the wife has been ASSIGNED

SUE ME BOOKS

The Wife Has Been Assigned...

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INTRODUCTION

Hartlepool, November 2015...

Me: Okay, Sue, what can you tell me about *Sapphire and Steel*?
Sue: Not a lot. You made me watch it once, years ago. It was set in a railway station.
Me: That wasn't me. We watched a completely different story together. Bravo repeated the series in the mid-'90s, and we watched an episode that was set in a high-rise flat. You didn't make it as far as the second episode, for reasons that will become apparent later.
Sue: Well, I definitely remember a train station...
Me: You probably remember it from your childhood. Well, I say childhood; you were 17 when *Sapphire and Steel* was broadcast in 1979. I was only nine.
Sue: Rub it in, why don't you? I was probably out getting drunk when it was on. Or playing badminton. Or both.

I transport my wife back to 1979 with a song. Sapphire and Steel would probably frown at that, but what the hell.

Me: Gary Numan was Number One with 'Are "Friends" Electric?' when *Sapphire and Steel* started.
Sue: I saw him that year at Newcastle City Hall. Best concert I've ever been to. He arrived on stage on this huge platform...
Me: It was on twice a week. Like *EastEnders*. And it was supposed to be ITV's answer to *Doctor Who*. Sort of.
Sue: Was it on ITV? Oh, in that case, I probably saw it when I was getting ready to go out.
Me: So what else do you remember about *Sapphire and Steel*? Apart from the railway station.
Sue: Well, it's got Patsy from *Ab Fab* in it, and one of the men from U.N.C.L.E was in it, too; don't ask me what his name is, though. Mac-something, I think.

Me: Anything else?
Sue: They are basically superheroes with silly code names, like in a Marvel comic. It's something like that. I don't really know. There's definitely a railway station in it, though.
Me: Is there anything about *Sapphire and Steel* that you'd like to know before we begin?
Sue: Yeah. How long is it? And will it be over by Christmas?

ADVENTURE ONE

Episode One

Sue: Could these titles be any cheaper? They aren't even straight. (*Shaking her head*) Seriously, is this really the best they could do?

Sapphire and Steel*'s first episode begins in a farmhouse kitchen.*

Sue: Ooh, I like that table. Yeah, that table is absolutely gorgeous.

As Sue admires the woodwork, a young boy concentrates on his homework. Or he would if his house wasn't so bloody loud.

Sue: What's with all the clocks? They'd drive me crazy if I had to listen to them all day.
Me: I bet that poor kid can't wait for digital watches to be invented, so he can enjoy some peace and quiet for a change.

The boy's parents are upstairs in his sister's bedroom.

Sue: How is that supposed to send her to sleep, exactly? They're encouraging her to jump up and down on her bed. Are they mad?
Me: Says the woman who let her five-year-old daughter stay up all night watching *The Breakfast Club*.

And then the clocks stop. All of them. At the same time.

Sue: Finally! Peace, perfect peace!

The boy examines one of the timepieces, which has suddenly fallen silent.

Sue: Don't wind them up again, son! Actually, this is a bit scary. I mean, one or two clocks stopping at the same time is bad enough, but all of

them? What are the chances? Is this why the house is full of clocks? Is it to ram that effect home? It's a bit over-the-top. They could have done the same thing with just a couple of clocks. Unless the clock fetish becomes important later on.

The boy is distracted by a strange noise emanating from his sister's bedroom.

Sue: Wasn't he in Flintlock?
Me: Wrong show, love.

And then the real title sequence kicks in...

Me: So what did you think of that?
Sue: It was pretty good. It was a bit cheesy, but it explains what's going on.
Me: (*Amazed*) It does?
Sue: Yeah, they're superheroes named after elements.
Me: Sapphire and Steel aren't elements, though.
Sue: But Silver is.
Me: Yeah, I know. It's fucking complicated.
Sue: The music's good, though.

The boy, whose name is Rob, realises that his parents are missing.

Sue: Have they been abducted by aliens? Are Sapphire and Steel like Mulder and Scully? Is that it? Are they Space Cops? Do they work for the government? Are they like Torchwood? And does Joanna Lumley always wear blue?

Sapphire and Steel have arrived.

Me: Yes, Sapphire always wears blue. The clue's in her name, Sue.
Sue: I was only asking. Don't be so tetchy.

Steel urges the boy to tell him everything that's happened so far. And he isn't very nice about it.

Sue: He's a bit rough with these kids. He's definitely the bad Space Cop, and she's definitely the good Space Cop.

Rob is aggrieved to put it mildly.

Sue: He's a good little actor. Why didn't they cast him as Adric? This is the same time as Adric, isn't it? He would have been a million times better than what they ended up with.
Me: And he isn't even that good.
Sue: I think he's doing a great job considering how weird this is.

Sapphire and Steel tell Rob and Helen that their parents have been abducted by, well, time monsters, basically.

Sue: That's going to make them feel better. Is this Sapphire and Steel's first assignment? Because they aren't very good at this.

Steel asks Helen to re-enact the exact moment her parents vanished.

Sue: He's bloody horrible to her. She's only a kid. Are you sure Sapphire and Steel didn't abduct their parents? I wouldn't put it past them. Especially him.

Steel doesn't have time for any pleasantries as he methodically pieces together what happened.

Sue: I could imagine Paul Darrow playing this part. Do you know what I mean? He's dishy and heartless at the same time. He's like Sherlock. He doesn't have any empathy.

Steel commands Sapphire to recite the nursery rhyme that Helen's parents were reading to her when they disappeared.

Sue: He's a right old bossy boots, isn't he?

Sapphire recites the rhyme, and just as the tension becomes unbearable, there's a sudden knock at the door.

Sue: Fuck me! I got the fright of my life!

Visions from the past suddenly invade the present, altering the dimensions of the bedroom itself.

Sue: What the hell is going on, Neil?

Steel tells Sapphire to tear the rhyme out of the book and burn it.

Sue: But give us a kiss first. I tell you what, Neil, there's quite a bit of sexual tension in this scene.

Rob finds Sapphire in the kitchen.

Sue: And now it's turned into *Bewitched*. Hang on a minute. I thought you said she always wore blue, Neil? Her dress is yellow... And now it's red!

Sapphire can change her appearance at will.

Sue: She's showing off, now. And she's fucking with this poor kid's head at the same time. *Who are these people?*

Steel tells Rob that the corridor of time is infested with beings who are desperately trying to break into our reality, and they used an old nursery rhyme as a key.

Sue: If only they'd explained this to the little girl. Oh dear...

Helen recites the nursery rhyme to herself in her bedroom. Sapphire and Steel race upstairs to stop her, but the door slams shut in their faces. Cue credits.

Sue: That was ridiculously scary! What time did this go out?
Me: 7pm.
Sue: Don't be stupid!
Me: I'm serious!
Sue: That's insane. This is too scary for me, let alone any kids watching.
Me: It's been 35 years, and I'm still getting over it.
Sue: I hate ghosts and supernatural things like this. If all the episodes are like this, I'm going to be in trouble.

Episode Two

Sue: How many episodes are set in this house?
Me: I'm not telling you.
Sue: In that case, there must be loads. I can read you like a book.

After the recap, the title sequence rolls again.

Me: They didn't have computer graphics back then. This is all animated by hand, Sue.
Sue: You could probably knock something like this up at home in a few hours today. I like it, though. It's got a certain charm to it, and I love the music. It really gets you in the mood... No, not that kind of mood, Neil.

Sapphire opens the bedroom door with her 'superpower', and Steel keeps the malevolent force at bay by sacrificing Helen's teddy to it.

Sue: What a heartless git. I bet she loved that bear.

The room's dimensions begin to distort as voices from the past echo through the house.

Sue: The LSD you put in my tea is definitely kicking in, Neil.
Me: It's very atmospheric, don't you think?
Sue: It's as atmospheric as fuck! It's scaring the shit out of me! The direction is really bizarre and unsettling. It's even more scary because it

doesn't look like normal telly. Everything is slightly off.

Steel barricades the bedroom door with several planks of wood.

Sue: Is he preparing for some kind of zombie attack?

It then becomes apparent Rob and Helen are cut off from the outside world because they live on an island.

Sue: As if this wasn't scary enough, now they tell us that they can't even leave! Bloody hell. How many episodes is this, Neil? I don't think my heart can take it.

Rob tries to make a run for it.

Sue: He's very smart for a boy so young.
Me: I bet he's got a badge for mathematical excellence and everything.

Rob's pathetic bid for freedom amuses Steel.

Sue: I can't believe he actually smiled. Well, almost.
Me: He's great, though, isn't he? David McCallum, I mean.
Sue: Oh, definitely. You can't take your eyes off him. He oozes charisma. He would have been a good Doctor Who.
Me: He's blonde, so he could have replaced Peter Davison.
Sue: Actually, forget I said anything.

Sapphire and Steel tell Rob he'll have to put up with them if he wants to see his parents again.

Sue: I don't care what this show is called, I'm on Rob's side. Sapphire and Steel are as scary as fuck! I don't trust them at all.

Sapphire persuades Helen to take her side.

Sue: And she's supposed to be the nice one!

A policeman arrives to investigate Rob's 999 call, but he vanishes as soon as the boy opens the door.

Sue: Are you sure Sapphire and Steel aren't the bad guys, Neil? I mean, are you *absolutely* sure?

And then the policeman arrives again. And again. And again.

Sue: Has Sapphire put him in a time loop? You know, I'm certain that's the sort of thing the bad guys do. Okay, she's doing it with a smile, but I'm not sure if that makes it worse or not.

Sapphire's powers allow her to extend moments in time.

Sue: That must come in handy when she's having an orgasm. Don't write that down, Neil.

The policeman is released from the time loop and Steel persuades him to leave.

Sue: So, every time you experience *deja vu*, it's because some fucker has stuck you in a time loop? It's clever, this. But why don't they just wind back time to a point *before* Rob's parents were taken?

Rob asks exactly the same question.

Sue: They should have called this show *Rob*. He's great.
Me: If only he'd slept with John Nathan-Turner...

Steel asks Rob to show him his father's office.

Sue: His interpersonal skills definitely need work. Fish fingers and custard – that's how you get small children to trust you. Everybody knows that.

A sense of pervading dread percolates through the house.

Sue: This is a show that isn't afraid to linger on some stairs. That takes guts. Even back then, it must have taken guts. I love it, even though it's terrifying.

Sapphire can identify the age of any given object.

Sue: Now that's a superpower I'd like to have. She'd make an absolute fortune on *Bargain Hunt*.

Steel wants the office stripped bare.

Sue: I love the flagstones on the kitchen floor. This looks incredible considering it's a studio set. I'm really impressed.

Rob's mother calls to her son through the barricaded door.

Sue: That isn't your mam! Don't be daft, lad. And you were doing so well.

But Rob can't resist his mother's voice, and he places his head next to the door.

Sue: No, Rob! Run!

And then a couple of roundheads from the English Civil barge their way into the bedroom. Cue credits.

Sue: What the fuck?

Episode Three

Sue: These recaps go on for ever. The episodes themselves must only be 15 minutes long.

The entity from the corridor of time (I think that's right) is represented by a white light on the floor.

Sue: It's the Mysterons!

Amazingly, Sue doesn't have a problem with this 'special' effect.

Sue: It's as low budget as it's possible to get, but it still works. Leaving it to your imagination makes it scarier, somehow.
Me: Good.
Sue: And I've seen every episode of *Doctor Who*, so my standards are pretty low. And you can't go wrong with clocks. The sound of ticking clocks is always scary. It isn't rocket science, you know.

This particular entity uses nursery rhymes to break into our reality.

Sue: Programme makers didn't give a shit about the effect this would have on kids in the 1970s, did they? I mean, making nursery rhymes scary before the watershed is just asking for trouble, isn't it? I bet there were a few wet beds that night.
Me: Don't look at me.

Sapphire believes that history has gone wrong.

Sue: I'm confused.

Whereas Steel thinks the entity is confusing them on purpose.

Sue: That doesn't help.

And then Sapphire finds herself trapped in a painting. As you do.

Sue: What a nice room. I love the wooden beams. I wouldn't mind being trapped in a room like that.

But the room is the scene of a terrible crime. A crime Sapphire will become part of if she doesn't escape.

Sue: I have absolutely no idea what's going on.

Sapphire tries to return time to a moment before she ended up in the painting. And fails miserably. "It's no good," she cries. "It's in here with me!"

Me: At 7pm, Sue. Can you believe it? 7pm!
Sue: I'm speechless. Fucking hell. I'm exhausted after watching that, and nothing actually happened!

Steel heads to the fridge freezer.

Sue: It's too late for fish fingers and custard now, mate. Actually, the girl who plays Helen reminds me of Amy Pond, and her parents were missing as a weird alien stole things from her kitchen. Do you think Steven Moffat has ever seen *Sapphire and Steel*?
Me: I think he's probably aware of it, yes.

There are now two entities loose in the house.

Sue: Ooh, two lights on the floor. They're really pushing the boat out.

Steel takes the fridge freezer apart.

Sue: He's just like the Doctor. A mardy Doctor. I bet he reverses the polarity or something like that.

Steel freezes the painting and Sapphire is saved in the nick of time.

Sue: This is too scary for me.

She reaches for my hand, instead of the usual cushion, as the roundheads break into our reality, determined to complete their grisly task.

Sue: What the fuck?

Cue credits.

Episode Four

Sue: I can't believe they threatened Sapphire with hanging *and* decapitation. This programme isn't pulling its punches. And if these recaps were any longer, I'd begin to suspect that I'd been trapped in a time loop, as well.

After the title sequence, which Sue attempts to sing along to (with limited success), Steel freezes the attacking soldiers and they vanish into thin air, screaming.

Sue: Has he broken time by doing this? If that murder never happened, doesn't that mess things up? Who does he think he is? Doctor bloody Who?

Sapphire tells Rob that Steel reduced his temperature to minus-273.1 degrees, which Rob immediately knows is as near to absolute zero as makes no odds.

Me: He's definitely got a badge for mathematical excellence.
Sue: What a waste.

Steel, who is now freezing to death, needs some time to recover.

Sue: Make him a Cup-a-Soup. Or some hoops. That's what you did in the 1970s, especially when the boiler stopped working.

Sapphire asks Helen to lead Steel to the kitchen, although she mustn't touch him under any circumstances.

