

# VORTEX



# A SONG FOR TEN

THE **TENTH DOCTOR** AND **RIVER SONG**  
TOGETHER AGAIN, BUT IN WHAT ORDER?

**PLUS: BLAKE'S 7 | TORCHWOOD  
DOCTOR WHO: WICKED SISTERS**

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# THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG

**ALEX KINGSTON** RETURNS AS RIVER SONG WITH THE TENTH DOCTOR NEXT MONTH – BUT THAT ISN'T HER ONLY SET OF FORTHCOMING NEW ADVENTURES FROM BIG FINISH.

**I**N JANUARY 2021, River is back in **The Diary of River Song** Series Eight, affectionately dubbed 'River and the Robots'. In *Slight Glimpses of Tomorrow* by James Goss, *A Brave New World* by Tracy Ann Baines, *A Forever Home* by Alfie Shaw and *Queen of the Mechnoids* by Jonathan Morris, the archaeologist encounters android Rachel from **The Diary of River Song** Series Two (played by Alex's

daughter, Salome Haertel), 24th century war criminal Annam Henic (played by Derek Griffiths), K9 (John Leeson), robot cat FE-LINE (Tracy Wiles) and the Mechnoids (played by Nicholas Briggs).

There's also an appearance by Jane Slavin who reprises her role of Anya Kingdom – the Space Security Service officer from **The Fourth Doctor Adventures** – who is on a rescue mission with a difference. **VORTEX**



## EDITORIAL

**WELL, THIS** is rather exciting, isn't it, more fantastic adventures with the Tenth Doctor and River Song! For many years script editor Matt Fitton and I have both dreamed of hearing stories like this. We know that River has met the Tenth Doctor before as we discovered on screen in *Silence in the Library/The Forest of the Dead*. And it's clear when the Doctor meets River for the second time in *The Time of Angels/Flesh and Stone* that the pair have had further encounters. I'm a huge fan of the Tenth Doctor and I love River, and we're in for a real treat with this new trio of tales all recorded during lockdown.

The COVID-19 outbreak across the planet has been dreadful with so many losses and tragedies being felt. I lost my friend, Hamish Wilson (the other Jamie in *The Mind Robber*), to it in the first few weeks.

But out of this horrible situation, Big Finish has worked miracles to carry on functioning and creating audio adventures, keeping actors, writers, directors, cover artists, sound designers and musicians in work – as well as studio engineers. And, of course, writing *Vortex* has kept me sane during my furlough from the day job.

Big Finish – reasons to be cheerful, parts one, two and three! **VORTEX**



### DOCTOR WHO THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG SERIES EIGHT

■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2021  
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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# Song for Ten

FOR YEARS WE'VE HAD RIVER SONG SKIRTING AROUND THE DOCTOR SO THEY DIDN'T MEET OUT OF ORDER, BUT NOW THEY CAN FULLY EXPLORE SPACE AND TIME TOGETHER...

**THE DOCTOR** and River Song have a complex history. The Tenth Doctor knows what her fate is when he's young, while she knows everything they are to go through when she meets him for the first time. Wibbly wobbly, timey-wimey indeed.

After the television episodes *Silence in the Library*/*Forest of the Dead*, we were left wanting to know

more about River Song, and to see more of Alex Kingston interacting with David Tennant. But it wasn't to be – although we did of course see her with Matt Smith and Peter Capaldi's Doctors. Producer David Richardson reveals: "A meeting between the Tenth Doctor and River Song came along, as these things should, a little by surprise. It had long been on our list of things we'd

love to do, and in the early days of lockdown we discovered that both David and Alex had availability and the means to record at home. So we pitched the idea of a box set to them and in an instant we were underway with storylines and scripts."

Script editor Matt Fitton tells *Vortex*: "It's a thing I've always wanted to do and I'm gutted I didn't have the time to write one of these myself, but we've got three exciting adventures from James Goss, Lizzie Hopley and Jonathan Morris.

David continues: "I wanted James to write the first story because he's done such lovely, effervescent work on two previous Tenth Doctor

scripts and he's written one of my favourite episodes in **The Diary of River Song** – *Signs*. Lizzie was actually underway with a script for a different project but I loved it so much that I instantly suggested we should switch it to a full-cast drama and use it here. And Jonny should really have written for the Tenth Doctor range before now, so this was the chance to put that right!”

Matt says: “Lizzie wrote for **The Eighth of March** set, which was the first time I’d worked with her, and as I knew she could do

fun to work with him. He came up with something very fitting for the era, appropriately in the style of both Russell T Davies and Steven Moffat, with the Doctor and River meeting ghosts.

“And James has written for the Tenth Doctor before, and came up with something very clever. The Doctor finds himself trying to find out more about River but she won’t give him any spoilers. She’s got a job she wants this Doctor to do, so if he won’t do it, she’s not above getting other Doctors involved as well.”

**THE FIRST** story in this set is *Expiry Dating* by James Goss. *The first time the Doctor met River Song, he saw her die. And now she’s asking him on a date.*

*Well, not a date, exactly... more of a mission. But the Doctor isn’t at anyone’s beck and call. Or so he thinks. With billions of lives hanging in the balance, can the Doctor afford not to do whatever River wants? Whichever one of him she asks?*

Vortex asks James what his reaction was when asked to write *Expiry Dating*: “Wheeeeeeeeeee.



(l-r): Alex Kingston and David Tennant

really great work quite quickly, I set her the challenge of the Tenth Doctor and River meeting. Lizzie writes things that are fun with an emotional heart to it all. In *Precious Annihilation* we have 17th century jewels which are exploding and killing people, so the Doctor and River set off on the trail of a ship of mutineers.

“Jonny has written for so many Doctors it seemed only fitting that he should get to do the Tenth as well! I’ve always been a fan of his writing, back to the BBC Books days, and it’s always

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SPANNER.**

JAMES GOSS

Then realising there’s a gap between their first and second meeting and that it’s a carefully limited gap. The Doctor still doesn’t entirely know who this amazing woman is and can’t find out, but it’s a cop-out to have him find out *everything* about her and then get hit on the head with a time spanner.

“I was scratching my head about what to do and Matt pointed out that he’d already asked me about it a couple of months before and I’d suggested writing it as a tribute to those glorious 18th century epistolary novels (like Jane Austen’s

*Lady Susan*). I thanked my past self and got on with writing it. It's a series of letters between two people who don't know or trust each other, and it ends up being a heist movie told through love letters."

James, a regular scribe for **The Diary of River Song** and who has written for the Sixth Doctor and River before, told Vortex: "It was a great joy not having to wipe the Doctor's memory combined with the fun challenge of not moving things along – the Doctor has to end up stunned and entranced by River but also intrigued."

"Matt (who is the king of River continuity) pointed out there's one fact about River that the Doctor has learned by the TV episode *The Time of Angels*, so we put it in here."

