put her in heels?'. He's such a brilliant sound designer, he just says, 'Yup, no problem,' and does it.

"I've said it before, but really you can't underestimate the sound design work on this set. As we speak I've only heard the first episode, but the work he's done on Helen's story is brilliant. There are aeroplanes and gun battles, and it sounds so good. I've not heard it with music yet, so there's even more icing on the top to come."

And Helen says: "I hope **ATA Girl 2** entertains and satisfies listeners

in the same way as **ATA Girl**. We had a challenge tying up some of the loose ends from the earlier episodes, but I think we found some really creative solutions and kept the spirit and intention of the original series. I must confess, I had a sneaky listen to an early edit of *The Hardest Day* when Iain Meadows sent it through for Louise's directing notes. I'd intended to only listen to the first few minutes just to get a flavour, but ended up listening to the whole thing. What a job he's done on the sound design! Just stunning. Hopefully the listeners will be as gripped as me... and I knew what was coming!"

FOR HELEN, collaborating with Louise was a joy. She says: "Working with Louise again was one of the biggest pleasures of this whole project. We've been friends a long time and collaborators in many different ways over the years, but this was actually the first time we were writers on the same production. As a writing team we couldn't be more perfectly suited

Holly Jackson Walters



Elinor Lawless

as I always over-write everything and put too much detail in, and Louise has the most wonderful talent for conveying layers of information in the most succinct, economical way. We both devised the storylines then went away and wrote first drafts of scripts then, together with John, we annotated each other's scripts and adapted accordingly. Sitting in Louise's kitchen brain-storming ideas

is definitely my idea of a wonderful way to spend the day!

"The studio sessions were hectic to say the least as the casts are unusually large. We also had to work around actor availability a bit so couldn't record all of the scenes chronologically. At one point I had to ask for the context of a scene as I'd got a bit lost – in my own script! Thankfully Louise did her usual brilliant job of directing and encouraging the best out of everyone.

"I play quite a big acting role as Faith Simpson in this series so there was a lot to think about on the day: acting; making sure everyone did their interviews; laying out lunch; getting folk into costumes and directing the photo shoot at lunchtime; and dropping actors to the station afterwards. Knackering, but extremely satisfying to get to the end of the day knowing that we'd somehow got it all covered."

Helen adds: "Series one had such an amazing response – far better than we had hoped for – and I think the true passion that went

into making the series by every member of the creative team, can be felt in the finished episodes.

"The whole project had an extraordinary energy about it from the outset as we all felt that we'd been tasked with an important responsibility. Everyone, from the wonderful writers to our incredible sound designer Iain Meadows, composer Howard Carter and cover designer Tom Newsom went way over and above expectations with their attention to detail.

"Even on the recording days the atmosphere in the studio was electric and the same could be said of **ATA Girl 2**. We thought it might be a little more 'the norm' but it felt just as exciting and special as before."



FOR THOSE who haven't heard any **ATA Girl** yet,

Louise says: "I think it's a series that's worthy, not just because of the amount of talent that's gone towards its conclusion but also because of the women that it's about. These are unsung heroines and very brave women – especially our main protagonist, Pauline Gower, who managed to get equal pay for equal work. This was back in 1942 and we're still fighting that battle!"

And Helen says: "Every single thing that we write is inspired by the real lives of the real women. We've been very careful about that, and I'm very proud of the end product." **VORTEX**



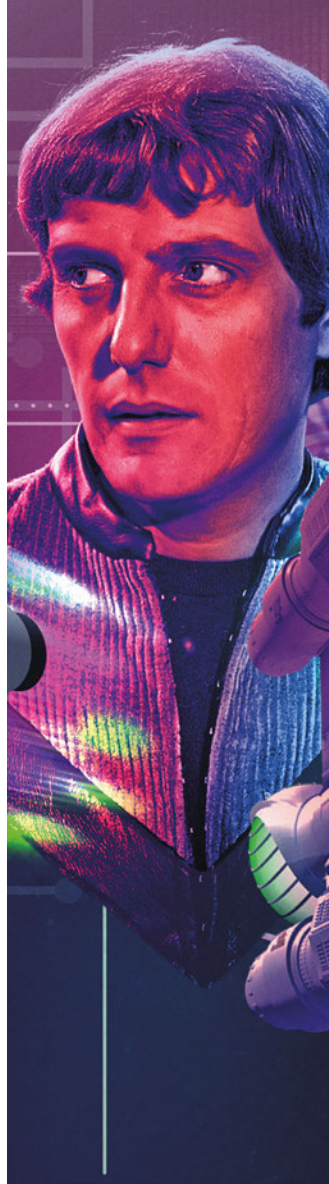
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FAREWELL AVON

Just wanted to say that I put on the new **Blake's 7** in the car then instantly burst into tears when I heard Paul Darrow speak. I guess I'd not really processed that he and Avon are gone and this would be the last time I'd get to spend with one of the greatest characters in fiction. I just wanted to share.

MICHAEL @ TIN DOG PODCAST

Nick: Thanks, Michael. When a legend like Paul is lost it affects us all very deeply.

OVER THE CHURCHILL

Is there any chance of more **The Churchill Years**? When first announced I didn't think I'd like stories that had part narration but after listening to the wonderful Ian McNeice they fast became some of my favourite New Series **Doctor Who** Big Finish releases! If there are no more planned, will Churchill be showing up to meet any of the other Doctors? I enjoyed him in *Ravenous 1!*

DANNY HOLMES

*Nick: There are no more plans for any more **The Churchill Years**, Danny, but we'll certainly have him turning up with other Doctors from time to time. You may have noticed that he's making an appearance in May's **The Third Doctor Adventures Volume 6...***

EVIL SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME

I'm guessing this is an unlikely one, but what are the chances of Big Finish getting the licence to do **Resident Evil** stories? The rich characters and horror would be incredible on audio.

SCOTT MAGEE

Nick: It's not something we've ever considered. I'll mention it to the team, Scott.

FLEET OF FOOT

Just rediscovered an old favourite on YouTube, **Star Fleet**. Inevitably it led to me wondering: is there any chance of Big Finish reviving this? After all, you have worked with Denise (Commander Makara) Bryer, at least. Unless my memory's packing in, I think Garrick (Captain Carter) Hagon as well? It still has quite a following, as is clear by the fond reaction whenever I mention it to those who remember this early 80s classic.

SIMON DARLEY

Nick: We've no plans for that, Simon. Benji Clifford and Jamie Anderson discussed it on a certain other podcast and unfortunately it was not a favourable review. Perhaps it's something best left to nostalgia.

LOST IN (TIME AND) SPACE

Even though *The Ultimate Evil* is now on audio, one story from that season that never was remains lost to us. Any chance we might ever get an audio version of *The Children of January*?

PAUL TAPNER

*Nick: I will double-check, Paul, but my recollection is that there was hardly anything to work from. **VORTEX***



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- **BIG FINISH CLASSICS:** *Dracula's Guests* (1)

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APRIL 2020

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:** *Cry of the Vultur* (263, SIXTH DOCTOR)
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- **DW • SUSAN'S WAR** (BOX SET)

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- **TORCHWOOD:** *Tropical Beach Sounds and Other Relaxing Seascapes #4* (37)

MAY 2020

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JUNE 2020

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- **DW • SHORT TRIPS:** *Out of the Deep* (10.6) **DLO**
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VOTEX

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BETTER TATE THAN NEVER!

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AND SHE HAS A FRIEND IN TOW...**

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OF ATA GIRL ARE BACK!

