



BEAUTIFUL CHAOS

GARY RUSSELL

BBC

DOCTOR WHO

Contents

Cover

About the Book

About the Author

The Doctor Who 50th Anniversary Collection

Title Page

Dedication

Introduction

ONE DAY...

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

FRIDAY

ONE DAY... (REPRISE)

Acknowledgements

Copyright

About the Book

Wilfred Mott is very happy: his granddaughter, Donna is back home, catching up with family and gossiping about her journeys, and he has just discovered a new star and had it named after him. He takes the Tenth Doctor with him to the naming ceremony. But the Doctor soon discovers something else new, and worryingly bright, in the heavens – something that is heading for Earth. It's an ancient force from the Dark Times. And it is very, very angry...

About the Author

Gary Russell was one of the script editing team for *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, and is the author of many novels and reference books in the *Doctor Who* range. A former editor of *Doctor Who Magazine*, he also was the producer of *Doctor Who* audio dramas for Big Finish Productions for eight years. He lives in Cardiff.

The Doctor Who 50th Anniversary Collection

Ten Little Aliens
Stephen Cole

Dreams of Empire
Justin Richards

Last of the Gaderene
Mark Gatiss

Festival of Death
Jonathan Morris

Fear of the Dark
Trevor Baxendale

Players
Terrance Dicks

Remembrance of the Daleks
Ben Aaronovitch

EarthWorld
Jacqueline Rayner

Only Human
Gareth Roberts

Beautiful Chaos
Gary Russell

The Silent Stars Go By
Dan Abnett



BEAUTIFUL
CHAOS

GARY RUSSELL



*For Russell and Julie,
for letting me play in the sandbox...*

INTRODUCTION

Memory is a funny thing – it sums up everything we are, everything we were and everything we'll probably be, because it shapes everything we do. I have long been obsessed with memory, and the loss of it and the effect that has on identity. It's been a running theme in a number of my *Doctor Who* novels over the years. But *Beautiful Chaos* was the first book where I wanted to take it out of sci-fi/fantasy and make it real. And dip a toe into the water of Alzheimer's and the effect it can have on people horribly afflicted with it and those that love them. And the family Noble gave me the perfect opportunity.

But let's take a step back – let's look at the world of *Doctor Who* in 2008 when I wrote this.

David Tennant was the Tenth Doctor. I'd known David for a few years, long before he became the Doctor – he was an actor I had admired ever since I saw him in a special episode of *The Bill*, the Thames TV cop drama, in which he played a psycho who had tied up a girl in the back of a soon-to-be-airless van. He kept his cool as he was interrogated, he played the policemen for fools, he led them down blind alleys and manipulated them while staying so super cool and innocent. Until he was exposed and the girl saved. And then in an absolute tour de force of TV acting, he tore the final scene up, metaphorically and literally as his character's insanity exploded, shocking the policemen and the viewers with its ferocity and believability and vulnerability too. I knew then he was an actor to watch. I sought him out and directed him a couple of times (he's played nasty Nazis, emotional Scotsmen and sadistic

soldiers for me). Then he went to do *Casanova* on telly for Russell T Davies and Julie Gardner. Who then made him the Doctor. Cos they're smart like that.

So I knew what he was capable of as the Doctor and, by 2008, I'd had a chance to see that close up, not just on TV but in studio, at readthrough sessions, etc., because I was working on the show by then. And I wanted to capture that energy, that slightly manic unpredictability but above all, that amazing intellect, in words, for this book. I wanted a book that reflected how I saw the Tenth Doctor.

Donna Noble – how I clapped when I heard she was to be played Catherine Tate. Inspired casting and, like all good comic actors, sixty times more talented than many gave her credit for beforehand. Seriously, you don't get to do all that stuff in her sketch shows without being a brilliant actress – long before you become the best comedienne. I remember watching her at a readthrough for *Planet of the Ood* (I read in the Oods – she thanked me afterwards and I was smitten) – the way she could turn Donna on a penny, one minute all in-yer-face sarcasm, the next, the most astonishingly emotional gut-wrenching torment. I wasn't the only one with damp eyes as she read through that sequence where she hears the Oodsong in the cells. Again, I knew I had to capture that in print – the loud-mouthed aggression that covered this most emotional and sensitive character always fighting to get out.

Both the Doctor and Donna were a testament to Russell's writing and creativity, and they always felt utterly real and normal to me. Stripping away the fake eccentricity that often plagued the Doctor in the classic series and replacing that with heart and soul worked wonders for this fan.