The story also features other Doctors, which was a highlight for James. He agrees: "The Fifth Doctor's cameo. Actually all the cameos. Matt was saying, 'Go for it see what happens.' I also love the title which wasn't mine – Nicholas Briggs came up with it and it's perfect."

**PRECIOUS ANNIHILATION** by Lizzie Hopley is the second story in the set. *When jewels become lethal in the London of 1912, both River and the Doctor turn up to find out why. A*

*mystery takes them centuries into the past and onto the high seas, where a superstitious crew edges towards mutiny. The star-crossed couple are about to find out that, while gemstones inspire jealousy, love can be the deadliest treasure of all...*

Lizzie tells Vortex: "David Richardson was looking for a high octane adventure for the Doctor and River. Having those two actors made the story just write itself as it's mainly just the two of them with some guest characters."

"I'd been toying with a story about the Cheapside Hoard for some time. It was an extraordinary find in Victorian London by some builders who dug up a haul of Stuart and Tudor jewellery that had been buried in mud for many years."

"It's a fabulous basis for an adventure. There's the obvious thrill of finding buried treasure but the fact it comes from a different period of history puts a mystery right at the centre of it. Who buried it and why?"



WITH DAVID  
TENNANT YOU  
CAN'T TAKE  
YOUR FOOT  
OFF THE GAS,  
YOU NEED  
TO KEEP HIM  
GOING.

LIZZIE HOPLEY

What was this jewellery? Where did it come from? The time difference alone was immediately alien-ly!

"I missed the exhibition of the Hoard at the Museum of London as my husband didn't want to see "a load of jewellery!" and by the time I returned to London the jewels had been dispersed back to their owners. But I remembered them during lockdown and bought a book on them. The book is actually really satisfying as big pictures are printed next to 'actual size' photos and the real jewels are tiny!"

The story has a basis in history, which is fascinating. Lizzie confirms: "It's still a massive mystery as to who buried the

jewels and why but thanks to the book I discovered the extraordinary character of Gerrard Pullman, the gem dealer. I kept a lot of truth about him in the audio adventure and set part of it on the East India Company ship he travelled on.

"The story of his risky voyage was unbelievable. He paid £100 to travel from Persia to England with his entire collection of jewels.

There were so many crates they filled the ship. I couldn't help thinking of the crew, knowing they were being paid buttons but were making this voyage with a man who (true story) kept the biggest jewels strapped to his body, talking to them as if they were children!

"They had this amazing temptation thrust before them and, I don't want to give away any spoilers, but my Gerrard has a very similar fate..."

"That whole period just lends itself to an audio adventure. You have the soundscape of the ship and the bustle of Elizabethan England, then you have the jewel mine in India and the pubs of Victorian London – I can't wait to hear what the sound team have done with it!"

Lizzie is thrilled, in particular, to have had the chance to write for



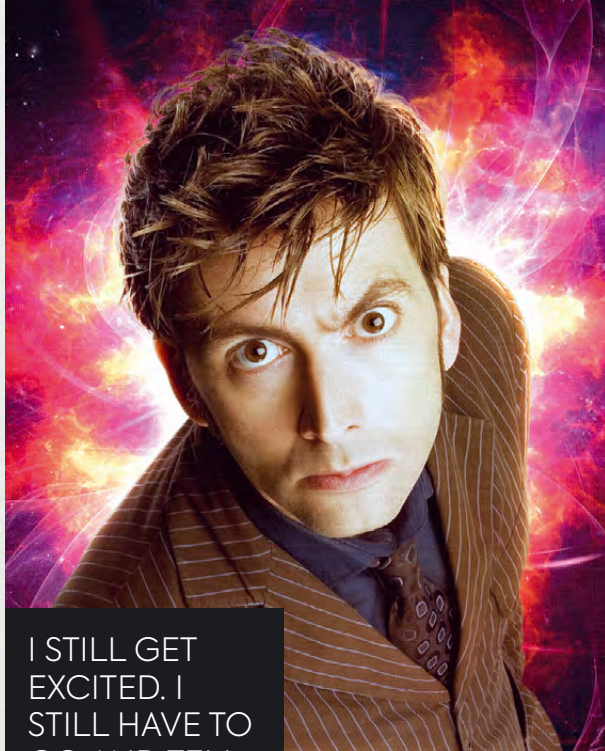
these leading actors. She explains: "Each of the Doctors have their own kind of humour and a different way of talking. David Tennant is just such a smart actor. He's very attentive to his scripts and you have that confidence knowing what he will do with your lines.

"Big Finish employ such wonderful actors which keeps you confident when you write but with David Tennant you can't take your foot off the gas, you need to keep him going. He kind of drives the pace in your writing.

"The syntax between him and River is so good – she's a great match for him. I loved writing for the two of them. There's one scene in particular that made me laugh while writing it as I could hear David and Alex saying it in my head."

**THE FINAL** story of the set is *Ghosts* by Jonathan Morris.

*River and the Doctor meet on the most haunted planet in the galaxy. The Doctor's not sure it's an ideal date – until they discover a mystery. Something is wrong with the ghosts. Something might even be killing them... And as the Doctor and River*



I STILL GET  
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AND I STILL  
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WITH IDEAS.

JONATHAN MORRIS

*investigate, the truth of what's happening on the planet of ghosts may prove deadly for them both.*

Jonny says: "I was thrilled to be asked to write this. You would think I would be jaded and cynical by now but that hasn't happened. I still get excited. I still have to go and tell my wife the good news immediately. And I still get fired up with ideas. At the time I was a bit busy doing the *Monster Vault* book as well as coping with the collapse of civilisation as we know it, but this was such a great, joyous opportunity that I knew I would have to make time for it somehow. And it did help take my mind off the pandemic.

"My main thought was that I wanted to keep it simple in terms of continuity, so it wouldn't be explaining how River ended up in the Stormcage or anything like that. It needed to be a straightforward, standalone story with a small cast that could be recorded remotely.

"My starting point was to tell a ghost story. Ghost stories usually have small casts, they are very contained in terms of location and have a simple structure of our heroes uncovering a mystery with escalating scares. That gave me a setting – they would visit the most haunted planet in the galaxy! A planet where there are so many ghosts, and where their appearances are so regular, they have become a tourist attraction. Then the next thing to do was to think about a twist..."

Was there a special excitement for Jonny, getting to write for David Tennant? He smiles: "The really beautiful thing in writing for the Tenth Doctor is that, as you write the lines, you can hear him saying them, and then after a while it becomes like *Midnight* and he's got ahead of you and



## AS IT'S A GHOST STORY, I COULDN'T RESIST HAVING THE DOCTOR SAYING, 'I AIN'T AFRAID OF NO GHOSTS!'

JONATHAN MORRIS

you're writing the lines down after you've heard him say them. It's always great to write with a specific actor in mind where you know how each line will be delivered, because then you can 'hear' how another character will hear it, and how they respond accordingly. It just makes the process so much easier and more fun.