Sue: Er, I think he knows the way, so why put her in unnecessary danger

like that? That's just crazy.

Helen leads Steel to the kitchen.

Sue: If she's really lucky, he'll make her some ice cream. You know, to make up for being a grumpy git earlier.

Sapphire tells Rob that there are 127 different elements like them.

Sue: I thought you said they weren't elements, Neil?
Me: They aren't. Steel is an alloy. I only know this shit because I looked it up before we started.
Sue: They obviously didn't have access to Wikipedia when they wrote this. Bless them.

Steel corrects Sapphire, stating that there are actually only 115 elements like them because all the transuranic elements are unstable.

Sue: Racist.
Me: There are actually 118 elements, but who's counting? And transuranic elements include Uranium and Californium.
Sue: Whatever you say, love.

And then Sapphire and Steel receive some unexpected back-up.

Sue: It's Shaft!

It's Lead, actually.

Sue: Of course it is. I should have guessed. Lead is definitely an element.
Me: Atomic number 82.
Sue: Oh do shut up, Neil.

Lead offers to help Steel.

Sue: It's basically like Marvel's *Avengers*, this. You could imagine Lead and, I don't know... Radium having their own show and crossing over into this one. Did that ever happen?
Me: No, but if their show existed, I bet the soundtrack would have included wah-wah guitars.

Lead is famished, so he tucks into a hearty meal before he takes on the forces of evil.

Sue: That's a Vista curry. They were state of the art back then. I can still remember the smell.

Lead tells Steel that Jet sends her love.

Sue: What? Her off *Gladiators*?

Sapphire serves up dessert.

Sue: A nice Sara Lee cake. This is so Seventies, it hurts.

With dinner out of the way, Lead is finally ready to help Steel.

Sue: I suppose having a black guy as a good guy with actual words to say was quite progressive back then. It undermines Sapphire and Steel if they have to call for help this quickly, though.

Lead removes a painting from the wall and places it back against the wall.

Sue: How is that going to help, exactly? It's still a painting and you can still see it. It's just lower down the wall. I don't get it.

Lead tells Rob that he once helped Sapphire and Steel deal with another assignment on a ship. A ship called the Mary Celeste.

Sue: I thought it was going to be the *Titanic*. But it's the same thing.

Me: It can't be the *Mary Celeste*. The Daleks were responsible for that.
Sue: Maybe Sapphire, Lead and Steel cleared up after the Daleks. Maybe the Daleks made a hole in time and they had to fix it.
Me: Have you heard yourself, Sue?
Sue: You made me this way, Neil.

Meanwhile Sapphire and Helen are burning books in the kitchen when one of the tomes comes to life.

Sue: Just when you thought they couldn't make this any scarier, they decide to make children's books evil as well. Yeah, nice one, ITV.

Helen recites the rhyme, seemingly against her will.

Sue: Just slap her!

And then all hell breaks loose. Quite literally.

Sue: Is this before or after *Poltergeist*?
Me: Before.
Sue: It's definitely tapping into something popular back then. There was a little girl in that film, too. And is she supposed to be laughing in this scene, or is that an outtake?

This episode concludes like all the rest – with people screaming at something incomprehensible.

Sue: What the fuck?

Episode Five

Sue is convinced that the malignant entity is the least of our heroes' problems.

Sue: That stair carpet hasn't been tacked down properly. It's an accident

waiting to happen. Just imagine if they defeat this evil spirit, but then they break their necks traipsing down the stairs. That would be embarrassing.

But by far the most dangerous element in this story is Steel. And he isn't even an element.

Sue: He's pure evil. That little girl has just lost her parents and he's having a go at her for clinging to Sapphire. What a git. That's even worse than Jon Pertwee's sandwich! He's only happy when he's bossing people around. I don't like him *at all*.

As the story begins to tread water, Sue's mind wanders.

Sue: I'd love a kitchen like this.
Me: A haunted one?
Sue: If it meant I'd get flagstones like that, yeah, sure, why not?

Helen is beginning to do Sue's head in.

Sue: I can't understand a word she says. I can't tell if it's because she's supposed to be traumatised, or if it's because she can't act. Maybe it's a bit of both.

When a door mysteriously opens by itself, Rob decides to investigate, broomstick in hand.

Sue: Who does he think he is? Harry Potter?

Rob finds his father waiting for him.

Sue: And if he believes that, he'll believe anything.

Rob's father tells him that he's been hiding with his mother all this time.

Sue: Is this some kind of weird insurance job? Is that it?

Meanwhile Steel and Lead are hunting for sentient spots of light in a pile of dusty books.

Sue: If I was a circle of light trying to keep a low profile, I think I'd hide in a lampshade. It's the last place anyone would think of looking for me.

And then, as Lead puts his friendly giant shtick on hold for a few seconds so he can discuss the plot with Steel, Sue gives up.

Sue: How are children supposed to follow this? Are you following this, Neil?
Me: Erm...
Sue: I thought not.

Rob's 'father' leads him into the cellar.

Sue: This POV shot is amazing. I can't fault this programme's atmosphere and style; if only I knew what the fuck was going on. Even just a little bit.

When Sapphire and Steel follow Rob, they discover the door to the cellar has been locked. So Lead opens it with a hearty laugh. Cue credits.

Sue: Eh? That wasn't a cliffhanger. What the fuck was that?

Episode Six

Me: Don't worry, love. This is the last episode, I promise.
Sue: I hope they spend it explaining what the hell is going on. Because I haven't got a clue.

Steel enters the cellar, but not before he tells Helen to sit the fuck down.

Sue: Bossy arse.

Meanwhile Rob's 'father' is still trying to convince his son to join him.

Sue: How come Sapphire and Steel can't hear them arguing? They can't be more than a few yards away from them at this point.
Me: I think they might be in another time zone. Or something.
Sue: *Eh?* Since when?

Rob's 'mother' appears in the cellar, with her back to Rob, facing the corner of the room.

Sue: It's turned into *Blair Witc*h, now. I suppose that director saw this as well.
Me: Possibly. *Sapphire and Steel* is a very influential programme.
Sue: Well, *Blair Witch* didn't make any sense either, so yes, I can believe that.

Lead decides to check on Helen.

Sue: He's off to cop another feel.
Me: Sue!
Sue: He's far too touchy-feely for my liking. He can't stop kissing her. It's a bit odd if you ask me. Bloody Seventies. You look at everything differently now, and always assume the worst. They'd never do anything like that in a script today, that's for sure.

Rob is trapped in the past, so Lead sings a sea shanty to him. Because, you know... reasons.

Sue: Stop pissing about, Lead, you're supposed to be working.

Sapphire forces the lights to manifest themselves in Rob's time zone.

Sue: How the hell is she doing that, exactly? And why didn't she do that before, when they were searching for the lights in the books? They're just making this up as they go along.

And then, just as Sue thinks about throwing in the towel, Steel begins to

question Rob (or at least the voice that's pretending to be Rob).

Sue: Okay, this scene is excellent. Mainly because I can actually follow it. Well, the basic gist of it, anyway.

Written on the house's foundation stone are the words: Jed Mace, 2 February 1736.

Sue: There's a typo on that stone. It says Febrvary instead of February.
Me: Really, Sue? *Really?*

History has never been Sue's strong suit.

Sue: Be honest with me, Neil – are you actually following this?
Me: Nope. Not even a bit. Sorry.

Steel wants to use Helen as bait.

Sue: I'm not surprised. I bet he'll sacrifice her if he has to. You can tell he doesn't really care about her.

Helen recites a nursery rhyme as she walks through the house.

Sue: It should be *The House That* Jed *Built*, not Jack, but never mind. And this poor kid is going to be messed up for the rest of her life.
Me: The actress?
Sue: No, the character. Even if she survives this, she'll be in therapy for years.

Helen's 'mother' begs her to stop. Thankfully, Sapphire is on hand to keep the girl on track.

Sue: I don't buy this at all. She trusts the weird woman with the glowing eyes who she's only just met, but she won't trust her own mother. Yeah, right. Bullshit.

The episode concludes when... Well... Let's see... Okay, right... So the spots of light end up trapped in the foundation stone, which Steel freezes with his powers before Lead stops giggling long enough to destroy it with his bare hands.

Me: Don't look at me!
Sue: Fuck's sake...

Rob wakes up at the kitchen table with his homework sprawled in front of him.

Sue: Don't tell me it was all a dream!
Me: Rob's been at the Dairy Lea Triangles again.

Rob finds his mother and father reading to Helen in her room as if nothing has happened. But we know better because Sapphire, Steel and Lead have all congregated on the landing so they can hand the girl's teddy bear back to her.

Sue: So Sapphire and Steel are basically the Ghostbusters, but without any of the jokes. Right, okay...

The Score

Sue: What do you want me to compare it to?
Me: I don't know. *Doctor Who*?
Sue: Which one? You can't compare that to a William Hartnell story, even though it did go on and on and on and on and...
Me: Compare it to one of the scary Tom Baker ones, then.
Sue: Well, in that case, I'll give it:

4/10

Me: Really? Is that all?
Sue: Look, I enjoyed some of it. Joanna Lumley was brilliant, and so

was David McCallum, even if his character was an evil bastard. But it didn't work as a television programme. It made no sense whatsoever. As a viewer, I feel cheated by it. I sat through three hours of that and I'm still none the wiser. And kids were supposed to follow it? Don't make me laugh! Yes, it was atmospheric, and some of was pretty scary, but as a piece of television, it was a complete failure.

Me: There isn't an official title for this story because the writer couldn't be bothered to write anything down. So what do you think we should call it?

Sue: Oh, that's easy: *Nursery Crime*.

ASSIGNMENT TWO

Episode One

Sue: Is this a train station? It is! It's a train station! I've seen this before.
Me: I know. So what do you remember about it?
Sue: Erm... I think it's about a haunted train.
Me: A ghost train?
Sue: Yeah. And there's something to do with a clock, as well, I think. Or maybe it's a scary waiting room. I can't remember. It's definitely scary, though.

A man named Tully is setting up some equipment in an abandoned railway station.

Sue: This place would be a great doer-upper.
Me: Apart from the fact that it's haunted, you mean.
Sue: I wouldn't worry too much about that; you'd get it dirt cheap.

Tully places candles at strategic points around the station.

Sue: (*Laughing*) Oh dear, they faded the lights up before he managed to light that candle, bless them.

Tully takes his time.

Sue: You'd never see anything like this on a television show nowadays, a man wandering around an abandoned train station for five minutes with no dialogue whatsoever. It was a different time back then, wasn't it? No one is in any rush to get this party started.

Sue finally realises what Tully is up to.

Sue: So he's a Ghostbuster? Is that it?

Me: Who you gonna call?
Sue: Er... this guy? He reminds me of the Crazy Russian Life Hacker.
Me: The what?
Sue: The Crazy Russian Life Hacker. Don't tell me you've never heard of the Crazy Russian Life Hacker, Neil! He's on *YouTube* and he shows you how to survive a zombie apocalypse with coat hangers and stuff like that. He's brilliant.

Tully uses a coat hanger to set-up a reel-to-reel tape recorder.

Sue: We used to have one of those. Me and my brother Gary used to record stuff on it, and then we'd play it backwards to see if we could hear any spirits.
Me: And did you?
Sue: Yeah. All the time. Or at least we convinced ourselves that we did.

A mysterious figure walks towards Tully as the theme music kicks in...

Sue: Do you know what this episode needs?
Me: What?
Sue: Ray Parker Jr.

Sue decides that the iconic title sequence needs improvement.

Sue: Who the fuck is Silver? And what are they doing in the middle like that?
Me: Eh?
Sue: The mysterious voice says, "Sapphire, Silver and Steel". Silver ruins it. The voice should say, "Sapphire and Steel!" instead. It isn't rocket science, you know.

The mysterious figure approaching Tully is, of course, Steel. He tells the amateur ghost hunter that he's from the Other Side.

Sue: What? The BBC?

Sapphire, meanwhile, approaches the station via its platform.

Sue: The set is amazing. They've done a brilliant job. I'm almost convinced that this is a real train station. And there's something else I've noticed as well.
Me: Oh yeah? What's that?
Sue: Steel is tiny! Sapphire towers over him! I bet he's got short man syndrome.

Meanwhile, on the platform outside, a darkness descends.

Sue: It reminds me of the black fog from *Lost*.
Me: It'll probably make as much sense as the fog from *Lost*, too.
Sue: The only thing about this station that isn't very realistic is there should be a giant cock and balls on the wall.
Me: I beg your pardon?
Sue: You know, graffiti. An abandoned train station in the 1970s and there's no graffiti anywhere. The place should be full of it.
Me: Maybe the ghosts scared Banksy away.
Sue: The direction is excellent, though. It's quite tense, this.

Sapphire and Steel have been assigned to track down a malevolent force.

Sue: Who sends them on these missions, exactly? Do we ever find out? I need to know.

Steel asks Sapphire to ascertain whether Tully is human or not. He'd do it himself but he's not equipped for the task.

Sue: Sapphire does everything! Steel just wanders around the place, scowling at people. I hope the people who send them on these missions pay her more than him.

Tully settles down to a heavy night of ghost hunting.

Sue: Why was everything tartan back in the 1970s? Tartan flasks, tartan shawls, tartan slippers... What the hell was that all about, eh?

Sapphire confirms Tully is indeed human. She also claims that his life expectancy is 57.03 years.

Sue: And he doesn't look a day over 57 years and two months. Oh dear.

Tully is quite taken with Sapphire.

Sue: Jesus! Why is it that men – no matter how old they are – always fancy their bloody chances? Unbelievable!
Me: Give the guy a break. I bet he only spends the night in abandoned railway stations so he can escape from his loveless marriage.
Sue: Really? I usually play tennis.

Steel removes his coat to reveal he's dressed in a tuxedo.

Sue: Either he's planning on going out to dinner after solving this – whatever this is – or he thinks he's James Bond. A really tiny James Bond.

Sapphire continues to perform all the heavy lifting. Not only can she detect the sounds and smells of summer on the platform, even though it's the middle of October, she can hear a military band in the distance, too. Steel, on the other hand, can't detect shit.

Sue: Even Tully can hear that band, and he's 57.02 years old.

The episode concludes with Sapphire trapped on the platform, dressed in Edwardian clothing.

Sue: That was really good. It was a bit slow, but everything was slow back then.
Me: Does it live up to your memory of it?
Sue: I remember it being a lot scarier than that, but give it a chance.

