

BEAUTY IS ONLY...

Written by: Scott Marshall

TDWP Special

Reviewed by Jez Strickley

The return of the Autons is the pivot around which *TDWP* Special *Beauty Is Only...* rotates its brief tale. Set upon the leisure planet of Augato in the twenty-fourth century, Scott Marshall launches his story in violent fashion as an all new shampoo brand leads to a case of mind control and a not particularly subtle murder.

The death of the President of Augato's wife at the hands of a shampoo-possessed guest is smartly followed by the Doctor's and Tamara's unplanned visit to the holiday paradise. Unsurprisingly the time travellers' vacation is soon cut short when they are mistaken for being agents of the law by the doughty Officer Pudmenzky. With little thought for their credentials, Pudmenzky presents the Doctor and Tamara with the chain of recent deaths which he and his colleagues, led by Detective Picca, have yet to solve. In typical Time Lord fashion the Doctor swiftly pins the root of the mystery to the aptly titled Entense Cosmetics Inc., an off-world company which has only lately opened its doors for business.

As events come to a head Entense Cosmetics Inc. is revealed to be a front for the planet-conquering schemes of the Nestene Consciousness, and the Doctor and Tamara are soon confronted by the Nestene agent, Mr. Sutona. Sutona makes for a decent expositional character and he relates the plans of his alien masters in the typically complacent fashion of the stereotypical master villain. The narrative then reaches its climax as our heroes fight for their lives whilst simultaneously trying to save the planet Augato from certain doom.

Although the story line follows a fairly routine formula the result is that the reader is left safe in the knowledge that they are following a piece of traditional *Who*-based story telling. *TDWP*'s Eighth Doctor and Tamara are well portrayed, although at times the former is a little more whimsical than he needs to be. Having said that,



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the lighthearted exchanges between the two of them are fun and Marshall certainly gets his money's worth out of the Time Lord's sunglasses obsession.

On a more critical note *Beauty Is Only...* is pinned together by a style of prose which is something of a mixed bag. Marshall dishes up the odd sharp comment and well crafted passage in amongst a poorly composed whole which is shot through with clumsy mistakes. This is a pity since a more carefully written version of this adventure would give the plot line the

substance it deserves, as well as providing the Auton's with a credible *TDWP* outing. What is more, the dastardly plans of these plastic-manipulators *par excellence* come unstuck rather too quickly, which tends to point towards the author squeezing too much tension into too little space. It is as though Marshall cannot decide whether he wants to deliver a lengthy affair or something short and pithy. In failing to make up his mind his adventure loses out on both counts. Still further, the reason behind the Nestene Consciousness being on Augato is never fully explained, thus leaving the mon-

ster of the piece appearing to be something of an add-on for which Marshall only latterly realised that he had to find a purpose.

Finally, *Beauty Is Only...* has the potential to be something much greater, and with a few choice tweaks here and there a lively piece of fan fiction could be realised. As it stands, however, this offering does neither the author nor the Autons any credit at all. **6/10**