"The other thing that's interesting with the Tenth Doctor is how, in almost every story, he starts off cracking jokes and taking nothing seriously... and by the end he's absolutely committed, absolutely serious. So there's

always an emotional journey as he gets put through the wringer."

The script did, however, pose a challenge. Jonny says: "It is quite tricky to portray ghosts on audio as they are mostly visual. But what the story is about – what I thought was even more scary – was the idea of what ghosts are. This idea that you might die and then find yourself wandering the Earth, not alive, but unable to move on, unable to end it. So aside from all the imagery there's something really scary about the thought, What would it be like to be a ghost?"

"As it's a ghost story, I couldn't

resist having the Doctor saying, 'I ain't afraid of no ghosts!' And then River replies, 'Doctor, please, and I cannot express this too strongly, never, ever, do that again.' Oh, I laughed when I wrote that. Naughty Jonny.

"There were also a few moments where as I was writing, a twist or an emotional moment naturally occurred to me, and because of the freedom of the 'ghost story' structure I could go with the flow and include that twist or emotional moment rather than being constrained by the dictates of the plot. It's a much more organic way of writing which is not my normal approach, but for this type of story it's good to always be 'in the moment!'"

**DIRECTOR NICHOLAS** Briggs has been responsible for bringing the scripts to life, working from home. Nick says: "We were in the early days of remote recording but I think this was the first time we used a system called Cleanfeed which records across the internet. We also had all the actors recording remotely at their locations so we ended up with two sets of recordings just in case there were any technical hitches. I jokingly tell people that directing remotely is approximately 15 times more stressful than directing in person – but it's sort of true. There are so many variables and the simplest technical hitch can suddenly eat into hours of time and the schedule goes out of the window. We had minimal hitches recording these but I seem to recall a few things went wrong. But we had a great sound engineer in Wilfredo Acosta who really guided everyone through."

How different is it working from afar when it comes to getting the performances you want?

Nick reveals: "It's not that much different because quite often in studio the actors can't really see you, they're listening to what you are saying to them. Only very rarely have I ever managed to get a specific performance out of someone by physically demonstrating something. Admittedly, there's a whole lexicon of unspoken signals that often aid communication in life generally but when working in the audio medium, as a director,



I use the dexterity of my voice as much as the actors do. And, as all Big Finish directors always say, if you've got the casting right you're not pushing hard to get a performance that isn't forthcoming.

"I'd actually never directed Alex before although I'd attended studio sessions with her and met her on set with **Doctor Who**. Everyone I know who has worked with her a lot had told me how lovely and brilliant she was to work with and I wasn't disappointed. There were quite a few technical challenges for Alex, not

where actors wait to be called and relax over lunch. *Vortex* asks Nick if he has been able to create a similar atmosphere virtually.

He nods: "I make it my business to build lots of nonsense into any recording day, and I make an extra special effort on that front with remote recording. Noses constantly stuck against the grindstone for a whole solid day of acting is not productive. It wears out the creative imaginations of all involved. So I always deliberately bring up irrelevant subjects.

actors are more relaxed and therefore more likely to do better work.

"It's a fine balance, a tightrope of titters. On one side, there's efficient work and on the other, there's an abyss of time-wasting. But it's sort of like steering a boat. You keep a light touch on the tiller most of the time but when it's needed – and only experience can really help you with this – you can bring everything under firm but friendly control."

Producer David Richardson adds: "It was of course a glorious time beset by a few technical difficulties.



least her iPad running out of power at a crucial moment, but she bears it all with such a light touch; she has a firm sense of perspective. She's very responsive to direction and very keen to discuss things to get to the real nub of a scene. I've worked with David quite a lot before so I feel very at home with him. He and Alex really worked together well. And David has an inspiring passion for the part of the Doctor and asked a lot of very relevant questions that helped us improve the work as we went along."

Big Finish recording days are well known for the warm, friendly atmosphere in the green room,

DAVID HAS AN INSPIRING PASSION FOR THE PART OF THE DOCTOR AND ASKED A LOT OF VERY RELEVANT QUESTIONS THAT HELPED US IMPROVE THE WORK AS WE WENT ALONG. NICHOLAS BRIGGS

"Those not used to my style often have a slightly querying tone in their voice, but those who know me of old sit back and join in with the giggles. And although you sacrifice a bit of time doing this you actually end up gaining time, because the

Day one, when we recorded *Expiry Dating*, had more than its fair share of holdups and problems, and at one stage I wondered if we'd get it recorded but of course all issues were resolved by our remote engineer Wilfredo Acosta. By 6pm it was all in

# WHEN YOU ARE STARVED OF RESOURCES YOU ARE FORCED TO BECOME MORE CREATIVE.

HOWARD CARTER

the can and sounding wonderful!"

**HOWARD CARTER** is working on the sound design and music for this trio of tales. How different is it combining the dialogue edits of these remote recordings, compared to the usual? Howard explains: "The process of assembling edits has become a lot more complicated but technology is enabling us to continue working at the highest standard. We have two sets of recordings for each actor: one recorded over the new remote-recording web system and one in the actors' local or home studio.

"The edit usually consists of a patchwork of these two sources. Although the actors are making every effort to ensure their recordings are as clear and dry as possible there is still a lot of post-production work to get everything sounding acceptable. We have to find a balance between the differing acoustics from the various remote studios and we spend a lot of time manually removing artefacts and acoustic anomalies to ensure the dialogue is to the usual Big Finish standard."

Howard has a vast library of sounds to work from when it comes to creating the background, and indeed foreground, noises that we hear. He explains: "Finding sounds for the stories isn't generally a problem. During the height of lockdown it wasn't possible to do too much original recording outside but utilising libraries and being creative with the existing material



Alex Kingston

we had meant that nothing was impossible. Sometimes when you are starved of resources you are forced to become more creative.

"Scoring these stories is always my favourite part of the process. I tend to sketch out ideas as I create the sound design for a project so I can hit the ground running when I come to the music. I'll then spend some time making the palette of instruments for the arrangement before I begin. With these stories there is usually a certain amount of pre-existing thematic material to work with so the process involves incorporating these motifs and ideas into the original score. I always want every story and set to have a unique sound and musical identity so the challenge is making sure everything sounds fresh and exciting while also nodding to the thematic legacy of the production."

Director Nick, shares with *Vortex* his highlights from the recording sessions: "The delivery of great scripts from our writers was an inspiration. And our obsession with what we'd had for lunch was a humour highlight. We all started sending each other pictures of our

food, as well as pictures of where we all were. And I remember everyone was very 'admiring' of my floral patterned shirt on one of the days! There was just a genuine sense of joy about the whole thing. I'm really looking forward to hearing the edits." **VORTEX**



## DOCTOR WHO THE TENTH DOCTOR AND RIVER SONG

■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2020  
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## BOOKCLUB



AS THE PATERNOSTER GANG RETURN FOR THEIR FOURTH BOX SET THIS MONTH IN *HERITAGE 4*, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE THEY WERE FIRST MENTIONED IN A BIG FINISH AUDIO.