Episode Two

Steel telepathically urges Sapphire to leave the platform before it's too late.

Sue: Just walk outside and grab her, you lazy git.
Me: I don't think it's as easy as that. I think she's trapped in time.
Sue: What? Again? You'd think she'd be used to this by now.

Tully tugs on the handle to the station door, which is now mysteriously locked.

Sue: (*Laughing*) Don't pull it too hard! The set almost came down.

A soldier appears on the station platform – and he very isn't very happy about it. Probably because he's dead. We know he's dead because we're subjected to a flashback, which suggests that his passing was both bloody and painful.

Sue: Not for kids! Bloody hell, that was horrific!

Sapphire refers to the soldier as an after-image.

Sue: For some reason, *After-Image Busters* never really caught on. I don't know why they don't call it a ghost and be done with it.

This minor quibble notwithstanding, Sue is completely gripped by this story. Rather worryingly, she's bitten her nails down to the bone and there's still another three hours left to go.

Sue: It's really well done, this. The direction is very simple, but it's extremely effective. Most of the effects are done in-camera, too, with simple lighting techniques. It just goes to show that you don't need fancy computer graphics to scare the shit out of people. No wonder I can still remember this after all these years. It still holds up today. This is much better than the first story, too.

Sue feels sorry for the ghost. Sorry: after-image.

Sue: It isn't his fault he was killed. I'd be resentful too if it happened to me. I don't see why Sapphire and Steel think he's evil. The worst thing he's done so far is to plant some nice flowers.

Tully feels much the same way as Sue.

Sue: I love this guy.

She's still conflicted when it comes to Steel, though.

Sue: He's definitely a lot like Avon. Paul Darrow could have played this part, and vice versa. This was around the same time as *Blake's 7*, wasn't it? There must have been something in the air to come up with so many charming anti-heroes. There's a smug, dangerous vibe to both of them.
Me: So does this mean you're going to start fancying David McCallum as well?
Sue: Don't worry, Neil. He's a bit too short for me.

Steel listens to a tape-recording that Tully made just before they arrived. After some preamble where Tully tries to communicate with a ghost, it suddenly switches to the sound of someone breathing very heavily indeed.

Sue: I bet he wishes he'd turned his recorder off when he went to the toilet, now.

What Tully captured was the after-image (after-sound?) of a conversation between two sailors slowly suffocating to death in a submarine.

Sue: Try getting your head around that while you're having your tea, kids.

Steel sends Sapphire upstairs to see if she can detect anything malevolent.

Sue: There she goes again, doing all the hard work while Steel just bosses

everyone around. Typical.

When Sapphire reaches the top of the stairs she feels like she's floating high above the clouds.

Sue: That was brilliantly done. This is a masterclass in how to create atmosphere and tension in a TV studio with just a couple of simple lighting changes. I can't get over how good this looks.

Steel realises the force they're up against has turned the railway station into a recruiting station for the dead.

Sue: I don't know what that means but it sounds great.
Me: An army of ghosts sounds impressive. I just hope it doesn't turn out to be a pile of shit.

Steel retires to another room to listen to another batch of Tully's tapes.

Sue: Do you think they'll explain why somebody has drawn four number 11s in the dust on that window? I can't work out what it means and it's starting to piss me off.

The episode concludes when Steel is suddenly transported into the cockpit of a military plane that's about to crash. The programme-makers achieved this feat with nothing more than a Dutch-titled camera, a dazzling light and some rather unsettling sound effects.

Sue: That was brilliant. Come on, Neil, let's watch the rest of them tonight. I want to know what happens next.
Me: We can't. We have to be up early tomorrow.
Sue: It's only 10.30am.
Me: Like I said, we've got an early start.

And that's when Sue had the biggest scare of the night.

Sue: Eight episodes? EIGHT?! But that's longer than a bloody Quentin Tarantino film! Fuck!

Episode Three

The next day, during the title sequence...

Sue: So is this the voice of God?
Me: Erm... possibly.
Sue: Is he supposed to be like Charlie from *Charlie's Angels*? Is that it? An omnipotent Charlie?
Me: Yeah, that's exactly it, Sue.

Meanwhile, back in the haunted railway station...

Sue: Tully's a bit of a stalker, isn't he? He can't take his bloody eyes off Sapphire, the poor woman.

At one point, Tully offers to protect Sapphire from imminent danger as they prepare to open a door.

Sue: That's hilarious. I love the way she sends him away to perform a stupid errand, just so she can have five minutes to herself without him leering at her.

Sapphire finds Steel slumped over a desk. But is it really *Steel?*

Sue: He's regenerated. Either that or David McCallum was ill and they had to replace him.

Steel has been replaced by another actor (David Cann to be precise).

Me: It's the doctor from *Jam*!
Sue: I hated that programme.
Me: You didn't understand it.

Sue: I don't understand this but I'm still enjoying it.

Sapphire takes back time – which results in her falling through the clouds with a clearly terrified David Cann.

Sue: I haven't got a clue what just happened, but it looked amazing.

When Steel returns from a fate worse than death, he kisses Sapphire's hand.

Sue: Oooh... Some sexual tension at last. Tully will be well jealous.

Steel asks Tully to light the lamps in the train station, even though they haven't worked in years. Tully fails to light the first lamp and gives up. And then, a few seconds later, all the lamps are mysteriously lit.

Sue: How did he do that, exactly?
Me: I have absolutely no idea.
Sue: But aren't we supposed to know? Don't you care, Neil?
Me: It's... enigmatic.
Sue: It's bloody irritating.

At least they attempt to explain the four 11s written on the station's window. Sapphire points out that Great War ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. But that still leaves another 11 unaccounted for.

Sue: Maybe the fourth 11 refers to the fact there are 11 ghosts? Or maybe it was the 11th second of the 11th hour? Maybe these ghosts have digital watches.

Steel wants Tully to sing for him, mainly because he believes it will annoy the ghost in the process. Tully refuses.

Sue: I bet he wouldn't refuse if Sapphire asked him to sing. Just saying.

Steel eventually cajoles Tully into a joyless rendition of Pack Up Your

Troubles In Your Old Kit-Bag.
Sue: That's a very Doctor-ish thing to do, isn't it? Steel's acting very like a mardy Peter Davison in this one.

And then, just as Sue settles back in her chair, the soldier suddenly – and completely unexpectedly – appears a few inches from Sapphire's face.

Sue: SHIT! I got the fright of my life then! Fuck!

Not only does the song cause the resentful soldier to reappear on the platform, he brings a submachine gun with him and the station is peppered with a hail of bullets. When it's all over, Steel is left staring into space, clenching his fists.

Sue: Oh dear. He's bloody furious now.

Steel realises that Tully and Sapphire have taken the place of two submariners who are slowly suffocating to death. Look, it's complicated.

Sue: I'm sorry, Neil, but am I actually supposed to understand this? How did kids manage to follow this?
Me: I think *Look-In* magazine used to produce free flow-charts that explained the plot. You could hang them on your bedroom wall.
Sue: Really?
Me: No.

The episode concludes with Steel holding a 1940s tank-top out in from of him.

Sue: Right. Okay. So that's the cliffhanger, is it? It isn't exactly a Dalek, but okay.

Episode Four

While Sapphire and Tully slowly suffocate to death, Steel decides to annoy

the ghost who's causing it.

Sue: What the hell is he doing? Get a bloody move on! They're dying!

Sue begins to worry that Steel is enjoying his job far too much.

Sue: I'm sure pissing off this ghost isn't the best way to go about things. Not when your partner is being tortured to death. What's he playing at?

Steel enters the part of the station that is now a submarine. Like I said, it's complicated...

Sue: He should have brought a garden hose with him.
Me: What?
Sue: You know, a hosepipe. He could have left one end in the railway station, and then they could have sucked in the fresh air from the other time zone.
Me: Right. That almost makes sense, I suppose. Almost.

Sapphire and Tully are slowly becoming the victims of a terrible naval disaster.

Sue: It's very clever, this. And very disturbing, too. It's giving me the creeps.

Steel saves Tully and Sapphire, but he has to leave the original victims to their grisly fate.

Sue: Bloody hell, it's a bit grim, this.

Steel is triumphant.

Sue: What's he so pleased about? He hasn't solved a damn thing. All he's done is piss off the fucking ghost. We're four episodes into this and we're still no further forward.

Steel decides to give Tully a bollocking for mucking about with things he doesn't understand.

Sue: Steel is a massive arsehole.

So our intrepid heroes decide to mount a séance.

Sue: Did they ever release a *Sapphire and Steel* Ouija board? They missed a trick if they didn't.
Me: Did you ever use a Ouija board when you were young?
Sue: Yeah, all the time. My mam used to tell me off because it wasn't a very Catholic thing to do. She said it was dangerous, too, although nothing like this ever happened when I tried it.

Our heroes retire to the buffet to summon the dead.

Sue: The actor who plays Tully is brilliant. What's he been in before?

Luckily for me, I'd already done some research on this.

Me: Well Gerald James was in *Yus, My Dear*.
Sue: Oh...
Me: But don't hold that against him. He was in *All Creatures Great and Small* as well. And loads of other things.

Sue: He's wonderful.

Sapphire is possessed by a dead submariner.

Sue: I don't mean to be funny, Neil, but there are times when Joanna Lumley looks like a man.
Me: (*Spitting out my tea*) WHAT?
Sue: She looks like a man in drag. It's her build, I expect. Do you know what I mean? Can you see what I'm saying?

Unfortunately for me, now that she mentions it, I can see what she's saying.

Sue: I bet she's got big hands, too.

It doesn't help that Joanna Lumley is currently impersonating an angry, young man who resents being killed on a submarine, especially as was killed as a result of negligence rather than warfare.

Sue: Oh, I see. Somebody fucked up. That's why these people are so angry – it's as if the ghosts have joined a union or something.

And then, as Sapphire possesses the spirit of the soldier's girlfriend, the episode just... stops.

Sue: Do you think the production team had the faintest idea what was going on? And if they didn't, did they care?

Episode Five

Sapphire channels a dead schoolteacher.

Sue: What's wrong with her voice?
Me: Nothing. She's doing a Cornish accent.
Sue: Is she? Well, in that case, let's just say that her Cornish accent is almost as good as Nicola Bryant's American accent, and let's leave it at that.

Tully goes ballistic when the séance's circle is broken. When it comes to séances, this is the golden rule, apparently.

Sue: How does he know all this stuff, exactly? Did he go on a course or something? What a load of bollocks.

After a great deal of coercion, we discover that the dead soldier's name was Sam Pearce.

Sue: Hallelujah! It's only taken them two hours, but we finally have a name. Okay, so now what? *Wikipedia* doesn't exist yet so I don't know how this will help them.

Sam remembers the marshes of his childhood...

Sue: And now it's turned into fucking *Springwatch*.

And as he reminisces about his sweetheart, he begins to reel off the names of birds: warblers, wee buntings, yellow wagtails....

Sue: But he was mainly interested in tits, if you know what I mean.

It turns out that Sam was killed 11 minutes after the Armistice came into effect.

Sue: Fair enough – I'd be pissed off too – but, you know, shit happens.

We are told that the Darkness has struck a deal with the ghosts.

Sue: They sound like the Shadows from *Babylon 5*. Maybe they're cousins or something. When do we learn more about them, and what they're actually trying to do?
Me: Er... Wait and see.

I'm sure the mooted remake will explain everything.

Sue: It's a tense episode, this. I can't get over how something so cheap can be so effective. It must have cost about 12p.

Steel spends the next five minutes antagonising Sam Pearce.

Sue: Steel is horrible. And what makes it even worse is that he enjoys being horrible. You can understand why the ghosts would make a deal with the so-called Darkness if Steel was the alternative. If he just

pretended to care, he'd get a lot further with them, you know.

As Steel tries to reason with the ghost, three dead submariners make a grab for his legs.

Sue: FUCKING HELL! We should have given this to Gary!

Sue's brother came over earlier that evening to borrow a DVD. He wanted the scariest thing I had in my collection so I gave him The Thing, The Exorcist *and* The Texas Chainsaw Massacre *on Blu-Ray.*

Sue: This makes *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* look like a comedy.
Me: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is a comedy, Sue.
Sue: EH?

The episodes concludes with more enigmatic whistling.

Sue: They aren't even trying to come up with a decent cliffhanger any more. Oh well. Never mind.

Episode Six

While it's fair to say that Sue is enjoying this story, she can't understand why it has to be four hours long.

Sue: They're definitely dragging this out.
Me: You should count yourself lucky. If you watched this in 1979, it would have taken you four months to get through it. Your first marriage didn't last that long.

I tell Sue there was a significant gap after the first couple of episodes aired, thanks to an ITV strike.

Me: When they resumed transmissions again they opted to repeat the first couple of episodes because they were worried the audience wouldn't be

able to follow the plot otherwise.
Sue: What? Are they taking the piss? I've been watching this over the course of a week and it still makes no sense whatsoever.
Me: This explains why I don't remember seeing this story when I was growing up – I was living in New Zealand at the time. I probably didn't see this until my late-20s, and even then I don't think I made it to the end.
Sue: Lightweight.

And then Sue has a confession to make.

Sue: I don't have anything else to say about this. Apart from the fact that ITV had much better technicians than the BBC. You never saw lighting as good as this in *Doctor Who*. They over-lit everything.

Steel wants to know how many ghosts are expected to arrive at the station. Is it a handful? Dozens? Thousands?

Sue: If we have to go through a thousand ghosts' back-stories, we'll be here for ever.

There are now two Sapphires in the station. One is comatose, the other is acting very suspiciously indeed.

Sue: If Steel can't tell that she's an imposter, then he's an even bigger dickhead than I thought.

Steel admits that he loves Sapphire.

Sue: Ooh... So now we know for sure: they've definitely done it.
Me: I'm not convinced that medium atomic weights can actually *do it* – I failed chemistry at school – but yeah, if you like.

The entity pretending to be Sapphire tries to convince Steel the ghosts are perfectly harmless.

Sue: She's got a point, I suppose. I mean, all they've really done is make the station look nice and pretty by bringing all the flowers back. They should just let them get on with it.

Steel is trapped by the Darkness.

Sue: What the hell is going on now?

Steel has been transported back to the Great War and left to hang on some barbed wire.

Sue: These sound effects are setting me on edge. Please make it stop.

