

DOCTOR WHO

AND THE TENTH PLANET

GERRY DAVIS



Introduction by **TOM MACRAE**

Contents

Cover

About the Book

About the Authors

Also by BBC Books

Title Page

Introduction by Tom MacRae

The Changing Face of Doctor Who

The Creation of the Cybermen

1. The Space Tracking Station
2. Disaster in Space
3. The New Planet
4. Mondas!
5. The Cyberman Invasion
6. Ben into Action
7. Battle in the Projection Room
8. Two Hundred and Fifty Spaceships
9. Z-Bomb Alert!
10. Prepare to Blast off
11. Cybermen in Control
12. Resistance in the Radiation Room
13. The Destruction of Mondas!

Between the Lines

Copyright

About the Book

The TARDIS brings the Doctor and his friends to a space tracking base in the Antarctic – and straight into trouble. A space mission is going badly wrong, and a new planet has appeared in the sky.

Mondas, ancient fabled twin planet of Earth, has returned. Soon its inhabitants arrive. But while they used to be just like the humans of Earth, now they are very different. Devoid of emotions, their bodies replaced with plastic and steel, the Cybermen are here.

Humanity needs all the help it can get, but the one man who seems to know what's going on is terminally ill. As the Cybermen take over, the Doctor is dying...

This novel is based on the final story to feature the first Doctor, which was originally broadcast from 8 to 29 October 1966. This was the first Doctor Who story to feature the Cybermen.

Featuring the First Doctor as played by William Hartnell in his very last adventure, and his companions Ben and Polly.

About the Authors

Gerry Davis

Born in 1930, Gerry Davis was already an experienced television writer and script editor when he came to *Doctor Who* as Story Editor in 1966. Wanting to explore stories rooted more closely in real science, Davis contacted Dr Kit Pedler. The resulting collaboration resulted in several notable scripts, and in particular in the creation of the Cybermen.

After leaving *Doctor Who*, Gerry Davis continued to work with Kit Pedler, and together they created the groundbreaking and controversial BBC series *Doomwatch*. The series centred on a government department responsible for investigating the dangers of technology and its adverse impact on the world. They also wrote three novels together that explored similar areas of technological crisis – *The Plastic Eaters*, *Brainrack* and *The Dynostar Menace*.

Gerry Davis returned to *Doctor Who* in 1975 to write the story ‘Revenge of the Cybermen’, and at about the same time novelised several of his and Pedler’s *Doctor Who* stories for Target books.

Davis spent most of the 1980s working in the USA on film and television projects. He died in 1991.

Kit Pedler

Born in 1927, Christopher (‘Kit’) Pedler was a medical researcher, and head of the Electron Microscopy Department at the University of London’s Institute of Ophthalmology when he was recommended to Story Editor Gerry Davis as someone who might be useful as an adviser to *Doctor Who*.

Davis presented Pedler with hypothetical, fictional problems and asked him to extrapolate what would happen. One of the questions Davis posed was: ‘What if some alien intelligence gets inside the top of the Post Office Tower [which was visible from Davis’s office window] and decides to take over London...?’ Pedler’s considered reply formed the basis for the *Doctor Who* story ‘The War Machines’, scripted by Ian Stuart Black.

Another of Davis’s scenarios concerned a new planet which is a mirror image of Earth drifting into our solar system. Pedler’s answer again formed the basis of a *Doctor Who* story, but this time one he wrote himself in collaboration with Gerry Davis: ‘The Tenth Planet’.

Pedler told Davis that as a doctor his greatest phobia was ‘dehumanising medicine’. He foresaw a time when spare-part surgery had reached the stage where it was commonplace, possibly even cosmetic. There would come a point where it was

impossible to tell how much of the original human being remained. Such creatures, he reasoned, would be motivated by pure logic coupled with the overriding desire to survive. They would sacrifice their entire bodies and their minds in the quest for immortality... From this fear was created the Cybermen.

Together with Gerry Davis, Kit Pedler created the prescient BBC thriller series *Doomwatch*, and later returned to scientific and ecological writing and presenting. Kit Pedler died in 1981.