NOVEMBER 2015 saw the release of *Jago & Litefoot & Strax: The Haunting*, a two-disc special adventure that saw the beloved infernal investigators, Henry Gordon Jago and Professor George Litefoot, team up with Sontaran Strax to solve a mystery in Victorian London. *The Haunting* was written by Justin Richards, the script editor of the Big Finish *Jago & Litefoot* range, and although Jenny and Madame Vastra are mentioned in the tale, they don't actually appear. Justin explains: "When Big Finish first got the rights to use some elements from the current television series I suggested we had Jago and Litefoot meet the whole Paternoster Gang but it wasn't possible for licensing reasons. So it was a welcome surprise when I was later asked to write a story with Jago, Litefoot and Strax. They are such an obvious match-up.

"Finding Strax's voice wasn't too hard as I'd already written for him a couple of times in prose in the novella *Devil in the Smoke*, which is now available as part of the *Summer Falls* anthology,

and in the novel *Silhouette*, so I knew the character fairly well. Hearing Dan Starkey read the audiobook version of *Silhouette* was fantastic."

Did Justin find there were any challenges in writing a 21st-century style **Doctor Who** character, compared to classic style as Dan Starkey encountered Christopher Benjamin and the late Trevor Baxter? He confirms: "There was an element of working it out, though it wasn't too much of a distraction. I did get notes on my original version saying it needs to move a bit quicker than usual!"

Dan Starkey, who always enjoys playing Strax without having to undergo hours of make-up, says: "I thought it was a lovely idea bringing together people the Doctor meets in the classic and in the modern series. The Doctor's had a lot of encounters on his travels, and having spent a bit of time in 19th century London it was inevitable that some of his mates would start coming together!



(l-r): Trevor Baxter, Dan Starkey and Christopher Benjamin

"What's interesting is that I occasionally, very occasionally, suggest lines that could be tweaked for Strax but with Justin's script they felt absolutely right. It's also spot on that this story has a different dynamic for Strax as he's not just there for comic relief. It's great to have a change where he uses his initiative more and makes his own investigations. There's a bit of added value too, as you get to know more about him as a character."

Justin concludes: "Jago and Litefoot completely complement each other. They are totally different characters but they work well because of their differences. And when you add in a third character, who's completely different again, it's a very nice mix.

"With Christopher, Trevor and Dan recording you always knew that you were going to get great performances – they really were an absolutely brilliant trio." **VORTEX**



# FALLING FROM GRACELESS

THE FIFTH DOCTOR (AND LEELA) ARE ON A QUEST – AND HE MAY HAVE TO KILL AN OLD FRIEND...

**I**N THE *Doctor Who* **The Monthly Adventures** in 2009, the Fifth Doctor was sent to find the Key to Time. Joined by a newly-created being, Amy, the pair had to recover the Key from agents of the Black Guardian, which included Amy's twin sister Zara.

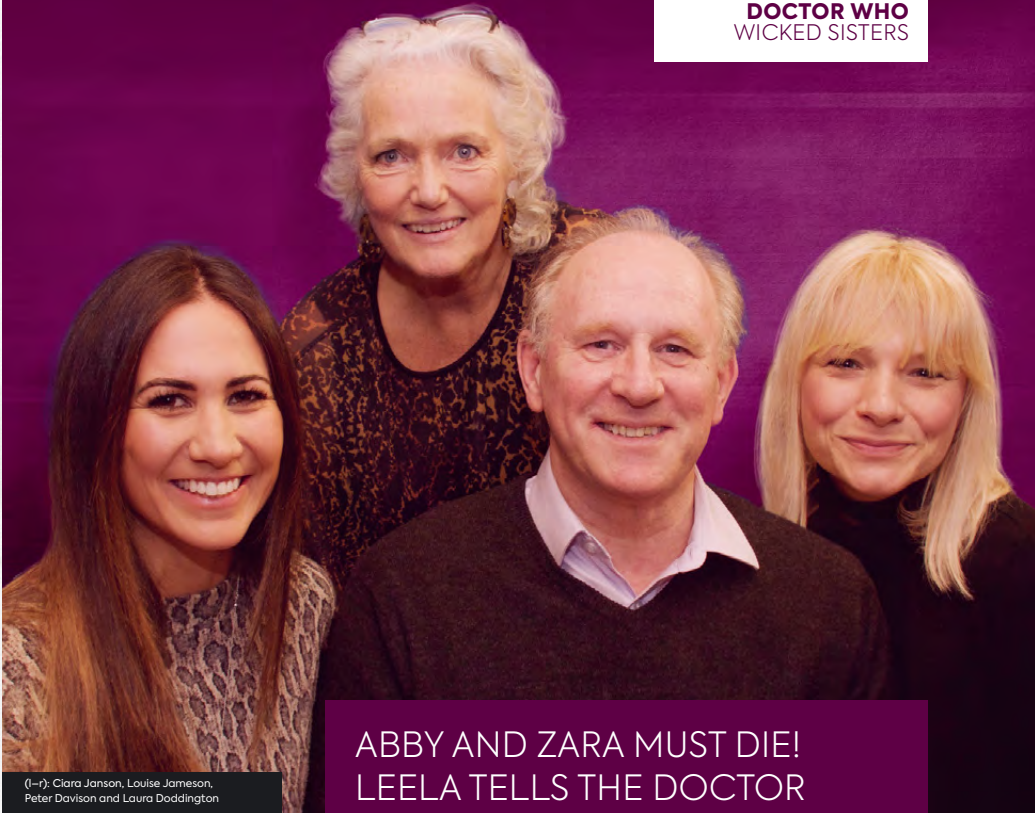
The sisters, played by Ciara Janson and Laura Doddington,

were a great hit with listeners so were given their own spin-off range, **Graceless**, where Amy became known as Abby. The sisters did their best to help those in need but lacked the (other) worldly experience to make appropriate decisions.

And now, Abby and Zara's past is catching up with them as the Doctor is recruited by Leela for a vital mission on behalf of the Time Lords. Together, they must track down and destroy two god-like beings whose extraordinary powers now threaten all of space and time. Their names are Abby and Zara...

Out for release in November, **Doctor Who: Wicked Sisters** is a full-cast box set containing three adventures: *The Garden of Storms*, *The Moonrakers* and *The People Made of Smoke*. All three stories were written by **Graceless's** creator, Simon Guerrier, who also wrote the first appearance of Amy and Zara in *The Judgment of Iskaar*.

Producer Mark Wright said: "It's been ten years since we first took Abby and Zara off on their own adventures. It's fun to get the team that's worked on every episode of **Graceless** together every couple of years.



(l-r) Ciara Janson, Louise Jameson, Peter Davison and Laura Doddington

“Simon Guerrier’s scripts always take us into unexpected territory, and actors Ciara and Laura bring something new to their performances each time Abby and Zara are back together. As it’s been a decade since the first series of *Graceless*, we thought it was time to bring things full circle and take the sisters back to where it all began – with the Fifth Doctor.”