Tully is allowed to leave the station, and the poor man runs away, leaving Sapphire to her fate.

Sue: Don't worry, he'll come back and save the day in the last episode. He's the only sane person in this. Steel will have to swallow his pride and thank him in the end, just you wait and see.

The episode concludes with Steel still hanging on the wire.

Sue: I'm sorry, Neil, but I don't understand this at all. The atmosphere is amazing, and it's definitely as scary as fuck, but what the hell is going on?

Episode Seven

This episode begins with Sam Pearce's ghost momentarily caught in a time-loop.

Sue: That's right – make it even more complicated. As if this wasn't confusing enough already.

Steel's barbed wire prison has been replaced by a spider's web.

Sue: The music sounds like something you'd hear on *Play School*. "And today we're going through the cobwebbed window..."

Steel finds Sapphire in the station's waiting room. She tells him they still have work to do.

Sue: Yeah, but there's no rush. Take your time.

Steel is worried about the Darkness.

Sue: (*Singing, very badly I might add*) "I believe in a thing called love!" Sorry, Neil. I just can't help it. Every time they mention the Darkness I have visions of longhaired men in tight spandex. It's off-putting.

When Sapphire analyses the dust in the station she concludes that they've been shifted 12 days forward in time.

Sue: You know, I'm sure I'd enjoy this a lot more if I knew what the fuck was going on.

And then, completely out of the blue, Steel goes from berating Sapphire to planting a kiss on her cheek.

Sue: Their relationship worries me. It's abusive.
Me: Really?
Sue: Just watch them: Sapphire has all the best powers, and Steel bosses her around and gets her to do all the hard work. One minute he's shouting at her, the next he's kissing her. Have medium atomic weights never heard of sexual harassment in the workplace?

Tully, who has been transported forward in time too, is scared to death.

Sue: You have to feel sorry for him, especially when he has to deal with Steel being a complete and utter bastard.
Me: The clue's in his name, Sue. He isn't Mercury, you know. That guy's

really wet.

Steel commands Sapphire to contact the Darkness so he can strike a deal with it.

Sue: Yeah, offer a three-album deal and a European tour.

Steel suggests that Tully has a nice lie-down (mainly to get him out of his hair).

Sue: He's been asleep for 12 days! The last thing he needs right is a bloody catnap!

Speaking of which, when Steel asks Tully about his family, he tells him that he lives alone with his cat, Nelson. Which makes a lot of sense.

Sue: Shit! That cat's been left alone for 12 days!

Luckily, Tully's neighbour feeds Nelson when he's out.

Sue: Thank God for that. That was the scariest thing in the episode so far.

Sapphire contacts the Darkness.

Sue: (*As Steel*) I'll just hide over here in the corner while you do the dangerous stuff. Good luck!

The episode concludes with the station platform heaving with passengers.

Sue: Typical. You wait ages for a ghost and then 30 turn up at once.

Episode Eight

Me: It's the season finale!
Sue: This had better explain everything. And I do mean everything.

They've had more than enough time to explain what's going on. I bet the transuranium heavy elements (sic) would have sorted this out in half the time.
Me: Sadly, they can't be used where there is life.
Sue: So what? They've got a problem with ghosts, who are already *dead*. There is no fucking life, Neil.
Me: What about Tully?
Sue: Just send him home to his cat. What's the big deal?

The ghosts turn to face the wall as the Darkness passes between them.

Sue: The fact you can't see it, but you know it's there, is really, really scary.

The Darkness pushes past Tully, who screams his head off.

Sue: Is he okay? He had better be okay, Neil.

When the Darkness invades Sapphire's mind, her eyes turn black.

Sue: Fucking hell! This is fucking terrifying!

Steel offers the Darkness a deal. A deal he won't adequately explain.

Sue: Ha! Like that's going to work. Steel is even worse than the writer when it comes to holding things back!

Steel promises to explain his offer in more detail if the Darkness agrees to send them back in time.

Sue: Right... So Sapphire has stopped time so they can jump off 11 days ago instead of 12...
Me: Yes, that's right.
Sue: *Why?*
Me: Erm... Keep watching.

Steel tells the ghost of Sam Pearce that the deal he made with the Darkness – to live again – is a sham and he'll actually spend eternity haunting an abandoned station.

Sue: Oh, I see. Steel's going to make these ghosts even more resentful, so the Darkness can feed on that and fuck off. That's clever.

Sue doesn't suspect a bloody thing.

Sue: Okay, so Steel is going to send all these ghosts back. Back where, exactly?
Me: That's a bit philosophical, Sue.
Sue: Yeah, but if they – FUCK!

Sapphire's face has been replaced by a lumpy, waxen mush.

Sue: What the fuck?

But that's nothing compared to the shock that's coming.

Sue: YOU MUST BE FUCKING JOKING! NO!

Steel's deal involves sacrificing Tully to the Darkness.

Sue: Sapphire – stop him! He's gone completely mad!

Steel urges Tully to his death as Sapphire slinks away in shame.

Sue: But... But... This will damage time! What the fuck is he playing at? It must be a trap. He can't actually...

Tully screams his head off as the Darkness consumes him.

Sue: Fuck me.

Sapphire and Steel walk off into the sunset. Cue credits.

Sue: I definitely hadn't seen that episode before. I wouldn't have forgotten something as cruel as that.

The Score

Me: So what are you going to give that?
Sue: God knows. I'm still in shock. I can't believe they actually did that. And what was the point? Sapphire and Steel didn't solve anything! In fact, they probably made it even worse because time is all messed up now and the Darkness is still wandering around. Doctor Who would punch Steel in the face if he ever found out.
Me: But they saved at least 20 ghosts from an eternity of resentful haunting. There's always that.
Sue: I would have left them to it. They were already dead. They even brightened up the station with all the flowers and everything. I just don't think killing Tully was worth it. And does that mean Tully will spend eternity haunting the station? And what happens in five years time when he's supposed to die? Will they have to go through this all over again?

6/10

Sue: I've already told you that I loved the lighting, and the sets and the direction, but it was too long and it barely made any sense. They could have cut at least two episodes out of that, maybe more.
Me: But then you wouldn't have grown to love Tully quite so much.
Sue: Yeah, and it wouldn't have traumatised me quite so much, either.
Me: So what should we call this story, given that we don't have an official title for it?
Sue: I don't know... How about *The Waiting Room*? Because most of the time you're sitting around waiting for something to fucking happen.

ESCAPADE THREE

Episode One

Sue is singing. No, not the Sapphire and Steel *theme; she's belting out the old ATV ident music. What's even worse is that as soon as she's finished, she launches straight into the theme to* Crossroads.

Sue: I forget, was this before or after *Star Wars*?
Me: After.
Sue: Thought so. What a rip-off.

As if you couldn't guess, she's referring to the mini-title sequence that begins every episode.

Sue: At least this story is set outside for a change... Oh... We're back in a TV studio again. Shit.

The studio has been transformed into tower block apartment. As a woman gets out of bed to tend to a crying baby, she stops and reports her activity to an unseen entity.

Sue: Nothing's ever simple in this programme, is it?
Me: Don't you remember this?
Sue: Definitely not.
Me: Well I can remember you watching it, even if you can't. Having said that, you didn't make it to the end.

I remind her that the cable TV channel Bravo *repeated episodes of* Sapphire and Steel *more than 20 years ago ("What? Between all the soft-core pornography?"), and this episode was my first – and last – attempt to persuade her to watch the programme with me. I always took "No" for an answer back then.*

Sue: Did I walk out in disgust because it didn't make any sense?
Me: Keep watching and see if you can guess the moment you finally gave up.
Sue: (*Two seconds later*) Was it now?
Me: No. Keep watching.

The baby's mother tries to work out why her baby is still crying.

Sue: It's 8am. It wants feeding, you silly cow!

At least Sue believes she has a handle on the plot.

Sue: Okay, so these are aliens slumming it on Earth. Fair enough. I think I actually understand this one. Amazing, eh?

Sapphire and Steel arrive at the tower block, only to find the apartment they've been sent to investigate is completely empty.

Sue: I love Sapphire's hair. She looks like Lady Gaga.
Me: Any minute now she'll start singing *Japanese Boy* by Aneka.

Meanwhile, the baby's mother, whose name is Rothwyn, and who reminds Sue of a British Bjork, is still reporting to a glowing symbol.

Sue: That's a gobo projected on the wall. It's as cheap as chips, this, but somehow it works.

Sapphire and Steel don't understand why the flat they've been sent to is empty. Steel thinks they've arrived too late. Sapphire says if that were true they would have been told.

Sue: Told? Told by whom? Are they ever going to explain who they work for? They could be the bad guys for all we know, especially after what happened last time.

Sapphire is adamant the subjects they've been sent to investigate are definitely in the room with them.

Sue: Maybe they are really, really tiny, like in *The Borrowers*.
Me: Don't be fucking stupid, Sue.

Steel suggests that the subjects could be microscopic.

Sue: See! Now who's fucking stupid, Neil?

Sapphire and Steel search the abandoned flat.

Sue: (*As Steel*) No, they definitely aren't in this chest of drawers. Let's check the fridge.

Sapphire finally works it out – the subjects are on the floor above them.

Sue: Right, so they got off the lift on the wrong floor. It happens to the best of us. Mystery solved. Nothing to see here. The end.

Meanwhile, on the floor above them (which doesn't technically exist), Rothwyn is attempting to live a normal life in 1980, and that involves preparing the evening meal. However, when she removes a frozen leg of lamb from the freezer, she's inexplicably attacked by disturbing – and extremely loud – visions from a slaughterhouse.

Sue: This is when I walked out, isn't it?
Me: Yeah.
Sue: Can I walk out now?
Me: No.

Sue isn't a vegetarian (despite our daughter's best efforts) despite the fact that she can't abide the thought of animals suffering. Yes, she knows it's hypocritical, and she hates being confronted about it, so the next five episodes could be interesting.

Sue: I can't believe this is supposed to be for kids. Bloody hell, Neil, make it stop!

Rothwyn picks up the leg of lamb she dropped on the floor and returns it to the freezer.

Sue: You should probably wash that first, love.

And that's End of Part One!

Sue: Ooh, this is new. Do I get to see the adverts as well?

She doesn't. So I sing the Shake n' Vac *song to make up for it.*

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?

Part Two begins with Rothwyn trying to smother her husband to death with a pillow that's squawking at her.

Sue: I can't believe what I'm seeing. This is insane.

Having said that, at least she's got a handle on the story's premise.

Sue: Okay, so when she touches something organic, she can feel the pain it had to go through to make life easier for us. That would be a pain in the arse every time you fancied a bacon sandwich.

We learn that Rothwyn isn't an alien – she's a time traveller.

Sue: So her and her husband are sociologists from the future? That sort of makes sense.

What doesn't make sense is the cushion on Rothwyn's sofa that's moving by itself.

Sue: Definitely not for kids. The kids use cushions to hide behind when things get too scary for them, and now they can't even do that. Even *Doctor Who* would have thought twice about making cushions scary. Idiots.
Me: I've grown to be frightened of cushions, living with you.
Sue: Don't tempt me, Neil.

Up on the roof, Sapphire and Steel stumble across an invisible apartment.

Sue: At least they got to go outside for a bit. Even if it is only on the roof of the TV studio.

Inside the flat, Rothwyn places a dressing gown back on its hanger.

Sue: Don't tell me it's possessed by the ghost of an angry sheep.

Rothwyn's husband, Eldred, joins his wife in the lounge.

Sue: Do you think they try to blend in by swinging? I bet they do. Just look at them.

Steel is adamant that nobody should interfere with time. "Except us," says Sapphire.

Sue: And the Doctor. Actually, they do act like Time Lords, don't they?
Me: They're basically ITV's version of the Time Lords.
Sue: Cheeky bastards...

The time travellers can't communicate with their own era thanks to what looks like a technical fault, and Rothwyn is worried they are trapped in the 1980s, which she describes as a horrible and cruel time to be alive.

Sue: Yeah, Thatcher's just come to power and she's obviously read her history books. No wonder she's shitting herself.

And then, just in case this episode wasn't disturbing enough, a sentient pillow attacks the baby in its crib.

Sue: I've seen it all now.
Me: Funnily enough, there wasn't a pull-out poster of the infanticide scene in that week's *Look-in* magazine.

The baby has disappeared, but the pillow is still restless.

Me: Oh dear. It's all gone a bit *Rentaghost*.

I expect Sue to agree with me, but her mouth is too agape to form anything coherent. And then the pillow – which has now taken the form of a giant bird – attacks Steel, almost pushing him off the edge of roof in the process.

Sue: It's an angry goose!

Cue credits.

Me: So what on earth did you make of that?
Sue: It's definitely better than the bloody train station.
Me: Really?
Sue: Yeah, I can actually follow it. It's completely insane, but at least I know what's going on. A bit.

Episode Two

There's a difference of opinion regarding the identity of the homicidal pillow.

Me: You know, I'm sure that's a swan...
Sue: Don't be stupid. You can't stuff a pillow with swan feathers. The Queen would have your head cut off.
Me: It looks like a swan to me.
Sue: Maybe it's a duck?
Me: Well, whatever it is, it's definitely fowl play.

And that's when Sue threw a non-sentient cushion at me.

Sue: Why is Sapphire caressing Steel's arm like that while he's being attacked by a pigeon?
Me: It definitely isn't a pigeon.
Sue: We're only a minute into this episode and I'm lost already.

Not only does Steel survive the pillow fight, the baby seems to be okay too.

Sue: What a bonny baby. Thank God for that.

Steel identifies his attacker as... a swan.

Me: Ha! See!
Sue: Neil, you've had this DVD for *years*.
Me: Yes, I know, but I haven't seen this since you walked out on it 20 years ago.
Sue: Don't tell me – you gave it another five minutes and then you turned over to something a bit saucier on *Granada Men and Motors*? That's why you didn't remember for sure.
Me: Erm...

Sapphire wants to know why a swan would attack Steel.

Sue: Good fucking question. It makes no sense whatsoever. A goose I could just about understand, but a fucking swan?

Steel sets some charges that will blow the apartment block to smithereens if anything goes wrong.

Sue: Like last week.
Me: I've got to admit that is a bit extreme.
Sue: *Extreme?* He's a fucking terrorist!

Steel reckons the collateral damage would be worth it.

Me: Our hero, ladies and gentlemen.

