

# GODMAKER

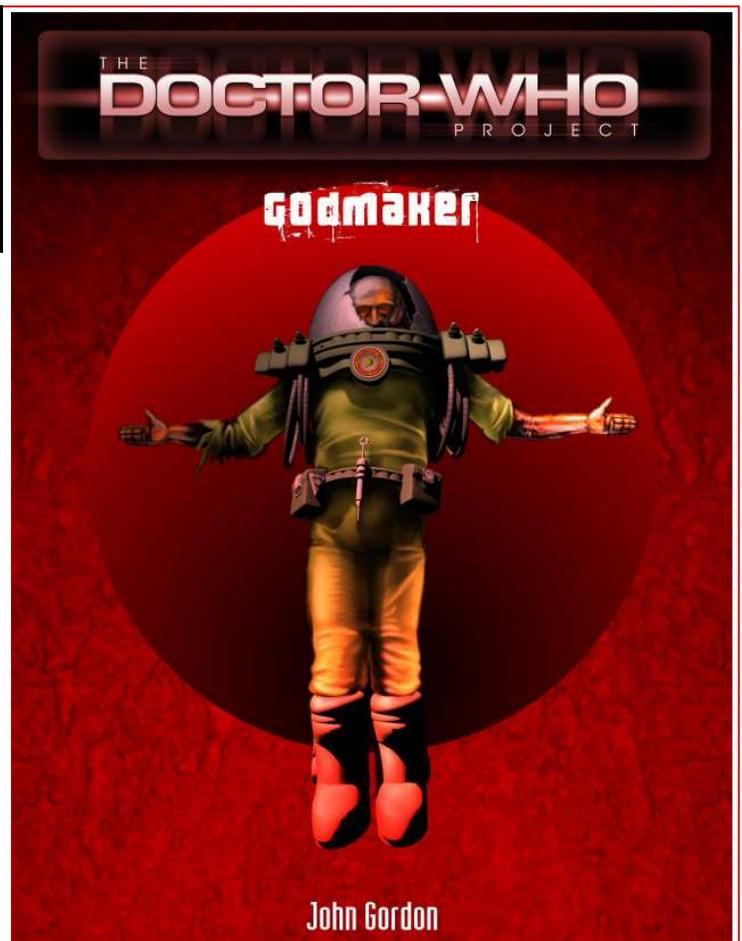
Written by: John Gordon  
Season 32/Story 9L  
Reviewed by Jez Strickley

John Gordon does not shy away from the business of fashioning complex plots involving craftily woven story threads, and *Godmaker* is no exception. After being exposed to the storm-like effects of anti-gravity energy the TARDIS makes planet-fall on an unknown, Earth-type world, whereupon the Doctor and his newly formed triumvirate of female companions – Tamara, Grae and Taryn – head-off to find out where they are.

With no obvious answer in sight the group splits up, with the Doctor temporarily returning to the TARDIS, and the rest moving further into the veritable Garden of Eden in which they've landed. The Doctor's investigations soon lead him to a matter transmitter and a visit to yet another mystery location, whilst Taryn becomes separated from Tamara and Grae by dint of an equally intriguing teleport experience; and here and there we are given a momentary interlude involving a humanoid xenosurveyor, who is busy assessing yet another, apparently unconnected planet. Oh, and don't forget the occasional reference to a wormhole and its spaceship cargo containing an alien race known as the Zhoma, which is en route to exact vengeance against the mysterious Anima. Indeed, all the evidence points to Gordon being very fond of complicated story lines.

As the tale unfolds, it is made clear that there is more to the mysterious world the TARDIS has landed upon than meets the eye. Its Eden-esque resemblance and the somewhat bizarre race, known as the Au'lan, which populates the nearby artificially constructed habitat, are strong clues as to the true nature of this place and its purpose. The final twist is nicely told and more than makes sense of the story which carries it.

In terms of character developments the Doctor, Grae and Tamara follow their respective roles to the letter. In the newly arrived Taryn Fischer, however, we are given an unusually uncertain figure, whose joining the Doctor is already beginning to look like a mistake. This less common reaction, as far as newly arrived assistants are concerned, enables the author to engage in some ultimate questions concerning the lifestyle the Doctor's time travelling offers. More, by having Taryn taken under the wing of the long serving Tamara the author makes shrewd use of the latter's growing doubts about the nature of her life with the Doctor; a point given salience by the events of the succeeding story. By raising this issue the author reminds us that not all that glitters is



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gold; and that although time spent with the Doctor may offer incredible experiences, it does so at a price.

Beyond the regulars the mysterious planetary surveyor, Decol O'Hallan is handled well, which is crucial given his importance to the overall plot line. The alien Zhoma, who are intent on destroying the Anima and its "people", the Au'lan, are given a decent amount of air time with which to state their case, and the Au'lan come across as particularly spooky, their humanoid form lending them a sinister quality which surpasses the traditional bug-eyed monster approach.

One of the qualities of Gordon's writing is the way in which he is not afraid to give time and thought to the little things that happen, events which can get neglected when there are great tales to be told.

Tamara's first scene is a case in point: her visit to an improbable kitchen inside the TARDIS, fully equipped with a working stove, kettle, fresh milk and tea conjures up a striking image, stoking the reader's wonderment of the Doctor's time machine and its manifold nooks and crannies. Importantly, it also gives a valuable insight into the habits of a companion who has seen all too much whilst travelling with the Time Lord.

To say that Gordon pays close attention to the Doctor's battered Type 40 would be something of an understatement. His prose seems to hit a creative high point whenever he pays attention to it: reference to the TARDIS' "electronic intestines" makes for a vivid metaphor, and comparing its shaking, whilst being exposed to the anti-gravity energy at the beginning of the ad-

venture, to a broken washing machine on fast spin is a masterstroke.

Finally, the style in which the various story threads are unwound, and then painstakingly brought together, creates a series decidedly intriguing scenes. The findings of the various time travelers, for example, juxtaposed with the occasional glimpse of O'Hallan and his seemingly routine mission, make for a fine helping of suspense, driving on the reader to find out how all the dots of the plot are joined up in the end. In short, *God-maker* is a mystery worth knowing and comes highly recommended.

Rating: 9/10