

BBC

DOCTOR WHO



WAR CHANGES EVERYONE
EVEN THE DOCTOR

ENGINES OF WAR

GEORGE MANN

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About the Book

The Great Time War has raged for centuries, ravaging the universe. Scores of human colony planets are now overrun by Dalek occupation forces. A weary, angry Doctor leads a flotilla of Battle TARDISEs against the Dalek stronghold but in the midst of the carnage, the Doctor's TARDIS crashes to a planet below: Moldox.

As the Doctor is trapped in an apocalyptic landscape, Dalek patrols roam amongst the wreckage, rounding up the remaining civilians. But why haven't the Daleks simply killed the humans?

Searching for answers the Doctor meets 'Cinder', a young Dalek hunter. Their struggles to discover the Dalek plan take them from the ruins of Moldox to the halls of Gallifrey, and set in motion a chain of events that will change everything. And everyone.

An epic novel of the Great Time War featuring the War Doctor as played by John Hurt.

About the Author

George Mann is the author of the *Newbury & Hobbes* steampunk mystery series, as well as numerous other novels, short stories and original audiobooks. He has edited a number of anthologies including *The Solaris Book of New Science Fiction*, *The Solaris Book of New Fantasy* and a retrospective collection of *Sexton Blake* stories, *Sexton Blake, Detective*. He lives near Grantham, UK, with his wife, son and daughter.

BBC
DOCTOR WHO 
Engines of War

George Mann

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BOOKS

*To my family,
who made time and space*

Part One
Moldox

Chapter One

It had been three days since she'd last seen a Dalek. Three days since she'd notched another kill into the barrel of her gun. It was too long. She was starting to feel twitchy. What were they up to?

The Dalek patrols had been sporadic of late, as though they were no longer bothering with the outlying ruins. They were massing in the city, corralling any surviving humans they found and shepherding them there, too. Their plans had changed. Something new was happening.

Maybe she'd have to think about moving again. And just when she was starting to get comfortable, too.

Cinder lay on her belly in the dust and the dirt, perfectly still, surveying the road below the shallow escarpment. She'd heard that a Dalek patrol was coming this way, but that had been over an hour ago. Had one of the other resistance cells taken them out already? That seemed unlikely. If they had, she'd be aware of it by now. A message would have buzzed over the comm-link. No, the likelihood was that the Daleks had encountered another group of survivors and were processing them for enslavement, or else 'exterminating' them - or, as she preferred to call it, *murdering* them on the spot. Cinder clutched her weapon just a little harder, feeling a spark of anger at the thought. If they *did* come this way...

She brushed her fringe from her eyes. She had a bright shock of auburn hair, cut in a ragged mop around her shoulders. It was this that had originally earned her the name 'Cinder'. Well, that and the fact she'd been found in

the still-burning ruins of her homestead, the only thing left alive after the Daleks had passed through.

It seemed so long ago now, when the planet had burned. When they had *all* burned. Cinder had watched as every one of the worlds in the Spiral had burst into candescence, lighting up the sky above Moldox; a twisting helix of flaming orbs, a whorl of newly christened stars.

She'd been a child, then, little more than a scrap of a thing. Yet even at that early age she had known what the fire in the skies heralded for her and her kind: the Daleks had come. All hope was lost.

Moldox had fallen soon after, and life – if you could even call it that – had never been the same again.

Her family died in the first days of the invasion, incinerated by a Dalek patrol as they tried to flee for cover. Cinder survived by hiding in an overturned metal dustbin, peering out through a tiny rust hole at the carnage going on all around her, scared to so much as breathe. It took almost a year before she felt safe enough to even make another sound.

Days later, confused and traumatised, she'd been found wandering amongst the wreckage of her former homestead and was taken in by a roaming band of resistance fighters. This was not, however, an act of kindness on the part of her fellow humans, but simply a means to an end: they needed a child amongst their ranks to help set traps for the Daleks, to sneak and scurry into the small places where the Daleks couldn't follow. She'd spent the next fourteen years learning how to fight, how to eke out an existence in the ruins, and growing angrier at every passing day.

Everything she'd done since – *everything* – had been fuelled by that burning fury; that desire for revenge.