And if that wasn't disturbing enough, how does a lava lamp with a foetus inside it grab you?

Sue: What the fuck?

Sapphire doesn't understand why they've been sent to this place. Two adults and a baby don't exactly amount to an invasion force.

Sue: My thoughts exactly. They aren't doing any harm. Just leave them to it. These two always seem to make things worse.

Steel disables the lift by tying a knot in its cable.

Sue: Is that Steel's superpower, then? He can bend steel? Is that it?

Rothwyn tells her husband that a pillow wanted her to kill him.

Me: Luckily she didn't go through with it because Eldred must live.
Sue: Eh?
Me: Never mind.
Sue: I want to know what he does for a living. What does he do all day if he isn't allowed to leave his time capsule? I bet they've gone stir crazy.

Rothwyn is left feeling distraught while her husband busies himself checking on "the others".

Sue: You know, I'm sure this is a metaphor for post-natal depression. Or a loveless marriage. One or the other.

And then a booming voice starts talking about time.

Sue: Is this Sapphire and Steel's boss talking?
Me: I don't think so, no.

Sue: He sounds like a fucking Mysteron to me.

And then, just before the commercial break, we're left with the unnerving image of adult hands emerging from a baby's crib.

Sue: Fucking hell, Neil! This is bloody terrifying!

Part Two kicks off with the mysterious voice somehow aging the baby into a small boy in a matter of seconds.

Sue: Oh no. He's turning into Adric.

Meanwhile Eldred can't contact any of the time-travellers who are scattered around the planet. Their webcams show empty houses.

Sue: Any minute now he'll switch to a video feed that shows a wild party in Provincial Unit Six. A party he hasn't been invited to. Again.

If that wasn't worrying enough, his baby is now a fully-grown adult male.

Sue: Bloody hell, I'm actually scared, Neil.

And then the most horrific moment in Sapphire and Steel *so far comes at us out of nowhere.*

Sue: You can see his arse crack!

She's exaggerating, but only slightly. If his shawl had risen by another nanometre...

Me: I wouldn't have bothered with *Granada Men and Motors* if I'd known this was going to happen...
Sue: My eyes! My eyes!

Steel finally finishes fucking up the lift.

Sue: Typical man, leaving all his tools in the corridor like that. Put them back in the storeroom, you twat!

Sapphire believes the mysterious presence in the invisible time capsule is Time itself. She's clearly terrified of it, and contacting it – albeit briefly – reduces her to tears. So what does Steel do? He cajoles her into contacting it again.

Sue: Here we go again. I really don't like him very much, Neil. He's a bully and a coward.

Sapphire does as she's told, even though she's obviously unhappy about it.

Sue: Look at Steel running off and hiding again as she puts herself in danger again. What a cunt.

Sapphire suddenly fades from view. She calls out to Steel, trapped in a dimension of never-ending pain.

Sue: (*To Steel*) That was your fault!

Cue credits.

Sue: I don't know what's more disturbing – the adult baby or Sapphire and Steel's relationship.

Episode Three

Steel nips downstairs to see if Sapphire is hiding in the abandoned flat.

Sue: Why is he looking for her there? Does he think she's gone to the loo for a poo?

Steel walks straight into a cardboard box as he investigates the kitchen.

Sue: Steel's peripheral vision is shocking. *Who are these people?*

And then the lift starts to make a horrible, droning sound.

Sue: This is what it must be like to suffer from tinnitus.

The noise gets steadily louder.

Sue: You wouldn't be able to broadcast this on television nowadays. That noise would break too many Ofcom rules.

And then the lift starts moving again.

Sue: He had *one* job!

Steel enters the lift and smashes its controls.

Sue: You should have done that in the first place, you numpty.

Steel returns to the roof where he finds man in a grey suit perched between the chimneys.

Sue: Blimey, that baby grew up quickly. And how did he learn how to speak English?

But it isn't the baby. It's...

Sue: Silver! Finally, the words "Sapphire, Silver and Steel" actually make sense! Hooray! So what's his special power?

Silver has been sent to help out.

Sue: It sounds like it's blowing a force-10 gale up on that roof, but their hair is barely moving.
Me: 1980s hairspray.

Sue: Oh yeah. Probably.

Silver is concerned about Sapphire's welfare.

Sue: Here we go... Love triangle time.

Steel and Silver rub each other up the wrong way in a cupboard. Literally! There's comedy music and everything!

Sue: When I say love triangle, I mean Sapphire and Silver be fighting over Steel.

Silver immediately gets to work.

Sue: He reminds me of the Doctor. You know, the way he's completely mad but still charming with it.

I remind her that David Collings has appeared in Doctor Who, *but she can't place him, which means I have to re-enact the scene where Pool seeks refuge under a table.*

Me: I'm scared of robots! I'm scared of robots!
Sue: That almost rings a bell.

Silver places a screw on the floor.

Sue: Is that code? Is he saying, "Fancy a screw?" to Steel?
Me: There's fan-fiction for people like you, Sue.

Silver's special power is the ability to transform metal objects into liquid. Or something.

Sue: Shouldn't that be Mercury's job?

And then Silver makes it blatantly obvious that he fancies Sapphire like

mad.

Sue: Has Silver killed all the people who are missing from the other time capsules? Is he a hit-man? Is that it? Has he been sent to clear up?

Meanwhile Eldred is worried the other time-travellers have left this time zone without him.

Sue: Yeah, like that time they all went out for a Wimpy and didn't invite you. That still hurts, I bet.

Sapphire materialises in one of the empty time capsules.

Sue: Ooh, I like Rural Unit 2. It's got a lovely kitchen. It's like that episode of *Big Brother* where there was a second house and it all kicked off. Look, that chair over there is their version of the Diary Room.

Back in the empty apartment, Silver gives Steel something to hold.

Sue: His knob!

It's a doorknob, actually, but yeah.

Sue: He's the world's weirdest estate agent.

She's pointing at Silver who's examining the apartment walls for what could be damp but probably isn't.

Sue: Silver and Steel look like insurance salesmen to me. The Doctor wouldn't be seen dead in a suit like theirs.

Back in the capsule, the man-child reaches for a glass. However, as soon as he touches it, it turns to sand.

Sue: He's like that Skittles guy, only worse. At least you could eat the

Skittles afterwards.

Rothwyn and Eldred are finally reunited with their offspring, who stumbles towards them from the shadows.

Sue: He looks like a zombie Marc Bolan. Good God, this is horrifying, Neil... Hang on... His mother just screamed without opening her mouth.
Me: That was a clarinet.
Sue: Oh. Okay.

Meanwhile, in the apartment below, Silver transforms Steel's doorknob into a fully-functioning light bulb.

Sue: He's made his knob all shiny.
Me: Stop it, Sue!

Sapphire and Steel re-establish telepathic contact, and when she learns that Silver has been sent to lend a hand, she barely contains her excitement.

Sue: Hello. Here we go.

Which means the episode ends with Steel feeling sorry for himself.

Sue: Well, I know who *I'd* choose.

Episode Four

Sue: They should let Silver's ball pop up at the end of the title sequence since he's in this one. Wouldn't that be nice?

Sapphire finds tiny puddles of sand dotted around the time capsule.

Sue: So did all the babies rise up and turn their parents into sand? That's a bit full-on, isn't it?

But that wouldn't be nearly disturbing enough for an episode of Sapphire and Steel*, so after the compulsory 'let's walk around a house saying nothing for a couple of minutes' scene, Sapphire learns the family killed themselves in a suicide pact.*

Sue: Dead kids! You know, I don't think I want to watch this any more, Neil. It's starting to upset me.

Meanwhile, the man-child gains access to the time capsule's diary room after disintegrating the lock with his hand.

Sue: What happens if he touches himself with his own hand? I need to know!

Sapphire and Steel strategise telepathically.

Sue: I wonder if they bothered learning their lines for these bits. I bet this was one of the easiest acting gigs they ever had.

Silver creates a portal that allows all three of them to enter the invisible capsule on the roof. But when Steel crosses the dimensions, he's assaulted with images and sounds from a slaughterhouse. Sue buries her head in a cushion and asks me when it's over.

Sue: Sapphire and Silver definitely have the hots for each other. She's all over him!

At one point, Silver teleports from one room to another.

Sue: Why walk anywhere at all if you can just do that instead? It doesn't make any sense.

Sapphire and Steel explore the capsule in semi-darkness, and when they enter the baby's room, Silver decides to help out by turning on the lights.

Sue: He's very funny. I love him. He stops this becoming too depressing. We could have done with him in the last story.

Silver believes the capsule is constructed from some kind of impenetrable metal.

Sue: Can't he just melt it with his superpower? And if not, why not?

Sapphire explores the kitchen area, but as soon as she opens the fridge, she's confronted with the sound of animals screaming.

Sue: The meat's definitely gone off.

And then – finally! – Sapphire, Silver and Steel come face-to-face with the man-child.

Sue: It's good casting, actually. He doesn't half look like his mum.

Sapphire realises that the male who's standing before them is actually a baby.

Sue: He's basically your average teenager: he's moody, doesn't say very much and is always causing trouble...

Silver believes the man-child is a machine, although why he jumps to that insane conclusion isn't entirely clear.

Sue: Is his superpower being thick?

Sapphire begs him not to touch the child, but Silver doesn't listen and the episode concludes with him vanishing in a puff of light.

Sue: Is Silver dead, then? Does that mean they'll have to remove him from the title sequence?

Episode Five

Sue: Nope. He's still there. Maybe that means Silver isn't dead after all?

The man-child (who is later referred to as a Changeling for some inexplicable reason) reminds Sue of somebody else.

Sue: He's a scary Marcel Marceau.
Me: Is there any other kind of Marcel Marceau?

Marcel uses his magic hand to transform the apartment's furniture back to its original organic state, which means a leather sofa suddenly becomes...

Sue: A huge pile of cow shit!

It's really difficult to argue against Sue's reading of this scene, so I don't bother.

Sue: Does that mean Silver is a tiny blob of silver, somewhere?

And then Sue finally loses her patience.

Sue: It's all gone a bit timey-wimey, now. It's making my head hurt. Don't any of these stories make any fucking sense?

Steel orders Sapphire to turn back time and bring Silver back.

Sue: He forgot the magic word again. What a git.

Sapphire does as she's told and we are treated to several flashbacks from earlier episodes.

Sue: I'm totally lost. What the hell is going on, Neil?
Me: Don't look at me! I haven't got a clue.
Sue: How were kids supposed to follow this if a semi-educated person like

you can't manage it? It's ridiculous!

The lead-up to the ad-break features our heroes reminiscing about poor old Silver.

Sue: He's only been gone 10 minutes!

Part Two begins with Sapphire and Steel visiting scenes from previous episodes as Rothwyn and Eldred repeat their movements.

Sue: It's like a really boring version of *Back to the Future*, this. But with McCallum instead of McFly.

When Steel starts peeling wallpaper off the wall, Sapphire begins to moan and groan.

Sue: I'll have what she's having!

Behind the woodchip is machinery that's covered in animal blood. Yes! Really!

Sue: Is it a dragon, do you think?
Me: No, Sue, this isn't *Game of Thrones*.
Sue: More's the fucking pity.

Steel questions the Changeling, who's sulking in the nursery.

Sue: He's obsessed with knowing people's names. It's as if he can't do his job properly if he doesn't fill out all the forms first.

Is suddenly becomes clear that Steel is trying to trick the Changeling into touching himself.

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?
Me: I know. It is a bit confusing.

Sue: No, I'm talking about those door handles over there. They aren't flush! Who put this set together?

Steel ends up in the baby's crib.

Sue: Best place for him, the big baby.

But at least the Changeling is a bouncing baby boy again.

Sue: Okay... Right... So... Oh fuck it. I have no fucking idea!

When Rothwyn and Eldred barge into the nursery, Steel demands to know their names.

Sue: There he goes again!

And then the episode concludes with Sapphire and Steel staring intently at a wall.

Sue: What kind of cliffhanger was THAT?

Episode Six

Silver is alive!

Sue: Good. He's making this stupid nonsense almost bearable.

Steel ramps up the casual misogynism to 11 as he directs his ire towards Rothwyn.

Sue: Her husband is just standing there while Steel manhandles and shouts at her. What a dick! Wait! Now Steel is pushing her around as well. I can't believe we're supposed to root for this prick.

Sapphire says their job is to safeguard the fabric of time.

Sue: So they are definitely Time Lords, then.
Me: You can believe that if you like, Sue.
Sue: Time Lords with silly code names.
Me: Like the Doctor, you mean?
Sue: Yes. Why not?
Me: BBC lawyers, probably.

Rothwyn and Eldred are told their colleagues decided to kill themselves in order to stop a malevolent force from wrecking havoc on time itself. Then Steel casually suggests that Rothwyn and Eldred do the same.

Sue: But they've got a baby! You can't be serious. Please tell me he's joking, Neil.

Steel takes Eldred to the Diary Room so he can see for himself. But when he's asked to look at the video feed from the bedroom where the suicide took place, Eldred refuses.

Sue: I think he protests a bit too much. He's obviously down here watching his neighbours at it all the time, but he's too embarrassed to admit it.

Eldred is forced to look at the corpses of his colleagues' children. And so are we.

Sue: Fuck's sake, Neil.

Meanwhile Silver is fiddling with the circuits embedded in the time capsule's walls.

Sue: He's even got his own sonic screwdriver.

Silver believes the machine has turned against them.

Sue: Like HAL? Is that what's happened?

Do you honestly think Sapphire and Steel would be that simple? Think again...

Sue: Oh, I see. It's a living ship. It's organic. Okay, I think I understand this.

In short, people in the future torture animals so they can travel in time. Well, of course they do.

Sue: Actually, on second thought, I don't understand a fucking word of this.

Eldred listens to the final diary logs from the other time capsule and he learns that the children had a say in the suicide pact, which is a lovely thought. Steel, on the other, is more concerned about the name of the animal causing all this trouble.

Sue: There he goes again. Who cares what they bloody call it! Worry about that later!

As Eldred and Rothwyn explain what the hell is going on (sort of), I wonder if this story will have any sort of meaningful impact on Sue.

Me: Will this put you off eating meat in the future?
Sue: No, but it will stop me torturing animals so I can travel in time. You have my word on that.

The creature that has been powering the time capsule suddenly breaks free from its moorings.

Sue: What the fuck is *that?*
Me: It looks like a mutated dolphin to me.
Sue: It's fucking horrible!