**WE LAST** heard from Abby and Zara in January 2017, and writer Simon says: “As I was writing the finale episode of *Graceless IV*, I wanted to tease the exciting adventures still to come so I put in a thing that they would one day meet the Doctor again and it wouldn’t go well for them. I wasn’t sure if I’d ever be allowed to do that, and I’d not really put too much thought into what that could be, but when we were recording *The Dance* we talked about it in studio. Producer Mark Wright then ran the idea past Big

ABBY AND ZARA MUST DIE!  
LEELA TELLS THE DOCTOR  
THAT HIS OLDS FRIENDS ABBY  
AND ZARA HAVE BECOME TOO  
POWERFUL AND RECKLESS,  
AND NOW THREATEN ALL OF  
SPACE AND TIME. SIMON GUERRIER

Finish big cheese Jason Haigh-Ellery, and Jason said that if we did a crossover it would need to be a **Doctor Who** story first, and written in such a way that you didn’t need to have heard any of *Graceless*. So that’s where we started this one.”

How did Simon find returning to *Graceless*? He told *Vortex*: “Exciting, fun and exhausting! I had the nub of the story quite early on: that Leela would be in it (because I love working with Louise Jameson); that she would want the Doctor to destroy Abby and Zara; and that he would be torn about doing so. I also had the setting in mind. I feel

very close to *Graceless*, I live down the road from Laura (who plays Zara) so see her about quite a bit.

“Once I had the storylines approved and had to actually write the thing, I found it pretty hard. There were some big changes going on in my life as I’d just given up a part-time job I’d had for 13 years to spend more time at home doing childcare while my wife returned to full-time work. But I sorted myself out and delivered the scripts in the summer of 2018 by which time Mark was caught up in other projects and the release was put back again! So the scripts sat quietly in a corner for



Ciara Janson

a year, and then we picked it all up again in the summer of 2019. That was good, really, because I came at it again with some critical distance, some objectivity. And also, pleasingly, *Wicked Sisters* is now coming out in November 2020, exactly 10 years after the release of the first **Graceless** set.”

Looking at each of the three stories, the writer reveals: “Abby and Zara must die! Leela tells the Doctor that his old friends Abby and Zara have become too powerful and reckless, and now threaten all of space and time. He must, she says, destroy them...”

“In *The Garden of Storms*, the Doctor and Leela find Abby and Zara in a garden paradise where everyone is happy and young. That’s because the people here are killed when they reach 40 – which is bad news for our heroes...”

“In *The Moon Rakers*, the gang battle Sontarans on the lunar surface in the early days of human colonisation. But these Sontarans, oddly, don’t seem to want to fight...”

“And in *People Made of Smoke*, Abby and Zara face the awful consequences of their powers. What is the Doctor willing to sacrifice to save them?”

**THE PRODUCTION** brings together not just the cast of **Graceless**, with producer Mark and writer Simon, but also director Lisa Bowerman.

She admits: “I’m so pleased to be back with the whole team again, with Simon, Mark, Ciara and Laura – and now we’ve got added Peter Davison and Louise Jameson!”

“I keep on thinking we’ve come to the end of **Graceless**, but they’ve kept saying, ‘How about another one?’, and here we are all these years later.

“We started together with *Key 2 Time* which we recorded back in 2008, and I think it was always

I KEEP ON THINKING WE’VE COME TO THE END OF **GRACELESS**, BUT THEY’VE KEPT SAYING, ‘HOW ABOUT ANOTHER ONE?’, AND HERE WE ARE ALL THESE YEARS LATER.

LISA BOWERMAN

intended to be a one-off but Jason saw how well the two girls worked together. We actually went through a pretty big casting process for that one. I remember holding auditions which was quite exciting. Aside from Ciara and Laura, we actually found a couple of actors we’ve since used in other Big Finish projects! Ciara and Laura were both really young when we cast them, we’ve seen them both grow up so much over the years since the first recording. As their lives have changed so too, in dramatic terms, have their characters in the series grown and matured as well.

“Their relationship with Peter Davison hit the ground running on this one, purely because of the *Key 2 Time*, there’s this lovely idea that he meets them again and still has a sort of fatherly relationship with them. It’s still there but this new thread addresses a much more serious subject – the girls are causing ruptions in space and time. With

the best of intentions they change people's lives for what they think will be for the better, then of course we get into the land of 'unintended consequences' and they go back to try to change their actions only for the outcomes to become increasingly worse rather than better. Things spiral out of control."

**RETURNING TO** the part of Zara is Laura Doddington. She laughs: "They tried to get rid of us and they didn't manage to, we're here! It's been something like four years since the last series and it was so lovely to be back in studio

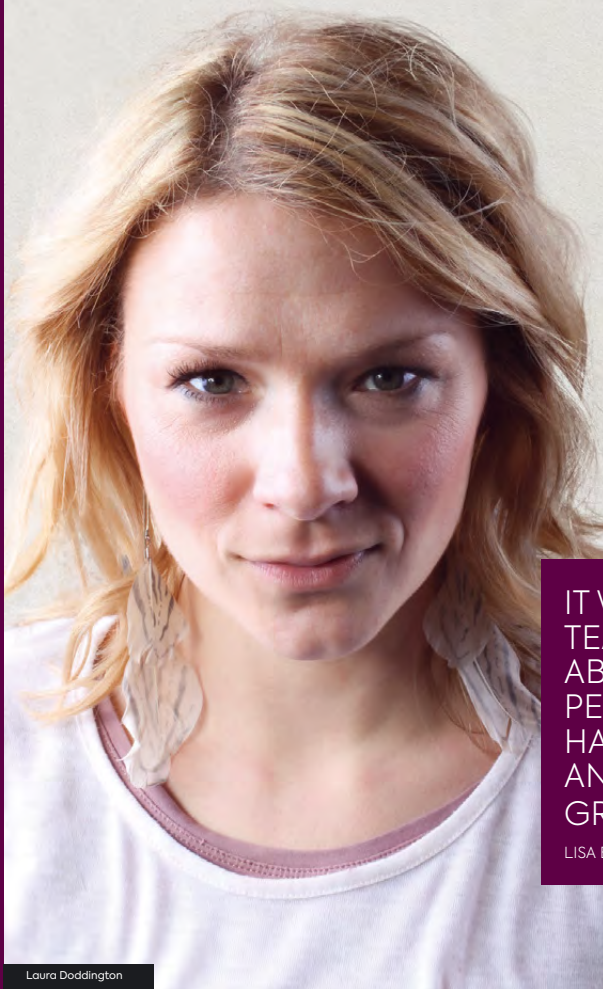
**ABBY AND ZARA TRY THEIR BEST. THERE ARE ALWAYS GOOD INTENTIONS BUT UNFORTUNATELY IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY WORK OUT THAT WAY.**

LAURA DODDINGTON

with Peter Davison. It was like going back to the beginning with *Key 2 Time*, and having Louise there was awesome with such a lovely energy. We recorded it before Christmas last year, it seems so long ago, and it was great to be with Ciara again as we always have such a laugh.