She knew the years of living hand to mouth had not served her well – she was thin, despite being muscular; her skin was pale and perpetually streaked in dirt, and whenever she found the time to look in a broken mirror or

shattered pane of glass, all she saw staring back at her was the pain and regret in her dark, olive eyes. This, however, was her life now: surviving day to day by scavenging food, and hunting Daleks whenever the opportunity arose.

All the while, out in the universe, the war between the Time Lords and the Daleks rolled on regardless, tearing up all of time and space in its wake.

Cinder had heard it said that in simple, linear terms, the war had been going on for over four hundred years. This, of course, was an untruth, or at least an irrelevance; the temporal war zones had permeated so far and so deep into the very structure of the universe that the conflict had – quite literally – been raging for eternity. There was no epoch that remained unscathed, uncontested, no history that had not been rewritten.

To many it had come to be known, perhaps ironically, as the Great Time War. To Cinder, it was simply Hell.

She shifted her weight from one elbow to the other, all the time keeping her eyes on the cracked asphalt road, watching for signs; waiting. They would come soon, she was sure of it. Earlier that day she'd destroyed another of their transponders, and the patrol that the others had spotted must have been despatched to investigate. The Daleks were nothing if not predictable.

She scanned the row of jagged, broken buildings lining the opposite side of the road, looking for Finch. It was his turn to draw the Dalek fire while she took them out from behind. She couldn't see him amongst the ruins. Good. That meant he was keeping his head down. She'd hate it if anything happened to him. He was one of the good ones. She might even go as far as calling him a friend.

The fronts of the shattered buildings all along the roadside were blackened and splintered; the result of both the Dalek energy rays and the incendiary bombs used by the human defence forces as they'd tried to hold the invaders at bay. Ultimately, they'd failed in the face of

overwhelming odds and an unflinching, uncaring enemy. The Daleks were utterly relentless, and within days the entire planet had been reduced to a smouldering ruin.

Cinder could barely remember a time before the Daleks had come to Moldox. She had vague, impressionistic memories of gleaming spires and sprawling cities, of wild forests and skies overflowing with scudding transport ships. Here, in the Tantalus Spiral, humans had achieved their zenith, colonising a vast corkscrew of worlds surrounding an immense, ghostly structure in space – the Tantalus Eye. It glared down at her now, balefully studying the events unfolding below.

It must have borne witness to some horrors in the last decade and a half, she considered. Moldox had once been majestic, but now it was nothing but a dying world, miserably clinging on to the last vestiges of life.

There was a noise from the road below. Cinder pressed herself even deeper into the dirt and scrabbled forward a few inches, peering over the lip of the escarpment in order to see a little further along the road. The strap of her backpack was digging uncomfortably into her shoulder, but she ignored it.

The Daleks were finally coming, just as she'd anticipated. Her pulse quickened. She squinted, trying to discern their numbers. She could make out five distinct shapes, although her heart sank as they drew closer, and her view of them resolved.

Only one of them was a Dalek, hovering at the back of the small group as if herding the others on. Its bronze casing glinted in the waning afternoon sun, and its eyestalk swivelled from side to side, surveying the path ahead.

The rest of them were Kaled mutants, Daleks of a kind, but twisted into new, disturbing forms by Time Lord interference. These were Skaro Degradations, the result of Time Lord efforts to re-engineer Dalek history, to toy with the evolution of their origin species, probably in an attempt

to sidestep the development of the Dalek race altogether. The results had been catastrophic, however, and in every permutation of reality, in *every single* possibility, the Daleks had asserted themselves. They were not to be stopped. Whichever way Cinder looked at it, it seemed the universe *wanted* the Daleks.

Many of these Degradations were unstable - unpredictable - which, to Cinder's mind, made them even more dangerous than the Daleks. And now they were being pressed into service here on Moldox.

Cinder readied her weapon - an energy gun ripped from the broken casing of a dying Dalek and lashed up to a power pack - and fought the urge to flee. It was too late now. They were committed. She only hoped none of the Degradations was carrying a weapon they hadn't faced before.