Steel stalks the apartment, a carving knife gripped in his hand.

Sue: Oh no! It's eaten the baby!

But this is just an illusion, which Steel realises as he's about to skewer an infant to death.

Sue: Unbelievable...

Steel is then confronted by a giant doll's head, which scares the living shit out of both of us.

Me and Sue: FUCKING HELL!

Steel almost strangles Sapphire to death as a result of this illusion.

Sue: Actually, it's difficult to tell if that's out of the ordinary for him or not.

Our heroes decide to send the creature back to the future with Rothwyn and Eldred so they can sort out this mess themselves.

Sue: Charming! Imagine the Doctor doing something like that! I give up on these two. They're a couple of lunatics.

Our heroes entice the creature back into the wall with a nice leg of lamb and then, thanks to something or other (answers on a postcard, please), the apartment is returned to its own time zone (which we aren't even allowed to see).

Sue: So, a couple of minutes after returning home, they're all eaten by a rampaging mutated dolphin.
Me: Yeah, and the baby was probably murdered first.
Sue: Neil! Stop it!

The episode concludes with the revelation that the time capsule was riddled with mice.

Sue: But that doesn't make any sense... Oh fuck it, I don't care.

The Score

Me: I'm almost afraid to ask...
Sue: Don't worry, Neil, I'm lost for words.

3/10

Sue: I liked Silver a lot, and some of it was proper scary, but I barely understood a word of it. I think they're taking the piss. It's as if they're daring us to take this nonsense seriously. No, I didn't like that one at all.
Me: So what do you think we should call that story?
Sue: A load of bollocks.
Me: Apart from that.
Sue: I don't know and I don't care.
Me: What about *Terror in the Timeshare*, or something like that?
Sue: Whatever. Call it what you like. I don't care.
Me: Cheer up, Sue. We're over halfway there.
Sue: I'm not enjoying *Sapphire and Steel* very much, Neil. But I still want to know what happens next.
Me: You make it sound like you have a choice.

SHENANIGANS IV

Episode One

Sue: Here we go again with the scary nursery rhymes. Oh joy.

I think it's fair to say Sue is expecting the worst.

Sue: I'm confused already and we're two minutes in.
Me: Give it a chance!
Sue: Yeah, right. Because anything I don't understand right now will be explained eventually, won't it? Of course it fucking won't, Neil. Give your head a shake, lad.

Children are disappearing from old black and white photographs only to reappear in an old tenement building.

Sue: Okay, I admit this is a pretty good start. It feels like the sort of thing *Doctor Who* would do. But at least *Doctor Who* would attempt to explain what the fuck was going on, even if it couldn't.

Cue titles.

Sue: So who do we get to meet this week? Is it Copper? Does Copper have red hair? I bet they do.

Sapphire and Steel arrive.

Sue: I like her new hairstyle.
Me: Talking as a reputable hairdresser in the 1980s, was that a fashionable style?
Sue: Not really. Joanna Lumley was probably trying to set a trend. I like it, though. It really suits her.

One thing hasn't changed though:

Sue: Steel is still a cunt.

Our heroes explore an abandoned store, which Sapphire describes as a cross between a second-hand bargain shop and a pawnbrokers.

Sue: *Cash Converters*, in other words.

Sapphire and Steel are worried they may have arrived here too late.

Sue: Well, it wouldn't be the first time, would it? It makes you wonder what these two get up to on their days off.

There's some talk about the difference between operators and specialists (whom Steel clearly doesn't like very much).

Sue: Bloody specialists, eh, Neil?
Me: Don't even go there, Sue.

Sapphire and Steel agree the shop is a very depressing place.

Sue: Yeah it's definitely a branch of *Cash Converters*.

Sapphire can detect a young girl hiding somewhere in the shop.

Sue: Do all the kids hide in the old photographs. Is that it? And did Dudley do the music for this?
Me: No.
Sue: Then he should sue the person who did.

Part One of the episode concludes with Sapphire being attacked by a phalanx of squawking umbrellas.

Sue: I've got to say, I didn't see that coming.

Part Two kicks off with more violent umbrella-shaking.

Sue: This is the sort of thing Alfred Hitchcock would do if he didn't have any money.

We are told that Sapphire and Steel are investigating a "time break".

Sue: I still think they might be Time Lords.
Me: Well they aren't.
Sue: And you know this for a fact, do you? Does that mean we meet their boss later, and it's all explained to us? Is that what you're saying?
Me: Well...
Sue: Because if that doesn't happen, they're Time Lords.

It doesn't take Sapphire and Steel very long to deduce that people are vanishing from old photographs and reappearing in our reality.

Sue: It's a wonderful concept, I'll give them that. And the sepia lighting on these children is quite brilliant, actually. Very clever.

Sapphire and Steel explore the rest of the building, and when they come across a locked door, Sapphire tells Steel where the locking mechanism is situated so he can use his powers to break in.

Sue: He still needs Sapphire to point at the bloody door for him. How many times has he done this, and yet he still can't work it out himself? He's useless.

They find a darkroom full of old photographs.

Sue: I miss our darkroom. If I could cause a time break, I'd bring our old dog back to life again. What a lovely idea that would be. To have Buffy around again.
Me: But you'd have to break the laws of time, or something.
Sue: So what? Do I look like I care?

Meanwhile sepia-toned children play in the yard downstairs.

Sue: Once again, I don't see the harm they're causing. Why can't they just let them get on with it?

Turning their attention to another flat in the building, our heroes burst in on a young woman who's half-dressed.

Me: Bloody hell!
Sue: I know. It's turned into an episode of *Rock Follies*. And put your tongue back in, Neil.
Me: Have you seen what's she wearing?!
Sue: I'm warning you, Neil.

The young woman tells Sapphire and Steel everything they need to know, even though they barged in on her in her underwear.

Sue: I can't tell if they're hypnotising her or she's easily led.

The young woman admits the building is haunted by the ghosts of children.

Sue: Even she isn't bothered by them and she has to live there. Just leave them alone!

But when the landlord returns, the children reveal another side to their playful personalities.

Sue: Did she just say, "Can we hurt them?"
Me: Yes!
Sue: Fucking hell.

And if that wasn't disturbing enough, there's the revelation the new landlord doesn't have a face.

Sue: Wow.

Me: I know!
Sue: That's very *Doctor Who*. I bet the *Doctor Who* writers wish they'd thought of that. Okay, I'm intrigued. Stick the next one on.

Episode Two

Sue: This monster reminds me of something else.
Me: Does it? I can't place his face.
Sue: I know what it is, it's Pink Floyd. He's on the *Wish You Were Here* album.
Me: Oh yeah... I can't believe I'd never noticed that before.
Sue: He reminds me of an Auton, too.

The young woman (who's name is Liz) tells Steel that she works in a nightclub.

Sue: She's a stripper? Right, okay...

She describes the building's new landlord as a "clean man", unlike Steel.

Sue: I can't believe this went out at 7pm, Neil. It's bloody ridiculous.

Liz puts a record on, and the music is so dreadful, even the Rock Follies would have baulked at it.

Sue: Stick some Floyd on – at least it'd be appropriate.

However, just when it looks as if Steel will succumb to a quick lap dance, we cut to Sapphire in the landlord's darkroom.

Sue: Not. For. Kids.

A little later, Liz bumps into the landlord on the stairs, only this time, he has a face.

Sue: Is that Tony Hadley from Spandau Ballet?

But it isn't long before the landlord's visage becomes a shapeless blob again, heralding the End of Part One.

Sue: Okay, I admit it. That was pretty good. I'm actually enjoying this.

Part Two begins with Sapphire and Steel realising the previous landlord has been trapped in an old photograph, along with the young woman's friend who has also gone missing under mysterious circumstances.

Sue: Show us the bloody photo, then! Oh, that's frustrating. It's because they didn't have *Photoshop* back then and it would have taken them ages to do it. And it would have looked like shit.

Sapphire can detect the smell of copper.

Sue: I knew it! I bet you anything they've got red hair.

The stench of copper means the new landlord is actually a living photograph.

Sue: So the bad guys have invented 3D printers. Fair enough.

Steel is determined to uncover the force responsible for this break in time.

Sue: Yeah, good luck with that. I bet we're none the wiser when this is over.

Sapphire describes the evil entity as a genie trapped in a bottle, which was released into our universe when the world's first photograph was taken. It's a bit of a leap, but...

Sue: That actually makes sense. As far as this programme ever makes sense, I mean. Okay, I can go along with this. Fine.

Steel orders Sapphire to take back time so they can meet the landlord face-to-face.

Sue: Here he goes again. What does he actually do apart from shout at Sapphire? What is his job, exactly?
Me: He opens all the doors.
Sue: Big deal! Just give Sapphire a sonic screwdriver and let her open her own doors. Or team her up with Silver; anything's better than this abusive relationship.

There then follows an exceptionally weird scene as Sapphire takes back time and the faceless man keeps drifting in-and-out of reality, accompanied by what can only be described as agonised screams. Seriously, it's fucking weird, even for Sapphire and Steel.

Sue: But if he comes from a black and white photograph, how come he looks like a colour negative, eh? Tell me that.

Sapphire can't bring the shape into focus and Steel loses his temper.

Sue: Leave her alone, you big bully!

Our heroes come to the conclusion the faceless man appears in every photograph ever taken.

Sue: I bet that would look really good if they did that again today. It's the sort of thing the Moff would do. I bet he liked *Sapphire and Steel*. You can just tell.

The episode concludes with Steel trapped in a photograph and Sapphire about to blinded by a little girl wielding a parasol.

Sue: Careful. You'll have someone's eye out with that.

Cue credits.

Sue: This is definitely the best *Sapphire and Steel* so far. And I'm not just saying that because there are only two episodes left.

Episode Three

The opening recap is so long, Sue threatens to get up and make a cup of tea. However, at least it gives her the opportunity to make something official:

Sue: Steel is even worse than Jon Pertwee's Doctor when it comes to being a total cunt. Sapphire puts up with far worse than Jo Grant ever did. If Steel stole a sandwich from her, he'd force her to make it first, and he'd stand over her shouting as she sliced the tomatoes. You can just tell.

Luckily, the parasol threatening Sapphire's vision is made out of paper and easily dispensed with.

Sue: Ooh, that was clever. I really liked that.

It then turns out the man without a face actually has two faces, whereas Sapphire and Steel are at a disadvantage because they only have one face each.

Me: That settles it. They can't be Time Lords.
Sue: Unless they've run out of regenerations.
Me: Oh, for fuck's sake!

This man has many faces.

Sue: It's very *Game of Thrones*, isn't it?
Me: Well, we almost saw some tits in the last episode, so yes, I guess so.
Sue: No, the whole stealing-faces thing. It's a bit like that. I love the way Sapphire and Steel are talking to two different people, but they're actually the same person.
Me: Yeah, I don't understand how anyone could be confused by this when you put it like that.

Steel realises the shape is using photography to travel between dimensions.

Sue: If they made this show today, the villain would have to be digital. That could still work, actually... You could have him jumping out of *Facebook* and *Instagram*. That would be scary.

Liz – who is still getting ready for work – is drawn towards a photograph of a Mediterranean villa.

Sue: I wouldn't mind being stuck in that photo. At least you'd get a tan.

The faceless man appears outside the villa. Cue ad-break.

Sue: I don't have a lot to say about this one, Neil. I'm enjoying it far too much.

Part Two begins with Steel hard at work in the darkroom.

Sue: He'll probably reverse the polarity of the sodium nitrate or something like that. And then he'll steal someone's sandwich.

Liz is heading to work when she finally notices the children she's been hearing for the last seven months.

Sue: I'll tell you what, though, the lighting in *Sapphire and Steel* is always amazing. Look at that. It's brilliant, that.

Liz hugs one of the children, but he turns to cardboard and crumbles under her embrace.

Sue: Well that didn't really work, did it? It's a brilliant idea but they were never going to pull that off in a million years.

Meanwhile Steel develops a photograph of a photograph.

Sue: He should be using tongs. He'll get fix on his trousers, if he's not careful.

Steel tells Liz to shut the fuck up and sit down. Or words to that effect.

Sue: He's a terrible role model, Neil. Did you actually like him when you were growing up?
Me: He scared the shit out of me. I definitely didn't want to be him.
Sue: Right answer.

Steel tells Liz that her missing friend – Ruth – is trapped in a photograph. Liz is naturally sceptical about this until he unveils a small detail from the photograph that he's blown-up for her.

Sue: That's really grim. I'm actually freaked out by that.

Ruth doesn't know where she is; it's as if she's trapped between a memory and a dream. And as we attempt to navigate our way through this existential minefield, the faceless man strikes and sets fire to the original photograph. Ruth screams in agony as the image shrivels away to nothing in the flames.

Sue: Oh. My. God. That's horrible! I can't believe he actually did that!

Cue credits.

Sue: That was fucking mental. But in a good way. I'm really enjoying this one.

Episode Four

Sue isn't that worried about Ruth's fate.

Sue: Just take back time. Easy.

However, when Sapphire tries to do this her talent is blocked and she's transformed into a two-dimensional standee. Oh, and Ruth is still dead.

Sue: This is all Steel's fault. If he hadn't taken his eyes off the original photograph, none of this would have happened.

Steel decides to blame Sapphire instead.

Sue: Unbelievable. The arrogance of the man. Even Marty McFly kept the fucking photograph on him at all times.

Sapphire tells Liz to pack her bags and leave.

Sue: I wouldn't go back to my flat and put my lippy on. I'd be well gone by now.

Steel surmises the original landlord combined images from two different time zones, which unleashed something terrifying.

Sue: He would have loved *Photoshop*. But he's dead now. The idiot.

The landlord tried to impress Ruth with an image formed by a kaleidoscope.

Sue: Ruth was very easily pleased, that's all I'm saying.

Steel is about to demonstrate how the kaleidoscope dragged the evil entity into our reality when Sapphire stops him in his tracks.

Sue: He's such a cocky bastard. He'd be totally fucked without her. I don't know how she puts up with him.

Part One ends with the faceless man trapping Sapphire and Steel in a photograph.

Sue: How does he do that?

Me: Fuck knows.
Sue: Why are you even here, Neil?

Part Two begins with the parasol girl eager to torture our helpless heroes.

Sue: Hang on a minute... Why has this guy surrounded himself with kids? What the fuck is that all about?