"Simon has let the characters develop so brilliantly over the course of the series, and it's so enjoyable to have the wit and banter that he gives us. It's really lovely to play.

"Abby and Zara try their best. There are always good intentions but unfortunately it doesn't necessarily work out that way. It's never two-dimensional as they feel real – they are three-dimensional characters dealing with the complex stuff that's going on. To start with I was the evil sister but we've changed it up a bit. Trying to do the right thing is the wonderful human



Laura Doddington

element Simon has added to them, giving them heart, which is really enjoyable to play.”

Looking back at the studio sessions, Lisa adds: “It was a very happy team, it’s good to be able to work with people who get on, having a bit of a gossip, and Peter’s always great to have around. If you have a happy working environment, you generally produce good work and I think we have here.

“There was one glitch at the very last minute when one of our guest actors lost their voice the night before recording and I had to get my little black book of friends out... It was a bit frantic but we got there!

“We have the Sontarans in it too so it was great to have Dan Starkey join us, and we have a couple of newbies to Big Finish as well which always helps the mix.”

Laura continues: “Peter’s absolutely fantastic to work with. I grew up watching him in **All Creatures Great and Small**. He’s not a diva, he’s very amiable and part of the company. He sits and chats, and he’s really lovely.

“Working with Louise was a real highlight too. I did some scenes with her and she’s an absolute pro. And to play off her, that was really enjoyable for me. She’s a master of her craft and I love that. I can’t say what we did without giving it away, but she has

the ability to create convincing high-drama moments which can be tricky on audio but she made them easier to do. She’s great.”

Working on the series sound design is Lee Adams, who was a newcomer to **Graceless**. He admits: “I hadn’t listened to **Graceless** before so I had to cram some research in, and it is really good so it’s been a privilege to work on it.

“It’s a timey-wimey story with a smokey villain behind the scenes. So that was fun – I like those kind of stories. I think the biggest challenge was creating the smoke creature: how do you go about making a voice smokey sounding? There was a lot of trial

IT WAS A VERY HAPPY TEAM, IT’S GOOD TO BE ABLE TO WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO GET ON, HAVING A BIT OF A GOSSIP, AND PETER’S ALWAYS GREAT TO HAVE AROUND.

LISA BOWERMAN

and error but I got my inspiration from the smoke creature in **Lost**.

“And it has Sontarans, the first proper **Doctor Who** monster I’ve done at Big Finish so that was an added joy!” **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO  
WICKED SISTERS  
RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2020  
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bgfn.sh/wicked



## VORTEX MAIL

**CALM IN THE CHAOS**

I would like to give a big thank you to all at Big Finish, especially during the difficult months we are going through with lockdown and ultimately the difficult time starting industry back up. I have found Big Finish to be a constant go-to over the years but even more so now. The stories help me switch off from the day to day rigours. Even my much loved partner will listen along as I do. Having placed my orders for the next six months, I cannot wait for what is to come. I hope that you do appreciate the importance you have played throughout the years to someone who is not only a fan but has found what you do to be a calming factor in a stressful world.

**Ian Branch**

*Nick: Many thanks, Ian. We should all try to keep as calm as you.*

**SCRIPT CONFERENCE**

I read in **Doctor Who Magazine** that you are going to do away with the monthly range. This seems quite a big step to take and it worries me a little. I was wondering, will this be the end of the PDF scripts we subscribers used to receive with our monthly story? Can we hope for anything similar in our future box sets? I'd be sorry to lose them as scripts are important for me as a foreign subscriber, and have helped me a lot to improve my English.

**Sabrina Tirabassi**

*Nick: Don't worry, Sabrina, it's not such a big change, we are just reorganising things so that our releases are a lot clearer for newcomers. For example, if you visit the bigfinish.com website for the first time, just what is 'The Monthly Adventures' – everything is monthly! They are actually a mixture of Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Doctors and it seems odd to lump them together. So they will each be given their own individual range and my aim is for these new individual ranges to offer script PDFs. (I would actually like all Big Finish productions to offer scripts but I'm told this is quite a mountain to climb).*

**BACK TO CLASS?**

It's been mentioned several times in the past that your **Class** licence was for 12 stories. These 12 have now been done so I was wondering if you were planning to try and secure a licence to do more (either set in series one or after)? I think Pooky Quesnel as Dorothea Ames would be an amazing character to get in an audio story! I love **Class** so much but didn't want

to get my hopes up for the future if more are not going to or unlikely to happen.

**Jack Snelling**

*Nick: Hi Jack, very glad you've enjoyed **Class**. We are looking into further possibilities but nothing to report yet.*

**CROSSING OVER**

Are there any plans for any **Doctor Who/Torchwood** crossovers? Like Owen meeting the Doctor (he's the only member of the original team who hasn't) or maybe the War Master meeting Bilis Manger (they're both mysterious and perhaps could be either allies or bitter rivals).

**Benjamin Cleave**

*Nick: Nothing planned yet, Benjamin, but I think it's a great idea.*

**TAKING PRIDE**

The world is a difficult place right now. Could I therefore suggest, maybe as a fun release for next year's Pride Month, that we get a full box set sequel to *The Creeping Death* with the Tenth Doctor, Donna and the passengers on the Brighton Bus? I don't think I've ever wanted an expanded TARDIS team so much!

**James Hadwen-Bennett**

*Nick: We've missed the bus on planning for that already, I'm afraid James, but I will put the idea on a Big Finish meeting timetable. **VORTEX***



## **BLAKE'S 7** RETURNS IN AN EXCITING NEW BIG FINISH AUDIOBOOK...

**BLAKE'S 7** has been a popular addition to Big Finish since the release of the first volume of **The Liberator Chronicles** audios in 2012, in which an original cast member narrates and performs new adventures set during the first three series of the television show. Big Finish has also published a number of original novels/audiobooks featuring the characters and full-cast audio dramas which began in January 2013.

# THE

Sadly the passing of **Blake's 7** stars Gareth Thomas, Paul Darrow and Jacqueline Pearce has meant that the audio releases have come to an end in their current format, but there's good news as Big Finish is continuing to produce original books.

Big Finish novels editor Xanna Eve Chown tells us more: "The next original book is called *Chosen* by Niel Bushnell which sort of has three narrative streams that all come together at the end.

"There's the story of Chana, an alien boy, who Cally is seeing in her mind; then the story of the *Liberator* caught in an asteroid field with only Gan and Avon on board to stop it disintegrating; and finally Blake, Jenna and Vila are on a supposedly abandoned Federation planet that actually has killer robots. Niel was great to work with – very professional, lovely writing."