As the patrol drew closer, Cinder got a proper look at them. Two of the Degradations were near identical and of a kind she had seen many times before: a humanoid torso in a reinforced glass chamber, suspended beneath a normal Dalek head and eyestalk. Three elongated panels on black metal arms flanked this central column to the sides and rear. The panels were peppered with the same half-globe sensors as the standard Dalek casing, and from each side jutted energy weapons mounted on narrow sponsons.

The limbless torsos inside the glass chambers twitched nervously as the monstrous things glided along, propelling themselves through the air on plumes of blue light. Finch had dubbed these ones 'Gliders'.

The others, however, were like nothing she had seen before. One of them was egg-shaped and mounted on a set of three spider-like limbs, scuttling along the road like a massive, terrifying insect. Once again, its casing was dotted with the same, familiar half-globes, although in this instance they were coal black and embedded into panels of

a deep, metallic red. The eyestalk was fatter, too, and from its body bristled four matching gun emplacements.

The final mutant appeared to be almost identical to a normal Dalek, except that its middle section – which typically housed the manipulator arm and gun – had been replaced by a revolving turret, upon which was mounted a single, massive energy cannon.

Cinder tried to swallow, but her mouth was dry. There was no way she could risk allowing that cannon to get off a shot. The results would be devastating, and Finch would have next to no chance of getting clear. That one had to be her first target.

She sensed movement in the ruins, and a quick glance told her that Finch was already on the move, dashing from cover to cover to draw the Dalek's attention. The Dalek sensed it, too, and its eyestalk swivelled in Finch's direction.

'Cease! Show yourself! Surrender and you will not be exterminated.' The Dalek's harsh, metallic rasp sent a shiver down Cinder's spine as it echoed along the otherwise empty road. She watched for Finch, trying to discern him in the ruins, to anticipate his next move. There was no chance he'd obey the Dalek's order – even if it wasn't lying, extermination had to be a better alternative to being enslaved by these monsters.

There! She saw him move again, near to the remains of a burnt-out homestead, and the Dalek swivelled, letting off three short, successive blasts with its weapon. The high-pitched wail of the energy discharge was near deafening. There was a flash of intense white light, followed by the crump of an explosion, and the remains of a damaged wall toppled into a heap, close to where Finch had been hiding only seconds before. Smoke curled lazily from the ruins in the still air.

'Seek. Locate. Destroy!' ordered the Dalek. 'Find the human and exterminate.'

'We obey,' chorused the Degradations in their warbling, synthetic voices. The two Gliders rose up on spears of light, while the others fanned out, covering the ruins with their weapons.

The patrol had separated, and Cinder saw her chance. She pushed herself up onto her knees, hefting the Dalek weapon to her shoulder and sighting along the length of the notched barrel. She drew a bead on the head of the Degradation with the cannon, took a deep breath, and fired.

The weapon issued a short, powerful blast of energy, and the force of its discharge almost sent her reeling. She kept her shoulder locked in position, steadying herself. The air filled with the stench of burning ozone.

Her aim was true, and the energy beam lanced across the mutant's bronze carapace, scoring a deep, black furrow and detonating one of its radiation valves. It did not, however, have the desired effect of causing its head to explode in spectacular fashion, instead eliciting an altogether more unwelcome response.

'Under attack! Under attack!' bellowed the Degradation, rotating its head a full 180 degrees to scan the top of the escarpment. 'Human female armed with Dalek neutraliser. Exterminate! Exterminate!'

Panicked, Cinder glanced at the gun in her hands. What had gone wrong? She'd never known a Dalek to survive an energy blast from one of its own weapons. Did this new kind of mutant have specially reinforced armour? Whatever the case, all she'd succeeded in doing was broadcasting her own location.

She had to act quickly, take out the leader. She twisted, raising the gun and closing her left eye, drawing a line of sight on the Dalek as it shifted its own bulk around, preparing to return fire. She squeezed the makeshift trigger and the weapon spat another bolt of searing energy.

The shot found its mark, striking the Dalek just beneath the eyestalk. The casing detonated with a satisfying crack, rupturing the sensor grilles and spilling the biomass of the dead Kaled inside. Flames licked at the edges of the ragged wound as green flesh bubbled and popped, oozing out with a grotesque hiss.