Trapped inside a photograph, Steel blames Sapphire for sending Liz away.

Sue: The fucking nerve of this guy!

The next five minutes are spent with a rostrum camera, as Sapphire and Steel slowly realise they've been completely fucked.

Sue: This is really disturbing.
Me: Disturbing? It's one of the creepiest things I've ever seen!
Sue: I don't really care about Steel – he deserves it – but she shouldn't have to suffer as well.

Thank God Liz took her sweet time leaving the building.

Sue: What was she doing all this time? Packing away her sex toys?

Luckily, Steel has a plan.

Sue: Didn't David Tennant's Doctor trap someone in a mirror, once? When he got married?
Me: He didn't trap his wife in a mirror, no. But yes, he did trap someone in a mirror. Out of spite.
Sue: Bloody Time Lords.
Me: They aren't Time Lords!

With Liz's help, they trap the entity in a prism.

Sue: Somebody just coughed off-camera. And all the characters are on-screen.

Me: Don't worry, they'll probably investigate that next week.

Steel transfers the entity to a kaleidoscope, which should hold it for 75 years. And just to be sure, they'll stick it on a ship that's due to sink in the Arctic Ocean. And then, just before they leave, Steel has a warning for Liz: "Find every photograph of you that there is. Burn them. Never have another taken."

Sue: She's definitely isn't on *Facebook*, then.

Cue credits.

The Score

Sue: I really enjoyed that.

8/10

Sue: It didn't go on for absolutely ages, and I sort of followed the plot. A bit. And the idea of a monster hiding in old photos is brilliant. Why can't they all be like that?
Me: So what should we call this story?
Sue: *Man in the Mirror*.
Me: That only works for the last episode.
Sue: Oh, I don't know.

Two hours later...

Sue: *Little Photo Shop of Horrors*!
Me: That'll do.

INVESTIGATION 5

Episode One

Me: I have a confession to make: I don't think I've seen this story before. And if I have, I can't remember a thing about it.
Sue: So it's crap, then?
Me: I didn't say that. I don't know.
Sue: Of course you don't, Neil. I can read you like a book. This is going to be crap.

Lord Mullrine is preparing to host an extravagant dinner party in 1930 with his sister Emma. There's only one problem: they come from 1980.

Sue: Right. So they're time-travellers, then. This is going to be another one of those jobs the Doctor turned down.

Mullrine tells his secretary that he isn't to be disturbed during the revelries.

Sue: These two are definitely shagging. He'd probably snog her face off right now if he had a box to stand on. He's tiny!

Mullrine is throwing a party to celebrate the formation of his company fifty years ago.

Sue: Oh, I see. It's a fancy dress thing.

But when Mullrine returns to the party, he leaves something important behind.

Sue: Oh no. He hasn't got his Dictaphone.
Me: Then he'll have to use his finger like everybody else.
Sue: Really, Neil? That joke is so old, Sapphire and Steel should investigate it.

Me: It's a classic! Besides, do you know how hard it is to actually use that joke nowadays? Anyway, it isn't a Dictaphone, it's an ultrasonic door key.
Sue: Of course it fucking is.

Cue titles.

Sue: The floating hat in the title sequence... Is it meant to be Viking?
Me: It's taken you 25 episodes to notice the hat?
Sue: No, I've always known it was there. But it's only just started to annoy me. Actually, didn't the Time Lords wear helmets like that?

I think she's talking about Omega in The Three Doctors.

Me: For the last time, Sue. They aren't...
Sue: (*Laughing*) You are far too easy, Neil!

Mullrine wants to transport his guests back to 1930.

Sue: This is what Nigel Farage is trying to do our country right now.

(Note: we watched this story in the lead-up to Brexageddon).

Sue: In fact, this party looks like it's packed with rich Tories. Do they all die, Neil? Please tell me they die.

Mullrine talks shop with his guests, Felix Harborough and Howard McDee, son of ex-business partner and dead scientist, George McDee.

Sue: Framing a decent three-shot with this guy in it is an absolute nightmare. He's tiny!

Mullrine's attention to historical accuracy includes a radio that broadcasts "live" cricket commentary from June 1930.

Sue: The commentator has a lovely voice. You don't get voices like that on

the radio any more.
Me: It's Valentine Dyall.
Sue: Is that supposed to mean something?
Me: (*In my best Valentine Dyall voice*) FORTY-TWO!
Sue: Nope.
Me: (*In my even better Valentine Dyall voice*) TURLOUGH!
Sue: Erm...
Me: The Black Guardian! He wore a dead bird on his head!
Sue: Oh yes! Him!

The radio actually conceals a tiny tape recorder.

Sue: This Lord has far too much time on his hands. He should open an interactive 1930s theme park or something.

However, when Felix, who memorises Test cricket results for a hobby, tries to remember the score of the match they are currently listening to, he can't.

Sue: This is a shit party. The atmosphere is dreadful. Cheer up, people! You're filthy rich!

The elderly Felicity McDee notices that the door leading to Mullrine's 1980 office has temporarily disappeared.

Sue: I think they've all been transported back to 1930 by accident. Yeah, that must be it.

The doorbell rings.

Sue: The cast is huge this week. I don't know how I'll keep track of everyone. I wish they wore name badges or something.

And then the penny drops.

Sue: Of course! The new guests are Sapphire and Steel! I'd almost

forgotten about them.

She's right, of course, although they are going by the names Miles and Virginia Cavendish.

Sue: They could have made an effort. Didn't the invitation tell them it was fancy dress?

Luckily, they've brought a change of clothes with them, and when they reach the guest bedroom in order to change, Sapphire asks Steel which side of the bed he prefers.

Sue: Bloody hell.

Steel asks if there's any other way.

Sue: There isn't if you want to make baby elements.

The house has indeed been transported back to 1930, as evidenced by the church tower that can be glimpsed through the drawing room window (it was destroyed during the Second World War). But Sue has other things on her mind.

Sue: It's all very Agatha Christie, this. I'm not a big fan of Miss Marple. It usually bores me to tears. I can't be bothered with aristocrats dropping dead. Good riddance to bad rubbish if you ask me.

The guests notice that a painting of the dearly departed George McDee is suddenly missing its mourning crape (whatever the hell that is).

Sue: George is going to come marching through that door any second now, you mark my words.

Sapphire and Steel change into their 1930s gear.

Sue: David McCallum could have been the first blonde James Bond if he hadn't been so small.
Me: What is it with you and size all of a sudden? It's making me feel inadequate.

Steel grows a moustache for the occasion.

Me: Aren't you going to mention that?
Sue: I don't like him enough to care, really. Sorry.

When they are introduced to the other guests, Sapphire provides Steel with a running telepathic commentary that's packed with juicy gossip.

Sue: This is quite funny, actually. I like it when Sapphire is cheeky.

You don't need to be telepathic to know that Howard is shagging Felix's wife, Annabel.

Sue: Did they have swingers' parties in the 1930s?

Sapphire informs us that a time-break has gate-crashed the party.

Sue: Bloody time-breaks, coming over here and fucking things up.

The door which leads to Mullrine's 1980s office begins to glow, so Sapphire astrally projects through it to get a better look.

Sue: Since when could she do that? Is there anything she can't do?

The episode ends with Sapphire's consciousness trapped behind the door while Steel panics.

Sue: That was all right, I suppose. If you like that sort of thing.

Episode Two

When Sapphire returns to her to her own body, she describes a feeling of euphoria emanating from the doorway.

Sue: In other words, there's a better party going on next door.

Meanwhile, two more guests have arrived: Tony Purnell and Veronica Blamey. Tony is a merchant banker.

Sue: There's no need to be rude.

Tony Purnell wants to shave before he joins the party.

Sue: His face is as smooth as a baby's bum, so what's he hoping to shave, exactly? His testicles?

Mullrine's secretary can't reach her boss and she (mistakenly) blames it on the ultrasonic key's batteries.

Sue: Just take them out and give them a quick rub, pet. That always works for me.

And then Sue begins to worry about Sapphire and Steel's presence at this party...

Sue: How can they not know how many guests they've invited? The chef is going to be livid when he finds out he's got two extra gatecrashers to feed.

Just as the guests are admiring a portrait of the late Dr McDee, the door opens and the real Dr McDee walks in. End of Part One.

Sue: Finally. A decent cliffhanger for a change.

Part Two begins with a crane shot, which knocks Sue's socks off.

Sue: I'm really enjoying this one. The direction is brilliant, the plot is easy to follow, and the furniture looks amazing.

As the guests try to come to terms with a dead guy suddenly turning up at the party, some wah-wah guitar can be heard in the background.

Sue: What the hell? Is time breaking through?
Me: Yeah, a 1970s blacksploitation movie is threatening to destroy the fabric of reality. Probably.

Once the confusion begins to settle down (a little bit), the guests agree to play a game of Sardines before dinner.

Sue: What the hell is Sardines when it's at home?
Me: You've never played Sardines before?
Sue: No. Am I missing out?
Me: I'll show you later.

The game begins.

Sue: Oh, I see. It's hide-and-seek for posh people.

The soundtrack replaces the wah-wah guitar with an arpeggiated keyboard solo.

Sue: Did Rick Wakeman have anything to do with this?

As as Steel examines a book on local history ("Nowt must have happened because that book is basically a pamphlet"), Howard's wife, Annabelle, finds Veronica in a cupboard. There's only one problem – Veronica is dead.

Sue: Ouch!

Annabelle slams the cupboard door on Veronica's dead hand, which really upsets Sue for some reason.

Sue: Hey, it's good, this. It's definitely the best *Sapphire and Steel* so far.

Episode Three

When Annabelle slams the cupboard door on Veronica's lifeless arm in the recap, Sue winces and turns away from the screen.

Sue: I can't watch that again. She'll have a terrible bruise in the morning.

Annabelle screams the place down.

Sue: For a moment there, I thought Veronica was screaming because she hurt her arm.
Me: Stop going on about her bloody arm! It's the least of her problems.
Sue: I know. She's fallen to the floor and I think I heard her hip snap.

It's even worse than that: Veronica has been stabbed in the back with a carving knife.

Sue: NOT FOR KIDS!

And then there were nine.

Sue: Oh, this tracking shot is fabulous...

Sapphire conjures up a blue-tinged flashback, which shows Tony Purnell trying to snog Mullrine's secretary.

Sue: I feel like we're watching an episode of *Dallas* that's been filmed underwater.

But at least Sue knows who the murderer is.

Sue: (*Pointing at Emma*) You see her, Neil. She did it. Don't ask me why. I can just tell. You can trust her as far as you can throw her.

The surviving guests are slowly losing their memories, and when Steel invites them to re-examine Veronica's corpse, they're horrified to discover her body has vanished. Cue adverts.

Sue: Oh no. Just when I thought I understood what was going on.

Part Two begins with an extreme close-up of an ashtray.

Sue: You don't see that on telly nowadays. Dirty fag ends.
Me: If Nigel Farage gets his own way, we'll be smoking in pubs again any day now.

Have I mentioned that we're watching this episode on the day of the big EU Referendum vote?

Me: Don't worry, Sue, I'm sure the United Kingdom will stay in Europe. I have a good feeling about it.
Sue: I wouldn't be so sure, Neil.
Me: Trust me.
Sue: Are you kidding? What do you know? You never leave the house. When was the last time you spoke to somebody about the referendum who wasn't on *Twitter* or *Facebook*? Seriously, Neil, you have no idea.

And then we reach the crux of the matter: if Dr McDee isn't killed in 1930, he'll accidentally wipe humanity off the face of the planet with a virus he's created.

Sue: I've gone right off this, now. I could just about follow it before it went all sci-fi on me.

Steel persuades Sapphire to commune with the dead McDee.

Sue: I don't know why she bothers arguing with Steel any more, he just shouts at her until he gets his own way.

Steel interrogates the spirit of McDee.

Sue: What an amazing scene. That was absolutely brilliant. I got goosebumps watching that. I can't fault the direction in this at all. It's remarkable.

A gun is heard. The guests try to work out who's been shot.

Sue: Don't just stand there guessing! Walk down the corridor and find out! For heaven's sake!

Tony's dead.

Sue: So what? Who cares?

Episode Four

It's the day after the EU Referendum...

Me: TAKE BACK TIME, SAPPHIRE! TAKE IT BACK!
Sue: I did warn you.
Me: TAKE IT BACK! NOW!
Sue: Stop whining and pull yourself together, lad.

We're not really in the mood for another episode of Sapphire and Steel*, but since the alternative is throwing cushions at the never-ending parade of resignations on the news, we decide to press on.*

Me: I bet Tony Purnell would have voted 'leave' if he hadn't died.
Sue: He's a banker, of course he would have voted to remain, you idiot. You have to let it go, Neil.

Mullrine's butler is told to remove Tony Purnell's corpse from the dining room.

Sue: Greville will never get the bloodstains out of that tablecloth.

Sapphire tells Steel that Tony was having an affair with Mullrine's secretary. He didn't love her, he was just using her, not that Steel can tell the difference.

Sue: That tells you everything you need to know about Steel. What a cunt.

When the guests have left the scene of the crime, Sapphire and Steel are thrown forward 50 years and the dining room is suddenly covered in cobwebs and dust.

Sue: Poor Greville. I hope he's on overtime.

Steel decides to take on the role of Hercule Poirot.

Sue: This reminds me of *Cluedo*. Tony was killed in the dining room with the revolver and an elemental time force.
Me: I keep expecting Jon Pertwee to turn up with a panel of celebrities.
Sue: In your dreams, Neil. In your dreams.

The prime suspect in Tony's murder is Howard, because Tony was embezzling money from his father's bank, and Howard was blackmailing him.

Sue: If that's true, whose bright idea was it to invite the pair of them to the same party? It would be a bit awkward, wouldn't it?

Annabelle complains that things are becoming crazier by the minute.

Sue: Tell me about it, pet.

Sapphire uses her powers to examine the murder weapons. She can tell how old they are, where they were made, and who used them.

Sue: She should ditch Steel and join the police. The hours are probably

better and she'd be valued there.

Completely out of the blue, Sapphire grabs the carving knife and stabs herself in the chest. Cue adverts.

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?

Steel blocks the knife with his hand, so Sapphire picks up the revolver and trains it on him.

Sue: Wouldn't the bullets bounce off him if he's made of Steel? What's he so worried about?

