

# THE DAWN OF TIME

Written by: John Gordon

Season 33/Story 9N

Reviewed by: Gary Phillips

As regular readers will know I have long maintained that many of the writers for *THE DOCTOR WHO PROJECT* can out-write a great many of the writers working on our favourite TV series and it beats me why many of them haven't already pitched ideas at Russell T Davies and Co as many of the stories in The Doctor Who Project would make great television stories.

*THE DAWN OF TIME* is no exception. With a little alteration this would have made a far better and much more exciting post-Rose Tyler Christmas special than the mess, which was *THE RUNAWAY BRIDE*. OK so John Gordon's script is little more than a sequel to *THE INVASION OF TIME* but it is a fantastic, breathtaking story, which never lets up.

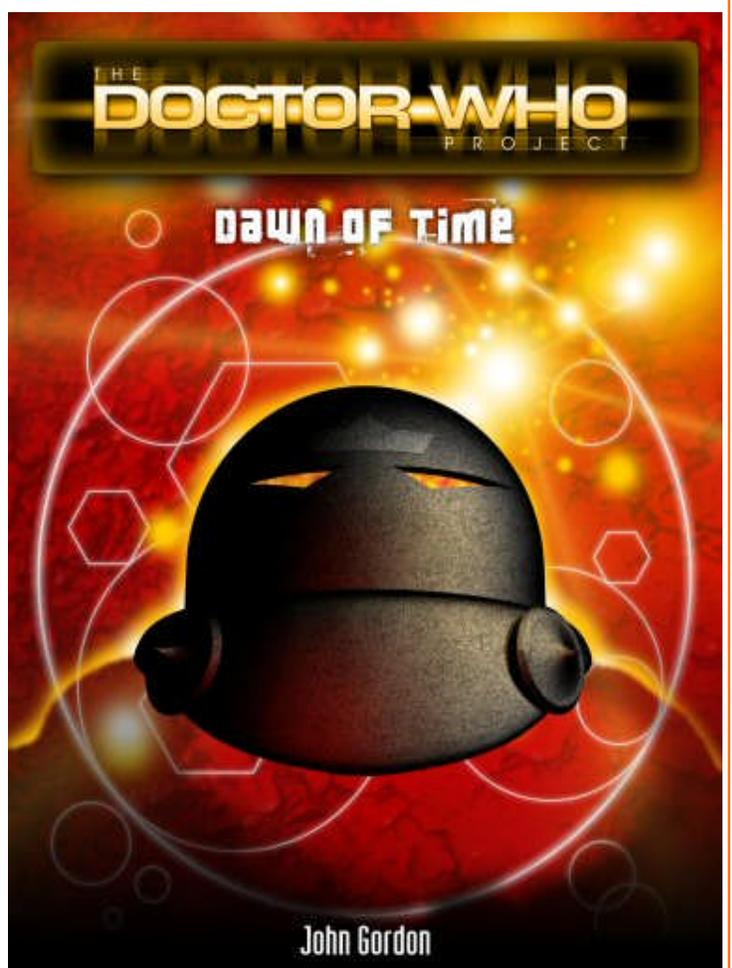
The air of melancholy in the TARDIS following the death of Tamara is very harrowing, but is it really what it seems? The beleaguered ninth Doctor is getting it from all sides. Grae goes for a walk and finds herself on a distant planet. Taryn blames the Doctor for Tamara's death and she too goes off in something of a huff. Indeed this is a far more realistic reaction to the death of a companion than the reaction to the death of Adric in *TIMEFLIGHT* which felt for all the world like a combination of crocodile tears and 'Thank god the little twerp's gone!' The pain here is real and it hurts!!! This is how one feels that the Tenth Doctor felt on TV in the closing minutes of Doomsday before we had Donna Noble shouting the place down.

Indeed Taryn is so angry at Tamara's death, she longs for her old life back with the TAC medical Corps on the *Rialto Verde*.

Before long, an army of Vardans invades the TARDIS. John Gordon captures these rather cheap and uninspiring intergalactic militiamen superbly and manages to give them an air of menace which 'David Agnew' and the late Gerald Blake failed to do back in 1977.

John Gordon manages to make the Sontarans superbly menacing in a way that they have failed to appear so on television since *THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT* back in 1975.

There are superb yet subtle nods to the past here. Time rings are used for the first time since Genesis of the Daleks and the TARDIS ends up a mere 10 seconds after Event One, the creation of the universe, meaning in effect that mere seconds after the TARDIS escaped The Master's trap in *CASTROVALVA*, it reappeared at the same scene with a different crew on board.



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The Sontaran's ultimate plan is quite superb and has its roots in what the Rani had in mind for Lakertya in *TIME AND THE RANI*. Using new Vardan technology, they plan to invade Time and Space at the dawn of time so that races such as Humans, Peladons, Monestras etc don't evolve and the Sontarans do, thus giving them victory over their many enemies, especially the Rutans. Thanks to a technique dreamed up by a Vardan scientist called Salvan. Not only that. But they again intend to destroy Gallifrey by using the Doctor's TARDIS as a temporal bomb!!!

This is what *DOCTOR WHO* should be!!! Never mind all this Time War and destruction of Gallifrey nonsense! This is what Doctor Who needs on TV now a well-executed story of a grand plan. *ARMY OF GHOSTS* and *DOOMSDAY* came

quite close to it, but was never a patch on this!!!!

*THE DAWN OF TIME* is really Taryn's story. The Doctor doesn't really come into his own until quite close to its conclusion. You read on, eagerly turning the page, with the thought in your mind that something is going to happen and believe me, it does!!!

If I could aim one criticism at John Gordon's excellent story it is that the character of Grae here seems a little one-dimensional and colourless, but this is most likely to be the emotional side effect of the aftermath of Tamara's death, in which case, the said emotion is brilliantly conceived and portrayed.

However, a surprise is in store for the TARDIS crew and owes something, I think, to the reappearance of The Sidar Baron Vladimir Harkonnen in Frank Herbert's book *CHILDREN OF DUNE*. Its surprise value and emotional impact upon the TARDIS crew is stunning!!!

If I can aim one small criticism at John Gordon's superb story with its atmospheric narrative that would be that the story does fall a little too often into some choice *DOCTOR WHO* clichés, The Doctor, Taryn and Grae are captured and tortured, the Sontarans, with Vardan help, do capture the TARDIS with brutal results and Grae meets up with a band of Vardans on her travels in scenes a bit reminiscent of *THE*

*INVASION OF TIME* but John Gordon gets around any noteworthy similarities as these are Vardans and soon Grae knows it.

The pace of the story is breathtaking and never once lets up. It is therefore rather sad that the air of melancholy which pervades the console room at the start of the story is still as prominent at its end which is a great pity as one feels rather deflated after such a breathtaking and exciting romp but its effect upon the TARDIS crew in future stories will be most interesting.

*THE DAWN OF TIME* is without a doubt, one of the best *DOCTOR WHO* stories I have ever read and should be expanded into a BBC novel, if not a TV script itself as it would put many of the novels and scripts currently been written to shame!!! This is a fantastic, fast paced adventure story pervaded by an air of melancholy and a superbly downbeat ending. As I said earlier, there are a few clichés in there but they do not detract from the superb quality of the narrative in any way. What a superb TV combination would be John Gordon and James Strong or John Gordon and Joe Ahearne! If, like Arnold T Blumberg, he can keep on turning out superb material like this, I look forward to savouring more of his work very soon.

**Rating: 10/10**