Cinder didn't have time to celebrate, however, as the egg-shaped Degradation opened fire in response. Its four weapons barked in quick succession, like chattering artillery guns, churning up the impacted loam along the top of the escarpment. She threw herself backwards, rolling for cover, but it was too late - the impact had destabilised the ground, and the edge of the escarpment collapsed in a crashing landslide of mud and soil.

Cinder felt the world give way beneath her. She screamed, clutching on to her gun for all she was worth, as she tumbled head over heels towards the assembled Degradations below.

Chapter Two

High above Moldox, a blue box folded into reality, sliding effortlessly out of the Time Vortex. It seemed incongruous, here on the outer edges of the Tantalus Spiral, a relic from ancient Earth that had fallen through time and space, only to appear here, its domed light blinking wildly as it returned to corporeal form. If sound had carried in space, its appearance would have been accompanied by a laboured, grating wheeze, but instead, there was only silence.

The arrival of this anachronistic object did not, however, go unnoticed, and the appearance of the TARDIS flashed up warning sigils on a thousand Dalek control panels. Dalek saucers stirred into action, gliding through the void to adopt combat formations, lights stuttering as they powered up to full readiness.

Inside the TARDIS, the Doctor - or rather, the Time Lord who had, before now, lived many lives under that name - rotated a dial and stepped back from the console. He folded his hands behind his back, and waited.

Around him, the roundels on the walls glowed with a faint luminescence, causing the craggy lines of his face to be picked out in shadow: the map of a hundred years or more, worn thin through conflict and weariness.

The central column burred gently as it rose and fell, as if the machine was somehow breathing, in and out, in and out. The thought was comforting. It meant he was not alone. He sighed, and glanced up at the star field being projected through the de-opaqueted ceiling of the console room.

Above him sat the ethereal form of the Tantalus Eye.

The Eye was an anomaly, a vast fold in space-time; an impossible structure that had no right to exist, and yet, nevertheless, did. How it had formed, whether it was natural or engineered - no one had ever been able to discern. All that the Doctor knew was that it predated the Time Lords, and that Omega, the great engineer, in those first, halcyon days of the Time Lord Diaspora, had written of the Eye and its many obtuse secrets - secrets that it still held to this day.

From this far out, on the edge of the Spiral, it had the appearance of an immense, gaseous body, a swirling human eye, encircled by a helix of inhabited worlds. It was pricked with the fading light of dying giants and the kernels of new, hungry stars, freshly reborn in an endless cycle of death and resurrection; celestial bodies trapped within its event horizon and the influence of its temporal murmurations.

To the Doctor, it was utterly breathtaking. He had come here often in his other lives - particularly his fourth and his eighth, those of a more romantic persuasion - although now those days were like distant memories, dreams that had happened to somebody else. Now, there was nothing but the War. It had consumed him, remade him into something new. A warrior.

Just like the Doctor, the War had changed the Tantalus Spiral, too. Once a peaceful haven, it was now blighted by the Dalek occupation. It had become a war zone, like much of the universe - a staging post from which the Daleks could continue their crusade to populate eternity with their progenitors and wage their ceaseless campaign against the Time Lords.

That was why the Doctor had come to the Spiral - the Daleks were massing here, and he needed to get a measure of their strength.

There was one simple and effective way to do just that.

'Right then,' he growled. 'Come and get me.'

Above the TARDIS, the Dalek saucers began to converge. They were not yet in range for their energy weapons, but the Doctor knew that at any moment he could expect a barrage. He stepped forward and took the controls once again.

‘Wait for it,’ he mumbled to himself. ‘Wait for just the right moment...’

He flicked a switch and opened the communication channel. A hundred or more Dalek voices were chanting in a riotous cacophony. Their words were barely discernible, but he knew very well what they were saying: ‘Exterminate! Exterminate!’ Even now, the sound of it made his skin crawl.

They were getting closer. Still, the Doctor waited.

The lead saucer finally moved within range, scudding overhead.

‘Now!’ bellowed the Doctor at the top of his lungs, cranking a lever forward and gripping the edges of the console so that his knuckles turned white with the strain.