Xanna adds: "Olivia Poulet, who plays Emma Peel in the Big Finish **The Avengers** range, has a home studio set up and has been in Big Finish **Blake's 7** productions in the past, which made her the ideal actor to narrate *Chosen*."

Niel – whose work as a CGI artist may be known to **Doctor Who** fans through the Blu-ray classic series releases – is no newcomer to crafting fiction having written novels for adults and children. His first novel, *Sorrowline*, won the Northern Promise Award in the 2011 Northern Writers' Awards.

Niel said: "This is my first writing gig for Big Finish although I've wanted to work for them for years. I've bought all the **Blake's 7** audio adventures, plus lots of **Doctor Who** and **Sapphire & Steel**. I'm a firm believer in persistence so I found out the name of the person who was responsible for the range [John Ainsworth] and

## THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WAS TRYING TO MAKE SURE THE VOICES OF THE CHARACTERS REMAINED AUTHENTIC WHILE AT THE SAME TIME TRYING TO PUSH THEM IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

NIEL BUSHNELL

heroes, which at the same time brought its own pressures. He explains: "The biggest challenge was trying to make sure the voices of the characters remained authentic while at the same time trying to push them in different directions. I think I've managed to explore some new aspects of the characters, especially one in particular who is at the heart of *Chosen*."

"It was really strange to finally be writing for **Blake's 7** having been a fan for so long. In many ways it was a dream job but I also felt a tremendous burden to ensure I was doing it justice. The writing of *Chosen* coincided with my dad going through a very serious injury and recuperation. During the hardest times I would find solace in writing *Chosen*. Wallowing in such familiar childhood favourites really did help me to cope with everything

# CHOSEN ONE

emailed him to let him know I'd love to write for **Blake's 7**.

"At this point I'd had several novels published and I'd written a sit-com for Radio 4 (which sadly didn't get past the pilot script stage) so at least I could show some indirect experience in audio storytelling. Over a period of about two years I kept in touch and happily John asked me to submit some ideas for **Blake's 7**. I sent in three or four brief outlines, one of which was the story that eventually become *Chosen*."

"I wasn't given a brief as such. I submitted a page of ideas and they were narrowed down and refined until we got to a satisfactory outline. *Chosen* is set early in the **Blake's 7** adventures, so the crew is still getting to know each other when the *Liberator* is damaged in a flight through an asteroid field.

"Blake thinks a base might be a good idea, somewhere to

conduct repairs and hide from the Federation, and he thinks he's found the perfect planet. While he, Vila and Jenna teleport down to the surface to explore, the others start repairing the failing ship. But Cally accidentally activates a dormant defence system and finds herself sealed on the flight deck, her mind flooded with images of a teenage boy growing up in a ruined city on an icy planet.

"As Cally fights a personal battle for control of her mind, Avon and Gan struggle to save the ship from destruction. And Blake's hope of finding sanctuary quickly turns into a battle for survival against a horde of killer robots. But at its heart, *Chosen* is a story of a secret, a secret that I hope readers will embrace."

As a lifelong **Blake's 7** fan it meant Niel was able to capture the voices of his childhood

going on in the real world. Dad passed away earlier this year so writing this book will always be interlocked with cherished memories of him." **VORTEX**



### BLAKE'S 7: CHOSEN

■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2020  
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW AT:  
[bgfn.sh/chosen](http://bgfn.sh/chosen)





# WHOWOOD BELIEVE IT?

THERE'S PLENTY OF DANGER IN STORE FOR THE **TORCHWOOD** TEAM FOR THE REST OF 2020...

**TORCHWOOD HAS** a strong cast of regular characters who feature in its monthly range, and the rest of this year is no different as Owen Harper, PC Andy Davidson, Rhys

Williams, Ianto Jones and Her Majesty Queen Victoria all feature.

*The Three Monkeys*, released this month, has been written by the producer James Goss and stars Burn Gorman and Tom Price.

James says his starting point was simple: "Could we do a story that was just Andy and Owen sat in a car on stake out? (We've already made *We Always Get Out Alive* with Gwen and Rhys driving in a car, so

maybe this is part two of a trilogy with part three featuring Bilis Manger and the Giant Blowfish...).

"I've probably said this before but Tim Foley and I busked a script each. We'd already recorded December's release, *The Crown*, and had a pile of scripts ready to go but they just weren't recordable (either for complexity or actor availability), so there were two gaps.

"Tom and Burn had both said they could record at home so we quickly got an outline approved and then I sat in bed for a weekend and wrote my story around the cat!"

Summing up the tale, James says: "Owen joins Andy on a stakeout of a corrupt local businessman. Together they decide to take him on. It's a satire on late-stage capitalism using a toy monkey.

"There's also some stuff about IT scandals and how their tiny

errors ruin the lives of 'small' people (part of it is inspired by the utterly appalling computer system that ended up putting people running small post offices in jail for accounting errors that the system was creating). It's also a story about how the 'little' people win."

Although they weren't a TV partnership, Andy and Owen have a brilliant rapport. James agrees: "They're just so great together - the world's biggest optimist and the world's biggest cynic - it's bliss spending time with them. The recording was an utter dream to listen to - especially when Tom's children came into Tom's home studio during bits where he was doing proper acting! They even both suggested the next adventure we could do, and it's a great, great idea."

James tells *Vortex* his personal highlight: "There's an



extraordinarily long scene where Owen has sent Andy into danger and is locked in a police car and has to try and explain himself away to a passing constable while remotely saving Andy's life – it's utterly awkward to listen to."

**NOVEMBER'S RELEASE** stars Kai Owen and Gareth David-Lloyd in *Rhys and Ianto's Excellent Barbecue* written by Tim Foley. James says: "Tim has written an extraordinary story about toxic masculinity and sausages and it's so great. It's light-hearted and heart-breaking and absolutely a joy to spend time with two people who aren't friends and don't get along but are forced to."

Tim continues: "I was asked to write a story for Rhys and Ianto. Apparently Kai and Gareth had been requesting one for a while and they both had their home studios ready to go. And since schedules were being rejigged because of lockdown it was the perfect time to strike! I was given lots of freedom in terms of subject matter, I had the whole universe up for grabs, so naturally I plumped for Rhys' back garden.

## TOM'S CHILDREN CAME INTO HIS HOME STUDIO DURING BITS WHERE HE WAS DOING PROPER ACTING!

JAMES GOSS



(l-r): Tom Price and Burn Gorman

"There's no plot, it's just Rhys and Ianto attempting to do a barbecue for an hour! You have these two guys, stuck together, trying to work out some issues. They laugh and bicker and probe some surprising depths, all while trying to cook some meat. I would listen to these two do the washing up together. Actually, maybe that's what I'll pitch next..."

How much fun is there to be had with Rhys and Ianto, and making a normal situation into a **Torchwood** story? Tim admits: "When I was first offered this duo, I thought it was such a bizarre pairing. There's just something inherently funny about these two being smushed together for a story. So I ran with that. And then you see how well they work together – the fact they're both in the orbit of flashy partners, the fact they're both extremely funny. And in this story they're both united by pain. I found it cathartic in a way, navigating the perils of 2020 with these two good souls beside me."