Also by BBC Books

DOCTOR WHO AND THE DALEKS

David Whitaker

DOCTOR WHO AND THE CRUSADERS

David Whitaker

DOCTOR WHO AND THE CYBERMEN

Gerry Davis

DOCTOR WHO AND THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN

Terrance Dicks

DOCTOR WHO AND THE AUTON INVASION

Terrance Dicks

DOCTOR WHO AND THE CAVE MONSTERS

Malcolm Hulke

DOCTOR WHO AND THE ICE WARRIORS

Brian Hayles

DOCTOR WHO AND THE DAY OF THE DALEKS

Terrance Dicks

DOCTOR WHO – THE THREE DOCTORS

Terrance Dicks

DOCTOR WHO AND THE ARK IN SPACE

Ian Marter

DOCTOR WHO AND THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

Terrance Dicks

DOCTOR WHO AND THE TENTH PLANET

Based on the BBC television serial *The Tenth Planet* by Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis by arrangement with the BBC

GERRY DAVIS

Introduction by
TOM MACRAE



INTRODUCTION

BY

Tom MacRae

‘Honestly, if you missed one, that was it. It just sort of vanished for ever.’

The eight-year-old girl I’m talking to can’t quite take in what I’m saying.

‘What about iPlayer?’ she asks me.

‘No such thing. There wasn’t an internet.’

The eight-year-old girl nods, like she’s dimly recalling a story an elderly relative once told her about that faraway time of BC (Before Computers).

‘What about – not DVDs – the ones before.’

‘Videos?’

‘Yeah. Videos. I’ve heard of them.’

‘You couldn’t get them. I don’t know why. No one thought to put out videos of *Doctor Who*. Not for years and years.’

‘So if *Doctor Who* was on, and you had to go out to the shops, or you were late in, you just...’

She paused, almost unable to get the heresy of the idea to stick.

‘Missed it.’ I completed her thought for her. ‘Yes.’ And then added ‘For ever’ rather needlessly.

The eight-year-old girl puffed her cheeks a bit, letting it all sink in.

‘That must have been horrible,’ she finally offered, in the same tone of voice I’d use with my nan if she told me a tale of death and the Blitz.

‘It was,’ I said. ‘It really was.’ And my mind drifted back to one evening, many, many years ago, when I was a child of around her age being faced with a terrible dilemma...

I had the lead in the village play. I can’t remember exactly which production it was that we were rehearsing in the United Reform Church Hall (I did a few when I was young and impressionable and thought acting was cool), but I had the lead, and that was a big deal to me. And then, one week, the night of rehearsal was changed for some reason, making it clash with *Doctor Who*, and I was faced with literally the Worst Decision In The World:

Watch the next episode of ‘Battlefield’ or miss out on the lead.

I had to go to rehearsal. It was non-negotiable. If I didn’t show up another boy would get my part. And yet attending meant missing *Doctor Who*. Missing out on the resolution of the cliffhanger. Missing out on the next thrilling piece in the puzzle. Missing out on all the TARDIS-y goodness that 25 minutes with the Seventh Doctor could provide for a wide-eyed young boy.

I tried to think of a way out of it – to somehow have both options – but it was impossible. I remember pulling my coat on as slowly as I could as I heard the opening bars of that famous theme tune waft through the closed sitting room door on my way out, knowing that I'd never get to find out first-hand what actually happened next.

Then, several years later, I was at a village jumble sale. I loved jumble sales. The aim was always to take home more new possessions from it than my mum could give away to it. I was rummaging through knick-knacks and bric-a-brac, when my eyes fell across an image of a man's face with a familiar hat, on a new-ish copy of a book – a face that I instantly recognised as Sylvester McCoy's. Then, my attention was drawn to the text above it – which read simply 'Battlefield'.

This was my introduction to Target novelisations. It was *The Book Of Answers*. Within the second-hand pages of this magical tome I was able to discover how Ace escaped the cliffhanger of the water torture chamber (the Doctor woke up in time and ejected her), how to protect oneself from evil magic (draw a chalk circle and stand in it) and that the Doctor possibly was or possibly wasn't Merlin (but probably was) (but possibly wasn't). With this book I was able to rewind time and fill in the missing gaps in my knowledge, like operating a pocket-sized paper TARDIS. At last I was able to have it all: I took the lead in the play and got to watch *Doctor Who*. Or at least read it, and make the pictures in my head (and making pictures in your head is a very useful skill to have, as I discovered many years later when, much to my surprise, I found myself actually writing *Doctor Who* for the first time).