The TARDIS shot straight up like a rocket. It caught the saucer completely unaware, colliding with its dome-encrusted belly and ripping through at an immense velocity, erupting through the top of the ship and spinning off, twisting on its axis.

The electrics inside the saucer fizzed and popped, visible through the ragged hole. It listed, spinning out of control, its weapons blazing indiscriminately. One energy beam took out a neighbouring saucer, while the damaged ship itself went spinning into another, which proved too slow to take evasive action.

On his monitors, the Doctor watched the shells of damaged Daleks drifting away motionless into the void as the ships themselves burned up.

‘That’s done it, old girl,’ he said, manipulating the controls once again to swing the TARDIS out of the path of another energy weapon. The Dalek saucers shifted like a

flock of birds, swooping after him, their cannons spitting death all around him. 'That's right,' he said. 'Follow me...'

Like the pilot of a stunt aeroplane - which he'd made a point of watching with the Brigadier, back in his UNIT days on Earth - the Doctor ducked and weaved the TARDIS, left, right, up, down, looping across the void, leading the Daleks on a merry chase, but always staying one step ahead of their guns.

All the while, the baleful glare of the Eye regarded them impassively.

'Right, isn't it about time...' The Doctor broke off, grinning, as a hundred or more Battle TARDISes phased out of the Vortex behind the Dalek fleet. 'Now we've got you,' he crowed, rotating a handle and dipping the TARDIS, bringing it back around on itself so that he could zip underneath the oncoming wave of Dalek saucers to join his comrades.

Weapons transmuted from the outer skin of the Battle TARDISes - plain, white lozenges with an outer shell of living metal that could morph into shields, or any number of predetermined gun emplacements. The TARDISes scattered, shooting off in a hundred different directions as the Daleks attempted to reverse their course, coming about to face the enemy who had so easily outflanked them.

Time torpedoes launched in a wave, a score of them finding their mark and freezing their targets, trapping them in a temporal holding pattern, a locked second from which the saucers could not escape. The Dalek ships bloomed into silent balls of flame as the Time Lords followed up with a volley of explosive rounds.

The Daleks weren't backing down, however, and as the Doctor's TARDIS burst through the surface of another saucer, sending it spinning toward one of the planets below, they managed to set loose their own first volley, detonating TARDISes with every strike.

The Doctor watched as the dying time ships blossomed, their interior dimensions folding out into reality, unfurling like violent flowers to swell to their true size before burning up in the vacuum. His fingers danced across the controls and the TARDIS danced away, just as the Dalek ships spat a second volley.

‘Phase!’ he bellowed over the communications rig, and the Time Lords did as he commanded, their TARDISEs blinking suddenly out of existence. They appeared again a moment later, having leapt two seconds into the future to avoid the crackling beams of the Dalek weapons, which faded away harmlessly into space.

Their return volley was far more effective, detonating countless Dalek saucers.

‘Retreat! Retreat!’ The chorus of Dalek voices, now diminished but still audible in the background, had changed. They were attempting to regroup, pulling back toward the Eye and using the wreckage of their fallen brethren as cover.

‘We’ve got them on the run, Doctor!’ called a satisfied female voice over the comm-link.

‘Stay with them!’ he replied. ‘Press the advantage.’

The Time Lords, now outnumbering the Dalek vessels two-to-one, did precisely that, surging forward, some going high, others going low, trapping the retreating Daleks between them.

The time torpedoes did their work, stuttering the Dalek retreat, and within seconds, space above the Tantalus Eye was filled with the wreckage of the remaining Dalek fleet.

‘Well done, Doctor,’ said the woman on the comm-link. She sounded jubilant. This was Captain Preda, Commander of the Fifth Time Lord Battle Fleet. ‘We led them on a merry dance indeed.’

‘Don’t count your victories too soon, Preda,’ replied the Doctor, his tone grim. ‘I’m not sure it’s over yet. There

could be more of them, lurking in the shadow of those planets.'

'Then let's take a look,' said Preda. The comm-link buzzed off, and the Battle TARDISEs, assembling themselves into a spearhead formation, slid closer toward the Tantalus Eye.

Warily, the Doctor fell in behind them, keeping an eye on his monitors.