But then there's Wilfred Mott. Wilf. Gramps. (Once known as Sid the Newspaper Seller.) Along with Sylvia, Donna's mum played so beautifully understatedly by Jacqueline King, Bernard Cribbins took that great cliché of the slightly fuddy-duddy granddad and made him shine, made him so utterly

gorgeous you wanted him to be your granddad. Isn't that the best thing that can come out of good television writing and good television acting? You wish someone was your granddad, because you love them so much, so quickly?

Into this, I brought in my own character – Nettie, Wilf's would-be 'girlfriend' who gives as good as she gets, utterly aware of where she fits into the family dynamic (Donna adores her, Sylvia sees her as a threat) but never oversteps her boundaries. (Russell even gave her a mention in *The End of Time Part One* – you have no idea how cool that feels!!) Everything should be perfect for her and Wilf – if it wasn't for the Alzheimer's that will, she and Wilf know, eventually destroy her. No one knows when, but they know it will in time. And that's the tragic thing – amidst alien invasions, mad computers, a couple of sparky kids and the delightfully spunky Miss Oladini, Nettie and Wilf are Romeo and Juliet, Calvin and Hobbes, and Eric and Hattie all rolled into one.

At least – that's what I intended. I have no way of knowing if it worked for the reader – I can only hope it did. All I've said is that these were my intentions – to write a story about loss, sadness, triumph and living the only life we have, despite – or even because of – what fate hands us.

All I know is I made Russell T Davies cry (so he says; he was probably being nice), and I had the biggest compliment of my life ever from Bernard Cribbins, who read the audio abridgement on CD. 'You wrote that? I thought because the author's name included Russell, it was him under a false name. Because it was so emotional and heart-breaking.' I didn't know what to say to that (I suspect he was also just being nice) because, although *Beautiful Chaos* is, in my eyes at least, the single best thing I've ever written, I'm well aware there's a hundred better *Doctor Who* novels out there written by far more accomplished and talented writers.

I just wanted to write a story about real people coping with real situations against a background of a fantasy

adventure story. I learned to *want* to do that from working with Russell for all those years.

I can never thank him enough for giving me the opportunity to do so. But I'll keep on trying...

Gary Russell
August 2012

ONE DAY...

It was raining up on the hill, the steady patter-patter-patter hitting the vast golfing umbrella like bullets on tin. Truth be told, it was raining everywhere, but up on the hill, here in the allotment, that was the only place Wilfred Mott really cared about it raining right now.

Whenever it rained, he couldn't help but remember. That awful, awful day when *he* had come to the house, bringing Donna with him. Unconscious, unable to remember anything. For her own safety.

Wilf remembered that final sight of the Doctor, soaked in the rain, his face streaked with water, hair drooping, clothes clinging tight to his skinny body. And his eyes, his eyes looked so haunted, so sad, so lost. So, so old. They looked like the eyes of an old man, trapped in a ridiculously young body. So miserable. So alone. So lonely.

Then that marvellous blue box had vanished as Wilf saluted it.

And he'd never seen the Doctor again.

But that didn't stop him looking, up there. Up into the night sky, up into the stars that were only still there because of Donna. Up at the stars that warmed and illuminated countless planets, with countless lives that owed their continued existence to Donna Noble. Who would never know – who *could* never know. Because if she did...

He didn't want to think about that. He didn't entirely understand it; he just trusted the Doctor. With his life. And the Doctor deserved that trust because he had saved them all.

From the spaceships in the sky, from the Christmas star, from that huge great *Titanic*, from the Adipose, the Sontarans and the Daleks.

And those were just the ones he knew about. He knew from Donna, Donna as she had been before, that there were countless more.

He shook his head at the scale of it all. And how small and insignificant he was in comparison. But he didn't really mind about that. Because the honour had been in knowing the Doctor.

He reached into a damp pocket and pulled out an old leather wallet. And from inside that, he pulled out some photographs.

One showed Donna on her wedding day, the wedding that had never happened. Donna believed she had never even made it to the altar because poor Lance had got caught up in that business with the Christmas Star attacking the streets of London. Lance had died then – that was the story he'd told her. Indeed, it was the story Wilf told everyone. And he also told Donna that she had been so traumatised by Lance's death, that she'd gone to Egypt to get over the shock.

Whatever it was that the Doctor had done to her memories made her brain accept the story and find a way to fit it together so she was convinced that was indeed what had happened. Perhaps that was the one good thing that had come out of the 'accident' – her brain did that to cope so, rather than a year or so of blankness, if you put an idea to her, she was able to rationalise it without question. Like a jigsaw where any pieces that didn't fit just reshaped their edges to make sure they did, and formed a slightly different picture but one Donna would never query.

Another picture was of Donna with her mum and dad at her dad's birthday dinner in town. His last birthday as it turned out.