Now, you've probably noticed that the book you're now holding isn't the novelisation of 'Battlefield', but that's not the point. This story isn't about one particular episode – it's about all of them. It's about remembering a time when *Doctor Who* came and then was gone, and no amount of pressing of red buttons would bring it back again. The only thing that stood between seeing a story and missing it for ever was a Target novelisation. When no one else cared whether *Doctor Who* fans got their post-transmission *Doctor Who* fix or not – Target did. Target cared. Target loved *Doctor Who* fans and loved *Doctor Who*.

Now *Doctor Who* is global industry – toys, games, online content, toothbrushes, dress-up kits and blockbuster exhibitions, to name but a few. We live in a Golden Era, and trying to explain that it wasn't always so to an eight-year-old girl today is a singular experience.

The eight-year-old girl of this story lives in the village where I grew up, and is one of the many children I've had the pleasure of talking *Doctor Who* with. I love that they just love it, and speaking to them reminds me why it's such a privilege to write this show. I tell them how lucky they are – how lucky we all are – and how brilliant it is.

The eight-year-old girl has one final question:

'You remember missing one episode of *Doctor Who* that much. Does that mean it was the only episode you ever missed?'

'Yes,' I say, after thinking for a moment.

'Wow. You must really love *Doctor Who*,' she says, smiling.

And I do. I absolutely do. Almost as much as a Target novel does.

The Changing Face of Doctor Who

The First Doctor

This *Doctor Who* novel features the very first incarnation of the Doctor. When the Doctor was younger, he was an older man. It seems strange now, but when television audiences were first introduced to the Doctor, nothing was revealed about his origins and background. We knew only that, together with his granddaughter, Susan, he has fled from his own planet in the TARDIS – which he cannot control. Every trip is a mystery and a surprise as the TARDIS could take him anywhere and anywhen.

Brilliant but crotchety, the First Doctor did not suffer fools gladly. He took his first companions – Barbara and Ian – with him out of necessity rather than choice. It was more of a kidnapping than a privilege. Over time, and perhaps because of his contact with human beings, the Doctor mellowed and became less irascible. But his brilliance and his passion for justice remained undiminished. ...

Ben

Ben is a Cockney sailor in the British Navy. During his time with the Doctor, he never loses sight of the fact that he wants, more than anything, to get back to his ship, HMS *Teazer*. Practical and realistic, it takes him a while to believe that the TARDIS really does travel through time and space. Never one to shirk action and danger, he is also clever and pragmatic.

While they only meet in a nightclub shortly before departing, accidentally, with the Doctor in 1966, Ben and Polly have become good friends and trust each other. Their relationship is punctuated by good-natured teasing and banter, but they complement each other well.

Polly

Polly worked as secretary to Professor Brett, the creator of a mad supercomputer called WOTAN. Ben nicknames her ‘Duchess’ because of her upper-class accent and sophistication.

Polly has a deep affection for Ben, although she masks it behind banter and teasing. She chats him up at the Inferno nightclub, and in a sense she is still chatting him up when they arrive back in London on the same day as they left, and leave the TARDIS. Polly is rarely completely serious, except when she believes her friends are in trouble. And she is most serious when Ben is threatened.

The Creation of the Cybermen

Centuries ago by our Earth time, a race of men on the far-distant planet of Telos sought immortality. They perfected the art of cybernetics – the reproduction of machine functions in human beings. As bodies became old and diseased, they were replaced limb by limb, with plastic and steel.

Finally, even the human circulation and nervous system were recreated, and brains replaced by computers. The first Cybermen were born.

Their metal limbs gave them the strength of ten men, and their in-built respiratory system allowed them to live in the airless vacuum of space. They were immune to cold and heat, and immensely intelligent and resourceful. Their large, silver bodies became practically indestructible.

Their main impediment was one that only flesh and blood men would have recognised: they had no heart, no emotions, no feelings. They lived by the inexorable laws of pure logic. Love, hate, anger, even fear, were eliminated from their lives when the last flesh was replaced by plastic.

They achieved their immortality at a terrible price. They became dehumanised monsters. And, like human monsters down through all the ages of Earth, they became aware of the lack of love and feeling in their lives and substituted another goal – power!

Later, forced to leave Telos, the Cybermen took refuge on the long-lost sister planet of Earth... Mondas.