The ambush came without warning. There was no alarm, no indication that anything was awry, that they'd triggered some sort of trap. One second there was nothing, the next an armada of Dalek stealth ships had blinked out of the Vortex.

The Doctor had seen these ships only a handful of times before - sleek, ovoid vessels of the purest black, devoid of the usual winking lights that typically marked a Dalek saucer, and twice as dangerous. They were a recent and unwelcome development. They were said to sit in the Time Vortex like spiders at the heart of a web, detecting the vibrations of passing TARDISEs. Only then would they make themselves known, shimmering into existence to catch the Time Lords unaware.

It was elegant and deadly and - the Doctor realised - Preda and her fleet had just been caught in their web.

The Time Lords had no time to react. Not a single one was able to dematerialise before the Dalek weapons cracked them open like tin cans, spilling their insides into the cold vacuum of space.

The Doctor roared, slamming his fists into the controls and sending the TARDIS spinning sideways in an evasive action that saved his life. Nevertheless, the TARDIS caught a glancing blow on her right flank and was sent into a wild spin. With the stabilisers unable to compensate, the Doctor slammed to the floor, rolling off the central dais as the ship juddered.

The TARDIS, out of control, hurtled headlong toward one of the planets below.

Chapter Three

The TARDIS plunged through the planet's upper atmosphere like a dropped stone, tumbling end over end, leaving a rippling trail of black smoke in its wake.

Inside, the Doctor clung to the metal rail that ran around the edges of the central dais. The engines were screeching and stuttering as the ship tried to right herself, but the trajectory was too sharp, and they were falling too fast.

The ceiling was still showing a projection of the view from outside, but now it was nothing but a disorientating jumble of images: snapshots of a bruised, purple sky; sweeping continents encrusted with bristling ruins; flames licking angrily at the edges of the ship's outer shell.

With a gargantuan effort, the Doctor released his grip on the railing and lurched over to the console, catching hold of a hooped cable in an effort to stop him from being sent sprawling to the floor. He tugged on it for support, but to his consternation it came away in his hand, one end decoupling from its housing and causing him to swing out wildly, windmilling his other arm until the ship tipped forward again and he could grab hold of a nearby lever.

He steadied himself as best he could, rocking with the motion of the tumbling ship. 'Right, let's see if this works...' he said, tossing away the loose end of the cable and jabbing at a series of buttons and switches on the control panel.

Its engines screaming in protest, the TARDIS made a juddering attempt to dematerialise. Outside, visible through the transparent ceiling, the world seemed to fade away to nonexistence, replaced by the swirling hues of the Time Vortex.

Just as the Doctor was about to issue a heartfelt sigh of relief, however, the view stuttered as if it were just out of reach, and returned to flickering images of the desolate, spoiled world beneath him, seen only in snatches as the ground seemed to rush up to meet the falling TARDIS.

He hammered at the controls furiously, to no avail. Even the central column had now ceased its ponderous rise and fall, as if the TARDIS herself had anticipated what would come next and was withdrawing into herself, shutting down her vital systems.

‘I’m sorry, old girl,’ said the Doctor, hanging on to the console for all he was worth. ‘I think we’re in for a bit of a bumpy landing...’

Her mouth was full of soil, her left cheek was smarting and she was pretty sure she’d broken at least one of her ribs. She couldn’t remember where she was, what she’d been doing. Comforting blackness offered to consume her. She welcomed it. *Sleep*. Sleep was what she needed. Sleep would –

‘Locate the other hu-man.’ The rasping, metallic sound of a Degradation stirred her to wakefulness. Of course! The escarpment. The landslide. The *Degradations*. Only a few seconds could have passed. She remained rigid and still. Did they think she was dead?

She was partially covered by the loose soil. She could feel it weighing down on her legs. That was good – at least she could still *feel* her legs. The mud must have cushioned her fall. She shifted her foot, ever so slightly, and felt the heaped earth give way. She’d be able to break free, then. She wasn’t buried too deep.

She was still clutching the stolen Dalek weapon. It felt smooth and cold against her palm, and hummed with power. Not only that, but she had the element of surprise. They weren’t expecting her to suddenly start shooting