

# TEMPORAL RENDITION

Written by: Jez Strickley  
Season 37 ▪ Story 11G  
Reviewed by Gary Phillips

Having enjoyed Jez Strickley's previous piece of *TDWP* fan fiction, Season 36's *The Wax Museum*, I looked forward to *Temporal Rendition* with eager anticipation. Alas, I was to be somewhat disappointed. This is not to say that the story is particularly bad, far from it, it is, as one would expect from this author, extremely well written. So why then does *Temporal Rendition* fall short?

The story begins with an intriguing and very realistic premise. The Doctor is worried about being monitored by the Time Lords in the wake of a visit from Assistant Monitor Doric Tum. Meanwhile Val, still feeling downcast over the disappearance of her brother, is in the Doctor's study reading his old university thesis about the 'Dol Crisis'. Val's reading is disturbed by the Cloister Bell as the TARDIS ends up trapped on the edge of a dimensional rift close to the planet Terra Zentrum.

The rift, we learn, presents an area of space that creates dangerous mental phenomena, known as Pocket Space Syndrome. This means the Doctor, who must leave the TARDIS to release it from its entrapment, can only stay outside for a matter of seconds. This scene is perhaps the very best in the story, and had *Temporal Rendition* been much shorter, and continued in this vein, it would have been so much better. Alas, for me, it has the same problem which *Human Nature/The Family of Blood* had on television, where you have a story with an excellent premise and a first episode which is all build up, but a second episode which proves to be a rushed conclusion.

In the case of *Temporal Rendition*, the problem is that at seventy-one pages the story is far too long, with too many unnecessary scenes which loosen up the narrative, and for the most part characters that, when they are not gone more or less in a flash, are quite distinctly unmemorable.

Once free of the dimensional rift, the TARDIS materialises aboard an anonymous vessel, where Val and Tom encounter a manacled figure screaming in pain. This is another outstanding scene, pure



***“The Institute is itself a remarkable organisation whose members can see beyond Time and Space, rather like the Water of Life allowed the Lady Jessica Atreides and her fellow Bene Gesserit Sisters to do so in Frank Herbert’s renowned Dune novels.”***

Hinchcliffe in its execution. The prisoner turns out to be Coordinator Paolo Mallender, Head of Temporal Engineering at the Star Gazer Institute and who, along with the story's mysterious antagonist, the Rector, is about the only character that has any depth.

In search of the perpetrators behind Mallender's imprisonment, the Doctor and his companions visit the Star Gazer Institute on the planet Terra Zentrum, an

organisation run by an enigmatic figure known as the Rector, who is one of the most interesting characters in any area of the *Doctor Who* canon. It is the need to know more about him and what he is up to that keeps the reader ploughing on through pages of narrative which seem to have little relevance to the major events of the story and its ultimate conclusion. Additionally, the fact that the Rector's bookcase is also his TARDIS is intriguing, and one reads on wondering if he is going to be revealed as the Master. Interestingly, the Rector credits himself with saving Terra Zentrum and here, the reader may displace the possibility that the Rector might well be the Master with the feeling that he could be Elijah Spellman of the *Sarah Jane Adventures* story, *Day of the Clown*, as it is rumoured that in return for the alleged ingratitude of the populace of Terra Zentrum, Rector took all the children of that planet, bar one, to a far off world.

These theories are dispelled when we learn of the Rector's way of disposing of his enemies and those who just get in his way: a space-time contraction catalyst, a.k.a. Rassilon's Cube. Now, an excellent idea though this is, making as it does the body disappear (and ultimately one wonders why 'David Agnew' didn't think of it for *The Invasion of Time* rather than making the ultimate weapon a demat gun), yet, as the Time Lords in these stories are the ones we know and love, and therefore presumably Rassilon is the wise old figure we have known since *The Deadly Assassin* and whom we saw in *The Five Doctors* and not the tyrannical despot we saw in *The End of Time*, one can simply not imagine the Rassilon we know sanctioning such a weapon, at least not to be used on ordinary folk. Alternatively, given the Time Lords' actions in *The Trial of a Time Lord*, it is possible to conjure up one of Rassilon's less-than-scrupulous successors developing this weapon, and naming it after the 'father' of the Time Lords as an

act of irony.

In order to investigate the Star Gazer Institute the Doctor poses as Mallender's replacement, Doctor John Smith of Galangrad III in the Capablanca system. It is here that the Doctor encounters Chief Constable Charl Vierthaler, whilst Val meets a student called Klara Jaeger. Whilst these two characters serve their purpose of giving the Doctor and Val someone to talk to, that, I'm afraid, is all they really achieve coming across as rather one dimensional when compared to the superbly drawn character of the Rector. Whilst Coordinator Klemens Geigerach serves the purpose of one who is equally suspicious of the goings on at the Institute and thus, temporary companion. He is there to voice the dissent of one who knows the workings of the Institute and thus is able to convey his dissatisfaction.

Other than the machinations of the Rector, the most intriguing part of the story comes when we learn that members of the Institute are mysteriously disappearing and why, given that the narrative is set in the thirty-fifth century, and with technology so advanced, can no-one travel in time?

Whatever we may think of the previous seventy-one pages, the end of the story – which I will not reveal here – promises something to look forward to and after such a sometimes rambling narrative, and this reviewer hopes we will see Jez Strickley back on the superb form he displayed in *The Wax Museum*. This is not to say that *Temporal Rendition* is any way bad, and no doubt it will have its admirers. But the narrative, which presents a thoughtful and well written piece, is really just too long for the sort of story it is trying to tell.

**5/10**