The Space Tracking Station

THE LONG LOW room housed three separate rows of control consoles and technicians and resembled Cape Kennedy Tracking Station in miniature. At one end, the interior of a space capsule had been projected on to a large screen. Two astronauts were seated at the capsule controls.

The scene is a familiar enough one to TV watchers – but the attentive viewer would have noticed that the Tracking Station’s ceiling was a little lower than that of Houston or Cape Kennedy, and that more of the technicians wore uniforms.

What he would never have guessed – looking round at the flushed, sweating men, in their singlets and open-necked shirts – was that immediately above the ceiling lay six feet of ice, and above that, the blizzard-swept wastes of the snowy Antarctic: the tracking station, code name *Snowcap*, was situated almost exactly over the South Pole.

One of the consoles, slightly raised above the others, faced the three rows of technicians. Behind it sat the three men responsible for the safe operation of Space Tracking Station *Snowcap*: General Cutler, the American soldier in charge of the predominantly military installation; Dr Barclay, an Australian physicist; and Dyson, an Englishman and senior engineer of the base.

General Cutler, his immaculate uniform neatly buttoned, and wearing a collar and tie, was apparently unaffected by the close atmosphere inside the tracking station. Tall, with close-cropped grey hair, a firm jaw line, small shrewd black eyes and a large, unlit cigar clamped firmly between his teeth, he easily dominated the other two men.

The voice of Wigner, Head of International Space Control, came over the loudspeaker system.

‘We’re now handing *Zeus Four* to Polar Base. Will you take control, please?’

Cutler glanced towards the left-hand console, and received a nod from the monitoring technician. He pulled the desk microphone towards him:

‘Yeah, we have *Zeus Four*, thank you, Geneva.’

The engineer, Dyson, clicked open his desk mike:

‘*Snowcap* to *Zeus Four*, over to local control channel J for Jack.’

On the big screen facing them, one of the two men in the space capsule turned his head slightly and raised his thumb. His voice came over the loudspeakers:

‘Over to J for Jack – now.’

General Cutler leaned back and removed his cigar for a moment. He smiled.

‘Good morning, gentlemen, you lucky fellas! Having a good time up there?’

The second astronaut, Schultz, turned his head towards the camera. ‘Why don’t you come up and join us, General?’

Cutler gestured with his cigar. 'And miss my skiing?'

There was a ripple of laughter among the technicians facing Cutler. The General liked his little jokes to be appreciated. The two astronauts in the capsule grinned at the camera. Cutler nodded – as if acknowledging the laughter – and stuck the cigar back between his teeth.

'O.K., Barclay,' he said. 'They're all yours.'

Dr Barclay turned to Dyson. 'Give Texas tracking the next orbital pattern.'

Dyson nodded and started to operate his desk transmitter. 'Will do.'

Barclay glanced up at the screen. '*Snowcap to Zeus Four, Zeus Four*, how do you read me?'

Again, the voice of the astronaut Schultz, sounding unnaturally high-pitched and squeaky in the weightless atmosphere, came over the loudspeaker. 'Loud and clear, *Snowcap*, loud and clear. Hey, we have a great view of your weather. How is it your end?'

'Really want to know?' Barclay grinned. 'There's an ice blizzard and a force sixteen wind. Repeat your velocity for ground check, please.'

The two astronauts were reclining in the narrow capsule. Immediately above their heads, a complex row of instruments clicked out a stream of necessary data and information as the capsule hurtled round the Earth towards its re-entry window. Through the two round side ports, the long shaft of sunlight constantly changed position as the space craft sped around the globe.

Major Schultz, a round-faced cheerful-looking German-American of about forty, and the older of the two men, turned to his partner. 'Skiing he says!'

Williams, a tall, handsome American negro of about thirty, nodded briefly before clicking on the communications microphone again. 'Williams. Cosmic ray measurements are now complete. Are you ready to receive data?'

The voice of Dr Barclay came through on the console above Williams' head. 'Yes, go ahead.'

Williams glanced over to the computer read-out controls set slightly to the right of the capsule panel, and started to relay the measurements. Schultz eased back in his seat and stretched his legs slightly in one of the approved isometric astronaut's exercises. It had been a good, if uneventful, flight. In another couple of hours the capsule would be sitting in the blue waters of the Pacific, waiting to be winched aboard the aircraft carrier. And after that: the pleasures of hot food, a bath, and a real bed...