The final photo was of an older woman in a wicker chair, glass of stout in hand, toasting the photographer.

He sighed. So much sadness in the Noble house over the last couple of years.

He put the photos away and took another look through his telescope.

Nothing to see.

‘How’s the night sky?’ asked a voice from behind.

‘Hullo, sweetheart,’ Wilf said, indicating the newcomer should join him under the umbrella. ‘What are you doing here? You’ll catch your death.’

‘Oh, I’m all right, Dad,’ said Sylvia Noble, passing a thermos flask to him. ‘Brought you some tea and a bar of chocolate.’

Wilf gratefully took the flask, and they sat in silence for a while, letting the rain create a symphony above them. Then he unscrewed the thermos and offered it to his daughter. She shook her head.

‘Donna used to do this,’ he muttered.

Sylvia nodded. ‘I know. Maybe I need to jog her memory, and she’ll start again.’

Wilf shrugged sadly. ‘Best not to, eh? Just in case.’

Sylvia changed the subject. ‘No blue boxes in the sky tonight then?’

‘Not today. But one day I’ll see him.’

There was a pause. ‘Does it really matter? After all he did to us?’

‘Yes, love, it does,’ Wilf said. ‘I need to know he’s out there, still watching over us. Watching over the universe. Because then I know that what Donna has suffered was worth it. Because without him, we’re not safe.’

‘That’s a lot of faith to put in one man, Dad,’ Sylvia said quietly. ‘And a lot of responsibility.’

Wilf knew that Sylvia didn’t like the Doctor, and not just because of what had happened to Donna. She felt that if the Doctor had never come to Earth maybe those Dalek things

wouldn't have either. It was an old argument, and the two of them would never agree about it. As a result, they tried not to talk about the Doctor too often.

'He's out there, love. Protecting us. And the Martians. And the Venusians. And God knows who else.' He took a swig of tea. 'You should probably get back in the warm, shouldn't you?'

Sylvia nodded and stood up. 'You going to be much longer?'

'Nah, just want to stay here till eleven, then I'll head back.'

'Donna suggested a drive out to Netty's tomorrow.'

Wilf put his tea down. 'No thanks,' he said quickly.

'Dad, you have to see her some time.' Sylvia reached out and squeezed his hand. 'For your sake if not hers.'

'You shouldn't let Donna go,' Wilf said. 'It's not safe. What if she says something about the Doctor?'

'That's not likely. Even if she does, Donna won't understand and Netty won't be able to explain it.' Sylvia stood up and walked back into the rain. Then she looked back at her old dad. 'We've gone through more heartache than anyone should have to, Dad,' she said quietly. 'Let's not bring any more on ourselves. Please come.'

'I'll think about it. Now go on, before you get a cold.'

Sylvia pointed up to the sky. 'The Doctor would want you to,' she said.

Wilf turned to her with a frown. 'That's beneath you, sweetheart. Please don't.'

Sylvia nodded. 'I'm sorry, Dad.' And she walked back out of the allotments and down the hill.

Wilf watched her receding form until she was out of his view, then unwrapped his chocolate and bit a chunk out of it. He turned for another look through the telescope, cross because Sylvia had invoked the Doctor. Cross because it was a cheap shot. And cross because Sylvia was dead right.

A tear rolled down Wilf's worn cheek.

For so many reasons.

One month after the skies had burned...

FRIDAY

Terry Lockworth checked his mobile, but there was still no signal. Maria was going to be so fed up with him – he'd had to work late but couldn't let her know. No doubt the spag bol would be in the bin tonight. Again. Poor Maria – it wasn't her fault she got fed up with him, but what was he supposed to do. They'd been married three months, had a child on the way (please let it be a girl), and money was tight.

Sure, her dad had given them a deposit for the flat in Boston Manor, but there was still the mortgage, the bills, pre-natal classes, food...

Terry shook his head as he pocketed the phone. Stop moaning, he told himself, and get on with the job, then he'd be home in an hour with any luck. More importantly, he'd be out of this mobile phone black spot in half that, so he could at least phone her then.

He picked up his toolbox and took out the wire-cutters, clipped the plastic coating from the copper wiring and cut the wires. He then yanked the old cables from the junction box and pulled a long thin coil of fibre optics out of the toolbox. These were interesting fibre optics (well, OK, only Terry found them interesting) because they were even finer than normal. A new system, developed by the Americans (aren't they always), and this building was the first in the UK to utilise them. They'd sent Terry on a course in New York six months back to learn about the system. That'd been fun – lots of nights on the town with Johnnie Bates, discovering that it really was the city that never slept. Frequently they'd