The story also has a fantastic cover, and the writer adds: "Oh I *adore* it. Lee Binding is a wizard, isn't he? I love that the individual art can bring a whole new dimension to the listening experience. And it can affect the

writing too. I saw an early draft of the *Tropical Beach Sounds* and *Other Relaxing Seascapes* # 4 cover when I was finishing rewrites, and it inspired me to add the nasty sting to the climax. May Lee forever make my work look awesome. Maybe Big Finish should sell Rhys's apron as merch."

**WE CONCLUDE** the 2020 **Torchwood** year with *The Crown* written by Jonathan Barnes. James explains: "*The Crown* is the third part of our celebration of Queen



**THIS IS MY TRIBUTE TO THE WONDERFUL BBC STRAND, 'A GHOST STORY FOR CHRISTMAS'.** JONATHAN BARNES

Victoria's bicentenary. Jonathan has written a magnificent tribute to MR James's Ghost Stories for Christmas – a mad old lady in an asylum claims to be Queen Victoria and tells a story about a cursed crown.

"It's a glorious slice of atmosphere and I'm so proud that we've now filled in the minutiae of how Victorian **Torchwood** ran but without ever sitting down and spelling it out. I'm also really pleased that Queen Victoria

comes across as the complicated, difficult creature she was in real life rather than a sweet old lady."

Jonathan says: "This was another unexpected, and lovely, invitation from Big Finish! I never thought I'd be asked to write for **Torchwood** but I was absolutely thrilled to do so. My brief was basically 'a spooky story with Victoria at the heart of it.' I pitched three separate suggestions and this was the one they went for.

"It's a story about Victoria but this time it's told from a different point of view. Dr Gideon Parr is one of the most brilliant minds of his age – a celebrated alienist with a willingness to accept the impossible. It's Christmas Eve when a stranger arrives at his door to tell him of a patient at a nearby asylum who has a strange story to tell: she believes herself to be the Queen. In spite of the season, Parr's curiosity means that he has to visit the woman and hear her tale – an encounter from which neither of them will emerge unchanged."

Jonathan adds: "This is my tribute to the wonderful BBC strand, 'A Ghost Story for Christmas'. I hope it has a similar tone and feel to the most authentic of them – I've drawn inspiration from MR James's story, *A Warning to the Curious*.

"I attended the recording day and it was very special.

Wonderful performances from all of the cast with Rowena Cooper being simply magisterial. It was all very skilfully marshalled by director Lisa Bowerman too, and I left feeling quite proud of it all. I'm delighted that it's going to be the December release from this range. It should be perfect to listen to on Christmas Eve when the fire's banked high and the rain is tapping at the window..." **VORTEX**



**THE THREE MONKEYS**

STARRING: BURN GORMAN AND TOM PRICE

■ RELEASED: OCTOBER 2020  
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

**ORDER NOW AT:**  
[bgfn.sh/monkeys](http://bgfn.sh/monkeys)



**RHYS & IANTO'S EXCELLENT BARBECUE**

STARRING: GARETH DAVID-LLOYD AND KAI OWEN

■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2020  
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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**THE CROWN**

STARRING: ROWENA COOPER

■ RELEASED: DECEMBER 2020  
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# VORTEX

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"Is there a powder to erase this?  
Is it dissolvable and tasteless?"

# COMING SOON

## THE BIG FINISH RELEASE SCHEDULE

FOR FULL DETAILS AND UPDATES VISIT,  
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### OCTOBER 2020

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:**  
*Shadow of the Daleks 1*  
(269, FIFTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE WAR MASTER:**  
*Hearts of Darkness* (BOX SET)
- **DW • TIME LORD VICTORIOUS:**  
*He Kills Me, He Kills Me Not*  
(1, EIGHTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE PATERNOSTER GANG:**  
*Heritage 4* (BOX SET)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS**  
**TIME LORD VICTORIOUS:**  
*Master Thief / Lesser Evils* **DLO**
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS:**  
*The Meaning of Red* (10.10) **DLO**
- **TORCHWOOD:**  
*The Three Monkeys* (43)
- **SPACE PRECINCT:**  
*Revisited* (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**
- **GEMINI FORCE ONE:**  
*Ghost Mine* (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**
- **INTO INFINITY:**  
*Planetfall* (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

### NOVEMBER 2020

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:**  
*Shadow of the Daleks 2*  
(270, FIFTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE TENTH DOCTOR AND RIVER SONG**  
(BOX SET)
- **DW • THE TENTH DOCTOR AND RIVER SONG:**  
*Expiry Dating* (TENTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE TENTH DOCTOR AND RIVER SONG:**  
*Precious Annihilation*  
(TENTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE TENTH DOCTOR AND RIVER SONG:**  
*Ghosts* (TENTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:**  
*Wicked Sisters* (BOX SET)
- **DW • TIME LORD VICTORIOUS:**  
*The Enemy of My Enemy*  
(2, EIGHTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS:**  
*Blue Boxes* (10.11) **DLO**

- **TORCHWOOD:**  
*Rhys and Ianto's Excellent Barbecue* (44)
- **BLAKE'S 7: Chosen**  
(AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

### DECEMBER 2020

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:**  
*Plight of the Pimpernel*  
(271, SIXTH DOCTOR AND PERI)
- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:**  
*The Grey Man of the Mountain*  
(272, SEVENTH DOCTOR AND ACE)
- **DW • TIME LORD VICTORIOUS:**  
*Mutually Assured Destruction*  
(3, EIGHTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • TIME LORD VICTORIOUS:**  
*Echoes of Extinction*  
(EIGHTH AND TENTH DOCTORS) **DLO**
- **DW • THE ROBOTS 3**  
(BOX SET)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS:**  
*The Shattered Hourglass* (10.12)  
**DLO**
- **TORCHWOOD:**  
*The Crown* (45)
- **BERNICE SUMMERFIELD:**  
*Christmas Tales* (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

### JANUARY 2021

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:**  
*TBA* (273, TBA)
- **DW • THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:**  
*Series Ten: Volume One* (BOX SET)
- **DW • THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:**  
*The World Traders* (10.1) **DLO**
- **DW • THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:**  
*The Day of the Comet* (10.2) **DLO**
- **DW • MASTERFUL:**  
*Limited Edition* (BOX SET)  
*Standard Edition* (BOX SET)
- **DW • THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG:**  
*Series Eight* (BOX SET)
- **TORCHWOOD:**  
*TBA* (46)

**DLO** = DOWNLOAD ONLY • **DW** = DOCTOR WHO

DATES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

# VORTEX



# WICKED SISTERS

**THE DOCTOR. SONTARANS.  
LEELA. ABBY AND ZARA!**

**PLUS: BLAKE'S 7 | TORCHWOOD  
THE TENTH DOCTOR & RIVER SONG**