A pleasant run-of-the-mill mission. For a moment, the veteran astronaut thought back to the tougher flights of the past when space flight still entailed unpredictable hazards. The good old days! Perhaps it was all becoming a little too easy!

Inside the TARDIS, Ben, the Cockney sailor, was having similar thoughts. The last three landings had been uneventful – even dull. No danger, no excitement – merely a landing on some uninhabited planet, lengthy rambles with the Doctor to collect specimens of plants and rocks, and then off again.

Worse still, the Doctor seemed to be ageing rapidly. He was beginning to stoop a little, and his absent-mindedness had increased to the point where he did not seem to recognise his two companions, frequently addressing them as Ian and Barbara, the names of his first two fellow space-travellers.

Just before their most recent landing Ben had turned to Polly and muttered: ‘I tell you, Duchess, if it goes on like this, I’m slinging my hook next port of call. Don’t mind a bit of agro, but when it comes to sitting around waiting for the Doctor all day – and then him never telling us what he’s doing – I’ve had it!’

The two of them were looking up at the television monitor screen which showed the latest landing place of the TARDIS. It didn’t look very promising: white landscape, grey sky, and a thick swirling curtain of snowflakes.

‘You can’t go out in that!’ The old Doctor shook his long white hair and tapped his lapel nervously with his long fingers – a familiar habit of his. ‘It’s quite out of the question.’

Ben was normally a good natured and obedient member of the Doctor’s little party. Polly even teased him by saying that he was too ready to jump to attention and salute when the Doctor told him to do something. On this occasion, however, Ben stood firm. He crossed his arms defiantly. ‘If I don’t get some shore leave now, I warn you, I’m quitting. I don’t care where we land, or what age it’s in. Next time you open those doors, I’m going to scarper.’

The Doctor looked impatiently at Polly, and waited for her reaction. By nature a kind man, the Doctor had grown irritable and dictatorial of late. He didn’t like to be crossed by one of his companions.

‘Well,’ he said, looking at Polly, ‘what about you?’

Polly smiled a little nervously: ‘If you say we can’t go out, then of course we can’t. But it wouldn’t do any harm, would it?’

The Doctor flung his hands up. ‘Any harm!’ He looked at the control board. ‘With a gale force wind and a blizzard – plus a mean temperature of thirty below zero!’ He glanced up at the screen again. ‘I don’t even know where we’ve landed, or in which period of time.’

Ben threw a quick glance at Polly as if to say, ‘That’s why he’s cross. Lost again!’

In spite of his age, the Doctor had sharp eyes and seemed almost able to read their minds. He noticed Ben’s glance, interpreted it, and sulkily turned away.

‘Oh, very well.’ He nodded towards the almost inexhaustible equipment room of the TARDIS. ‘You’ll find some Polar furs in there. You’d better bring some for me, I suppose I shall have to go out with you. Ten yards away from the TARDIS in this sort of weather, and you’d be hopelessly lost.’

The Doctor’s two young companions ran into the equipment room before he changed his mind. Within five minutes, clad awkwardly and heavily in fur parkas, leggings and fur caps with ear flaps, the three adventurers opened the door of the TARDIS and stepped out into the snow.

The wind had already piled up the snow around the small blue police telephone box, and Polly began to shiver violently. The extreme cold cut short their breath and burned their lungs; icy particles of snow stung their faces with thousands of tiny pin pricks.

Polly and the Doctor made little progress in the face of the driving wind, but Ben heaved himself forward, step by step, through the loose drifting snow. Suddenly he appeared to collapse on his knees.

‘He’s hurt!’ shouted Polly, and tried to hurry towards him, the Doctor close behind.

But Ben was pointing excitedly to something he had found. Four squat, black

chimneys protruded through a small mound of snow. The three time travellers bent over them and felt warm air against their cheeks, flowing up from below.

‘Something’s buried under here, Doc.’ Ben was shouting against the shriek of the Polar wind, his face close to the Doctor’s ear. ‘What is it?’

Before the Doctor could answer, Polly squealed excitedly from the other side of the chimneys. The long black snout of a periscope, similar to those used on submarines, had appeared from under the snow!

‘Look what’s here!’ she called excitedly. ‘A periscope!’

