

Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

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CONTENTS:

FICTION: *Ghost Story* by Pliny The Younger

REVIEW: *Doctor Who - The Waters of Mars*



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INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to Aleph Issue 1. Aleph is an occasional series we'll be doing looking at the best, oldest and oddest genre fiction around. We'll be covering everything outside the 20th century, the sort of work that laid the foundation for everyone from Lovecraft up to King. First though, we're going to the oldest recorded ghost story, translated by William Melmoth in 1746 and edited by RW Stedman to bring it in line with the original latin.

Yes, the original *latin*.

So, without further ado, we proudly present Aleph 1, and a ghost story by major up and coming new talent Pliny the Younger. Now if we can just find an email address for him...

Alasdair,
Hub magazine

FICTION

by pliny the younger

There was in Athens a house, spacious and open, but with an infamous reputation, as if filled with pestilence. For in the dead of night, a noise like the clashing of iron could be heard. And if one listened carefully, it sounded like the rattling of chains. At first the noise seemed to be at a distance, but then it would approach, nearer, nearer, nearer. Suddenly a phantom would appear, an old man, pale and emaciated, with a long beard, and hair that appeared driven by the wind. The fetters on his feet and hands rattled as he moved them.

Any dwellers in the house passed sleepless nights under the most dismal terrors imaginable. The nights without rest led them to a kind of madness, and as the horrors in their minds increased, onto a path toward death. Even in the daytime--when the phantom did not appear--the memory of the nightmare was so strong that it still passed before their eyes. The terror remained when the cause of it was gone.

Damned as uninhabitable, the house was at last deserted, left to the spectral monster. But in hope that some tenant might be found who was unaware of the malevolence within it, the house was posted for rent or sale.

It happened that a philosopher named Athenodorus came to Athens at that time. Reading the posted bill, he discovered the dwelling's price. The extraordinary cheapness raised his suspicion, yet when he heard the whole story, he was not in the least put off. Indeed, he was eager to take the place. And did so immediately.

As evening drew near, Athenodorus had a couch prepared for him in the front section of the house. He asked for a light and his writing materials, then dismissed his retainers. To keep his mind from being distracted by vain terrors of imaginary noises and apparitions, he directed all his energy toward his writing.

For a time the night was silent. Then came the rattling of fetters. Athenodorus neither lifted up his eyes, nor laid down his pen. Instead he closed his ears by concentrating on his work. But the noise increased and advanced closer till it seemed to be at the door, and at last in the very chamber. Athenodorus looked round and saw the apparition exactly as it had been described to him. It stood before him, beckoning with one finger.

Athenodorus made a sign with his hand that the visitor should wait a little, and bent over his work. The ghost, however, shook the chains over the philosopher's head, beckoning as before. Athenodorus now took up his lamp and followed. The ghost moved slowly, as if held back by his chains. Once it reached the courtyard, it suddenly vanished.

Athenodorus, now deserted, carefully marked the spot with a handful of grass and leaves. The next day he asked the magistrate to have the spot dug up. There they found--intertwined with chains--the bones that were all that remained of a body that had long lain in the ground. Carefully, the skeletal relics were collected and given proper burial, at public expense. The tortured ancient was at rest. And the house in Athens was haunted no more.

fin

Doctor Who - The Waters of Mars

reviewed by scott harrison



Written by Russell T. Davies & Phil Ford

Starring David Tennant, Lindsay Duncan, Peter O'Brien, Aleksander Mikic

BBC 1. First shown 15th November 2009

Let's face it, we've been waiting a long time for *Doctor Who's* second Special of 2009. Seven long months have crawled by since we all sat down with our chocolate eggs and marvelled at the pluck and bravery of the passengers of the Mighty 200! As a modern audience we've been spoilt, we're not used to waiting so long between our fixes of New Who. It's usually four to five months, tops! It's been a hard slog

but we've finally made it. But has it all been worth it?

The Doctor, having landed on Mars in the year 2059, finds himself an unwelcome guest in an Earth colony base established on Mars. But this is no ordinary base. No, this is Bowie Base One, whose inhabitants are all destined to die in an unexplained nuclear explosion. Unable to help, the Doctor must stand helpless by and watch as the team become infected by an unidentified alien entity, knowing that this is a fixed point in Human history and he cannot interfere...or can he?

As with many previous New Who episodes before it *The Waters of Mars* appears to have split the viewing audience straight down the middle. And it's very difficult to quite understand why many 'fans' didn't enjoy this Special, or, in fact, what it would take to please them. Since late 1963 *Doctor Who* has been doing something completely different - something unique even - from other sci-fi/fantasy series/serials and *The Waters of Mars* is no exception. It ticks all the boxes, as they say. Intense, dark, exciting and monumentally epic in scope this episode far exceeds April's *Planet of the Dead* both in ambition and jaw-dropping spectacle. For once we see a very different, much scarier, side of the Doctor, a side that, by the end, pushes the show into a completely new area. As a result it actually feels like a different show! David Tennant sparkles as the Time Lord, as he portrays a much darker character than we are used to. This is a Doctor who has gone too far, who has no one around to stop him. This is a Doctor we glimpsed very briefly in *The Runaway Bride*, callously killing the Racnoss offspring, before Donna stepped in to halt the slaughter. Let's be honest, writers Russell T. Davis and Phil Ford have given us a Doctor who, somewhat shockingly, is unlikeable. A brave move indeed and a rather ironic note to end the era of someone who has recently been voted the most popular incarnation, beating even the mighty Tom Baker.

It's the beginning of the end for the Tenth Doctor. After acting completely out of character and playing with innocent people's lives like some second-rate god he has changed the course of history and events have irrevocably been set in motion. As we approach Christmas things will never be the same again. The cloister bell is ringing and the end of time beckons.



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