She turned back to peer into the lens of the periscope. ‘Do you think there could be a submarine down here?’

Meanwhile, the Doctor was thoughtfully scraping the snow from a square hatch which he had discovered to one side of the chimneys. Obviously a trap door – but leading where?

The thick-set sergeant on duty in the base guardroom below stared in disbelief at the monitor screen which relayed the picture taken by the periscope’s camera. He rubbed his eyes, shook his head, and looked again. ‘Tito. Hey, Tito, come over here will ya!’

Against the far wall of the guardroom stood a couple of bunks on which the guards took it in turn to snatch a few moments’ sleep or relaxation. On the lower one, the second guard, an Italian-American named Tito, was reading a comic.

‘Yeah, what is it?’ He couldn’t take his eyes off the adventures of Captain Marvel, who was engaged in a life or death struggle with a marauding party of robots.

The American Sergeant was still staring at the screen.

‘I can see people!’

The bored soldiers at the base often played jokes on each other. Tito had heard it all before.

‘Sure, sure. Lots of people, skiing out there.’ He turned another page of his comic.

‘One of them’s a girl.’

The Italian dropped his comic, swung himself off the bunk, and ran over. The three other guards, who had been playing poker at a table by the door, dropped their cards and converged on the small monitor screen.

Polly’s face filled the screen as she looked into the lens of the periscope.

‘A real live girl!’ Tito grabbed the handles of the periscope and turned it round slightly.

Outside, the day had brightened and the driving snow eased a little. The assembled men could just make out the outline of the TARDIS. ‘That looks like some kind of hut!’

The Sergeant looked over Tito’s shoulder, and came to a decision: ‘We’d better investigate.’ He turned to the other three men.

‘Take your small arms.’ He jerked his thumb over to the row of sub-machine guns which were ranged in a rack by the door. ‘Get outside and bring them down here. Now get moving!’

The three men quickly swung into their parkas, zipped them up, snatched a gun each from the rack, and started climbing the exit ladder at the far end of the room.

The three time travellers had finished inspecting the periscope. Despite the thick furs,

Polly was trying to keep warm by swinging her arms and stamping her feet in the snow.

‘I... th... think my face is getting frostbitten,’ she stuttered through chattering teeth. ‘C... Can’t we go back now, Doctor?’

As usual, the Doctor’s mind was elsewhere. He continued to examine the periscope. ‘Some kind of base, I imagine, set under the ice.’

Ben looked at Polly, and then at the Doctor. ‘She’s had enough, Doc. She wants to go back inside the TARDIS.’

‘Oh yes, of course. I’m sure we’ve all had enough...’

He swung round to lead the way back to the TARDIS, and stopped abruptly. Unnoticed by the three of them the trap door had been opened, and ranged alongside it were the sinister figures of the three soldiers in hoods and snow goggles. Their machine guns were levelled. The leading soldier gestured back towards the open trap door with his weapon.

Polly huddled against Ben. ‘What does he want us to do?’ she whispered in his ear. ‘Come quietly, I expect.’

Disaster in Space

‘GET A MOVE on!’ The Sergeant, hands on hips, watched as the three time travellers climbed awkwardly down the ladder. ‘Back against that wall.

The sudden transition from the dark, cold Antarctic ice cap to the brilliantly lighted, over-heated guardroom was almost too much for Polly. Ben took her arm as she began to sway dizzily.

‘My dear fellow,’ said the Doctor, as he brushed himself down, ‘there’s really no need to shout at us.’

‘Easy, nice an’ easy!’ drawled the American Sergeant as the Doctor removed his furs.

‘I assure you we’re not carrying any weapons.’ The Doctor spoke irritably. ‘We are never armed.’

‘Yeah? Well, just who are you?’

The other guards now entered and slammed the trap door shut behind them. They stared incredulously as the three travellers slowly pulled off their cumbersome fur garments, and whistled when they caught sight of Polly’s long slender legs.

‘O.K.,’ said the Sergeant, ‘I’ll ask again. Who are you and what are you doing here?’

Polly, feeling a little more human and a little less like a Polar bear, smiled at him: ‘We’ve landed just above you, Sergeant.’

‘Landed? What in?’

‘Oh in a...’ She stopped, suddenly remembering the Doctor’s warning to keep their business to themselves at all times. ‘... It’s a sort of spaceship, actually.’

‘You can knock off the gags,’ replied the Sergeant. ‘You’ve no business here. This is a military base. Out of bounds to all civilians.’

The Doctor stepped forward: ‘Ah, we must apologise then. Perhaps you wouldn’t mind telling me just where we are, my dear chap?’

There was a quick smile on the faces of the assembled men. The Sergeant leant back against the table and folded his arms.

‘You’re standing in the South Pole Base of International Space Command, and frankly, pop—’

‘Doctor, if you don’t mind.’

‘O.K., Doctor, your story’s gonna have to be awful good.’

The Doctor’s two companions gazed at each other in excitement.

‘You mean we’re on Earth?’ burst out Polly.

‘You heard, Duchess – South Pole,’ Ben reminded her.

‘Then we’re home at last!’ cried Polly, clutching Ben round the neck.

The Sergeant gazed wearily from one to the other. ‘Boy! Have we some right kooks here! Tito,’ he nodded towards the Italian-American, ‘get the CO will ya.’

The smile dropped from Tito’s face as he backed away towards the door. ‘He’s not going to like this!’

‘The CO?’ queried the Doctor.

‘Commanding Officer – Boss!’ Ben whispered in the Doctor’s ear.

Tito picked up the phone by the door and dialled the number. ‘Hello, sir. Duty Guard Private Tito here. Could you give a message to the General, please?’

Ben noticed that the men around the table stiffened to attention at the mention of the name. Cutler was obviously a man to be reckoned with. Ben began to feel a twinge of nervousness.

‘Sir. I know that,’ Tito explained into the telephone. ‘But this is an emergency. Oh, I see. The General’s not there. Can you tell me where he is then, sir?’

‘I’m right here, Private.’ Tito had not noticed the door behind him open, and the General enter.

The men in the room immediately snapped to attention. Cutler, his face impassive as always, took in the scene. The long black cigar was still clenched firmly between his even white teeth.

‘What’s it all about, Sergeant?’

The Sergeant saluted and hesitated for a moment,

‘Well, sir...’

‘Who are these people?’ Cutler snapped.

‘They just appeared... outside in the snow.’ Cutler nodded. ‘They came out of a...’ The American Sergeant looked embarrassed, ‘a hut!’

Cutler slowly turned his gaze away from the three time travellers to look at the Sergeant. ‘A hut?’

‘Yes, sir. It just appeared. We haven’t seen it there before, that is...’

Tito nodded in excited agreement. ‘That’s right, General. That’s just the way it happened.’

Still with the same impassive, almost threatening look, Cutler moved towards the three companions, and walked around them as if inspecting troops.

He stopped in front of Ben and took in the sailor’s uniform. ‘Who are you?’

Ben snapped to attention, saluted: ‘Able Seaman... Ben Jackson... sir. Royal Navy.’

‘Then why aren’t you with your ship?’

‘Well, sir,... it’s difficult to explain.’

Cutler’s face was two inches away. ‘You bet your life it is!’

The Doctor stepped forward: ‘I can assure you we mean you no harm, my dear General.’

‘You can assure me what you like. Whether I’ll believe you or not is another matter. You people land at a military installation without authorisation or even proper identification, in the middle of a complex space shot...’

‘A space shot!’ exclaimed Polly excitedly.

Cutler took the cigar out of his mouth. ‘I’ve no time to deal with this now.’ He pointed the cigar almost threateningly at the three travellers. ‘But by thunder, you’d

better have a good explanation ready later.’

‘I don’t like your tone, sir,’ the Doctor began.

A faint smile appeared on the General’s craggy features.

‘And I don’t like your face, Grandad.’

Turning from the speechless Doctor, he beckoned to the Sergeant. ‘Sergeant, bring them into the tracking room and keep them under guard in the observation chamber. I’ll question them as soon as I have time.’

The sight of the Doctor and his two companions entering the space tracking room created a minor sensation. The technicians just stood and gaped – especially at the pretty girl with the long blonde hair, blue eyes, and tall, shapely figure. Barclay strode across to meet the General: ‘What on earth...?’ he began.

‘Never mind now,’ said Cutler brusquely. He motioned the Sergeant to take the three time travellers into the observation chamber at the side of the main tracking room. As soon as the three had filed into the narrow room, the General turned around and motioned the men back to their places: ‘O.K., let’s get back with it, we’ve a job to do.’

Cutler strolled past the seated men like a school teacher with a class of unruly boys, eyeing them carefully before taking his usual place on the dais.

‘What are they doing here, Doctor?’ Polly whispered excitedly. ‘Is it some kind of space shot?’

Ben nodded and turned to the Doctor. ‘Yeah, a smaller version of Houston Space Control. Mind you, not quite what you see on TV, is it?’

The deep voice of the Sergeant, who had taken his place behind them in the viewing room, cut in: ‘Don’t know what you’ve seen on your TV, son, but this is General Cutler’s outfit. He don’t like a lot of personnel. Cuts them down to the bare minimum and works ’em into the ground. We only do a couple of months stretch on this station.’

The Doctor, who had been studying the wall behind them, suddenly cleared his throat with a little clicking noise he sometimes made to attract their attention.

‘I don’t want to depress you, but we... er... are not quite where you think we are.’

‘What do you mean, Doctor?’ asked Ben.

The Doctor pointed to the calendar.

‘I don’t see anything...’ began Polly – and then her voice died away as she caught sight of the date: 2000! The year was 2000!

‘Oh, not again,’ she moaned. ‘I really thought we were on our way home this time.’

Ben glumly nodded his agreement. ‘Still adrift! That explains why there are so few people. Computers do all the work now.’ He turned round to look at the Sergeant. ‘Have they reached Mars yet?’

The Sergeant, more relaxed now, leant back against the wall and grinned. ‘I thought you watched TV, sailor?’

‘You mean you *have* sent people to Mars?’

‘An expedition came back five months ago.’

‘Has this flight anything to do with it?’ Polly asked, pointing towards the astronauts on the screen which they could clearly see through the glass front of the

observation booth.

‘No. Just the normal atmosphere testing probe. Purely routine. Nothing ever happens...’

Suddenly, the attention of the three became engaged by a flurry of activity inside the tracking room. The men were craning towards the main console. Barclay was gabbling into the communication phone: ‘An error? Where?’

The voice of Williams boomed out over the loud speakers:

‘Looks bad. We are now over South Island, New Zealand. We’re reading a height of eleven hundred miles.’

‘Eleven hundred! That’s impossible!’ He glanced sideways. ‘Dyson, check what it should be, will you?’

Dyson checked one of the illuminated dials. It should be nine hundred and eighty.’

The Australian jumped up and, leaning across his smaller English colleague, tapped the computer read-out key.

Again, the figure of nine hundred and eighty miles appeared on the dial.

‘Cripes!’ exclaimed Barclay. ‘You’re right! Nine hundred and eighty miles. Out of position by over one hundred miles.’

He spoke into the mike again: ‘*Snowcap to Zeus Four*. Do you read me?’

The voice of the astronaut, crackling with static, came through on the loudspeaker.

‘*Zeus Four to Snowcap*. Strength eight. Over.’

‘Take visual checks on Mars to establish position, please. Report back.’

On the screen, they watched the coloured astronaut nod his head in agreement: ‘Will do. Out.’

In the space capsule, Colonel Williams turned to Schultz. ‘Did you get that, Dan?’

Schultz nodded grimly. The easy, relaxed atmosphere inside the small capsule had disappeared. Both men now spoke with a quiet deliberation and a charged awareness of their predicament.

‘Go ahead then,’ said Williams.

Schultz swung a small telescope viewer into position. He looked at the vernier on the telescope support. Beside him, William consulted a small chart fixed to the back of the instruments.

‘Should be about four, two, zero.’

Schultz checked the vernier again. ‘Nope. It’s four, three, two.’

For a moment, the other astronaut’s composure broke. ‘Ah, come on man, it can’t be. Try again.’

‘O.K.’ He manipulated the small telescope again.

‘And get a move on. We’ll be back in the sunrise shortly.’

Schultz glanced out of the corner of his eye at the younger man. ‘Take it easy, Glyn. We’ve time.’

For a moment Williams struggled with his feelings and then, leaning forward slightly to speak into the mike to *Snowcap* base, he became the impersonal, all-systems-go astronaut.

‘Did you hear that conversation?’

Dyson’s voice came through on the loudspeaker. ‘Yes, Colonel. We’re getting a Mars fix, too. We’ll call back.’