Just before she pulls the trigger, Sapphire tells Steel that she isn't sorry about shooting him.

Sue: Do it! Do it!... I'm not supposed to feel like that, am I, Neil?

Luckily for Steel, he removed the bullets earlier when Sapphire wasn't looking (even though she can apparently detect stuff by just looking at it).

Sue: Why was Steel so scared, then? And why are there six bullets on that table? Shouldn't there be five bullets after the other guy was shot? Or maybe he wasn't really shot. Was he shot, Neil? Oh God, this is so confusing...

Once Sapphire has stopped trying to murder Steel, she decides to seduce him instead.

Sue: Seriously? Have they really got time for this?

However, before they can get down to it, they are interrupted by Emma, who tells them dinner is about to be served.

Sue: Yes, they've removed all the corpses and all these deaths means extra

pudding for everyone!

As dinner gets underway (Greville must have replaced the blood-stained table cloth), Emma slips away.

Sue: I knew it! She's definitely up to something.

Emma walks into Mullrine's office in 1980 and finds herself in Dr McDee's laboratory in 1930. Does that make any sense? Does it? *No, it makes about as much sense as Great Britain leaving the European Union. Sorry. Where were we? Oh yes, in Europe. Sorry! Sorry! Erm...*

Sue: This is making me feel uncomfortable.

Emma is flirting outrageously with Dr McDee, even though she's old enough to be his grandmother.

Sue: Either there's something timey-wimey going on here and he can see her how she looked 50 years ago, or he's got the same taste in women as Wayne Rooney. Either way, this is bloody weird.

Back in 1980, Mullrine's hi-tech computer equipment (think Amstrad meets Commodore 64) starts going crazy.

Sue: Oh no! The photocopier is out of toner! Nooooo!

Text appears on a computer monitor, only the word 'library' keeps being replaced with the word 'laboratory'.

Sue: Somebody wants to change their *Cluedo* answer.

Meanwhile, at the dinner party from hell...

Sue: The old lady is flirting with Steel now.
Me: She's a sugar granny.

Sue: She's a cougar.
Me: She's too old to be a cougar. She's a sabre-toothed tiger.

There's an uncomfortable moment as Steel passes the port in the wrong direction.

Sue: So fucking what?
Me: Don't you know you're supposed to pass the port to the left?
Sue: Do I look like the sort of person who drinks fucking port, Neil? These people make me sick.

Howard proposes a toast to their hosts.

Sue: What about a toast to absent friends, you heartless dick? People have died tonight!... I think...

Howard knocks back a glass of port and drops dead. Cue credits.

Sue: And then there were seven. At this rate, this story will be at least 12 episodes long. Get a bloody move on!

Episode Five

With Howard dead, thoughts immediately turn to what will happen to his shares.

Sue: What a bunch of cunts. Kill them all!

Greville is instructed to clear up after the third murder of the night.

Sue: He'll never get port stains out of that tablecloth. Poor Greville.

When Howard's body disappears, Sapphire claims the explanation is perfectly obvious.

Sue: Is she taking the piss or what?

I decide to have a go:

Me: I think the guests are travelling back in time to 1930, but the guests who are too young to have been alive in 1930 can't be there, so the... *thing*... whatever it is... killed them. Yeah, I think that's it.
Sue: Sounds like a load of bollocks to me, but nice try.

As if to prove my point, Annabelle is electrocuted to death. Cue adverts.

Sue: That was quick. The first part of this episode, I mean, not her death. I think she suffered quite a lot.

Part Two kicks off with a detailed summary of the plot. And guess what?

Me: I WAS RIGHT!

Felix is the only guest who seems to care that people are dying, so he seeks help from Sapphire and Steel, whom he calls operatives in an intergalactic police force.

Sue: That's probably the best description for them I've heard. It almost makes sense.

Sapphire proves to Felix that the guests aren't really dead by showing him Howard relaxing in limbo land.

Me: Limbo land sounds great; you can go anywhere and see anything you want.
Sue: I bet you'd use it to perv.
Me: So what would you choose to see, if you ended up in limbo?
Sue: I already feel like I'm in fucking limbo watching this story. When does it pull its finger out and get a move on?

Felix wants to join Sapphire and Steel's gang, as long as he gets an elemental codename, of course. Sapphire suggests Brass.

Sue: They should include some brass balls in the title sequence, for a laugh.

Sapphire gives Felix the ability to communicate telepathically.

Sue: If Sapphire can transfer her special powers, why doesn't she give them to Steel when he starts shouting at her? Let him do his dirty work himself.

Our heroes need to know how Dr McDee died, so Sapphire makes Mullrine's office door reappear, meaning Steel can nip next door and check an old newspaper report on the office Amstrad. Why they couldn't have asked someone at the party (or read their mind) is anyone's guess.

Me: You know, that sounds like a Chumbley from *Galaxy 4*...
Sue: Yeah, it does a bit.
Me: Are you seriously telling me that you remember what a Chumbley sounds like?
Sue: Yes, you made me watch *Galaxy 4* twice, you sadist.
Me: I'm impressed.
Sue: Actually, I'm lying. All these computer noises sound the same to me after a while. But that's what I get for living with you.

Steel barges into Mullrine's 1980s office and pushes the secretary away.

Sue: Seriously, Neil, I'm really beginning to lose my patience with this git.

Sapphire is too busy playing bridge with Brass to care about Steel's attempt to reach a 1980s version of Wikipedia*. However, she eventually relents and agrees to distract Mullrine's secretary so Steel can sneak a peek at her files. The secretary doesn't take too kindly to this subterfuge and calls Sapphire a bitch.*

Sue: Charming!

Sapphire telepathically instructs Felix to take Mullrine to bed.

Sue: (*As Felix*) I say, steady on, chap!

Mullrine leads Felix to Dr McDee's laboratory instead. Unfortunately, Dr McDee doesn't want to be disturbed and he accidentally throws the contents of a Petri dish in Felix's face.

Sue: Oh no. It's all going to end in tears. And vomit, probably.

Felix staggers back to the library and Sapphire and Steel watch helplessly as he slumps to the floor with half his face missing.

Sue: Greville will never get those pus stains out of that rug.

Episode Six

Me: It's the season finale!
Sue: Another one?

Sapphire and Steel have to keep time on track, or George McDee will destroy the world.

Sue: But I thought the virus had already escaped? Look, it's all over Brass' face.
Me: Yes, but he hasn't really died, remember. Time is getting rid of him so it can take the house back to 1930. It's perfectly simple, really.
Sue: Is it bollocks.

The remaining guests are now oblivious to Sapphire and Steel's presence.

Sue: Why?
Me: Because... erm... they're on a different... erm... a different timeline. Or

a different dimensional thingy. Look, just go with it!

Emma tries to seduce Dr McDee.

Me: Thank God lingerie in the 1930s wasn't all that revealing.
Sue: Does she think she's a young woman?
Me: Yes, she's re-enacting the past in her 1980s body. Hence the granny sex.
Sue: They should have recast the parts with younger actors for these bits. It would have made a lot more sense.
Me: And it would have been a lot less disturbing, too. This is inches away from turning into *The Word*.

Everybody hates George McDee. His wife, Felicity, hates him because he's sleeping with Mullrine's sister, Emma hates him because he won't leave Felicity, and Mullrine hates him because he's threatening to pull out of a business deal. Greville is suspiciously quiet on the subject.

Sue: My money's on Emma. I don't trust her one bit.
Me: I think Greville did it.
Sue: Don't be stupid.
Me: It's always the butler, Sue. Don't you know anything?

Felicity confronts her adulterous husband, but she can't bring herself to shoot him. Which is a shame because he's going to destroy the world tomorrow. Cue adverts.

Sue: Sapphire should take back time so she can have another go.

Sapphire takes back time so Felicity can have another go.

Sue: Anybody could write this. How many goes is she allowed until she gets it right? Is there a limit?
Me: Are you asking me whether there should be a second EU Referendum because...

Sue: NO! SHUT UP!

But Felicity isn't the killer; Emma is.

Sue: I knew it. It was obvious from the beginning.
Me: Er... *why?*
Sue: Are you joking? She came to the party dressed as a witch!

Emma changes history by shooting Felicity instead of George.

Sue: Who cares? Just get Sapphire to turn back time and try again. Next!

It turns out that Emma has made a deal with 'Time'. She and George will become young again, as long as she doesn't kill him.

Sue: So who's rattled Time's cage?

Steel explains to George that he'll bring about the end of humanity if he isn't killed.

Sue: He didn't take much persuading.
Me: Do you want another episode where they persuade him to die?
Sue: Fair enough. Good for him.

Sapphire takes back time once again, only on this occasion, when Emma shoots Felicity, Dr McDee steps in front of the bullet.

Sue: Okay, there's still one thing I don't understand.
Me: Only one thing?
Sue: Did that actually happen? For real, I mean?
Me: Yes. That's how events were meant to happen.
Sue: Right. So how come Emma and Felicity were still on speaking terms 50 years later? Emma slept with Felicity's husband and then she killed him. I suppose that explains why they were so frosty with each other in the first episode, but I think I'd be a little more than frosty if someone you

were having an affair with killed you because they were trying to kill me. Yeah, I definitely wouldn't have passed her the salt.

With time back on track, Sapphire and Steel depart before the dinner party can begin again.

Sue: Poor Greville. He's got to serve dinner to those rich arseholes all over again. It's a fate worse than death.

The Score

Me: Well, I enjoyed that. How about you?
Sue: It was pretty good, I suppose, but if you hadn't been around to explain what the hell was going on, I wouldn't have had a clue.

7/10

Sue: It would have been even higher if they'd trimmed a couple of episodes. They needn't have spent so much time killing off the guests who were surplus to requirements. And I would have recast the flashbacks. Apart from that, it wasn't too bad for that sort of thing.
Me: So what should we call that particular assignment?
Sue: Fuck knows.
Me: What about *50 Year Party People*?
Sue: That's shit; I don't get it. I know, call it *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Cluedo*.
Me: Okay. Oh, incidentally, that was the only *Sapphire and Steel* story that wasn't written by the series creator, PJ Hammond. Could you tell?
Sue: Not really, no. None of them make much sense.

MISSION SIX

Episode One

Sue: So this is it, then? This is the last one?
Me: Yes, and it's only four episodes.
Sue: I like it already. So do they explain everything we've seen so far?
Me: What do you think?
Sue: I think I've got more chance of winning the lottery.

The place: an abandoned petrol station. The time: 8.54pm on a summer evening in 1981.

Sue: Castrol GTX! Wow, this takes me back. And signs for Luncheon Vouchers, too! Do you remember Luncheon Vouchers, Neil?
Me: Weren't they a prostitute's currency of choice in the 1980s?
Sue: How the fuck would I know that? And what's more, *how do you know that?*

Sapphire and Steel have been assigned.

Sue: Did Steel have a crafty peek at the dirty calendar on the wall just then? I'm sure he did...

But they are not alone.

Sue: It's Silver! Excellent. I love Silver. He's my second-favourite element after Sapphire.

Our heroes have been sent to investigate a couple who have arrived at the petrol station in a car that was manufactured in 1946, but is less than two years old. Cue titles.

Me: Tell me if you notice anything different about these titles.

Sue: Different to what?
Me: The other 30 times you've watched them.

The title sequence draws to a close.

Sue: Looks the same to me.
Me: Really? I'm appalled. Here, try again.

A few seconds later...

Sue: The whooshing noise is slightly different when it all kicks off.
Me: Apart from that.
Sue: It isn't that? Well, in that case, it looks the same to me. Have the words been changed?
Me: Yes! One of the elements has been replaced!
Sue: Really? Which one?

I play it again.

Sue: Is it Radium? No, Radium's still there. Is it Silver? No, it can't be Silver, because he's in this. Oh, I don't know. Does it matter?
Me: It's Lead! Lead's dead!
Sue: Lead's dead?
Me: Yes! Lead's dead! I don't know why you're laughing, Sue. We met Lead in the first story. Remember?
Sue: Oh yeah. So how do we know Lead's dead? He could be on sabbatical or something.
Me: Either way, he's been replaced by Mercury.
Sue: That means Mercury has to turn up in this story, or they wouldn't have changed it. So that's a spoiler.

Silver welcomes his colleagues with open arms.

Sue: What's his superpower again? I've forgotten.
Me: He can manipulate machines. Look...

Silver rigs a fruit machine so it always pays out.

Sue: If he wants to make some real money, he should stop holding his plums and go for the bells. Yes, that's it! Three bells. He's quids in now.

But enough of all that, our heroes have a time-break to deal with.

Sue: Okay, I know how this works. What usually happens now is Steel shouts at Sapphire until she finally turns back time and tells him everything he needs to know. I'm right, aren't I?

Sapphire doesn't need to be persuaded to access Silver's memories.

Sue: Any opportunity to touch Silver up. There would be a big row, usually, and then she'd agree to touch the car. But she's actually enjoying this.

We learn the petrol station is stuck in a single second of time. Cue adverts.

Sue: It's a good idea. It feels familiar somehow. Like someone ripped this off later. I get the sense this programme has been very influential, if you know what I mean.

Steel interrogates the couple from 1948, but they refuse to cooperate, mainly because the future scares them.

Sue: It's a good job they didn't end up in 2016.
Me: I'm terrified of 2016 and I'm from around here.

When the duo arrived at the diner, it was 1948, but then their surroundings suddenly changed.

Sue: It's like that Stephen King thing where there's a hole in time in a diner. You see, I knew this was influential.

The two are married. But not to each other.

Sue: Ah! So that's why they're shitting themselves. It all makes sense now – they're worried about being caught.
Me: Don't you think they're a bit more suspicious than that?
Sue: The fact they're just sitting there doing nothing is a bit annoying, I suppose, but apart from that, no, not really. What else are they going to do? Play pinball?

Silver offers to rustle up some food, but they remain adamant they don't want anything from the future. Except for a glass of water, that is.

Sue: She's not that fussy, then.
Me: She'll be on the coke floats in no time. Just you wait and see.

Silver offers to introduce them to the wonders of the modern electronic calculator.

Sue: They should take that back to 1948 and invent the calculator. They could be millionaires.

Sapphire suggests they take the calculator back to 1948 so they can invent it and become millionaires.

Sue: Hey! That's what I just said!

Steel's intense questioning results in the man losing his temper.

Sue: Look at Steel back away as soon as the other guy put his fists up! What a coward!

However, before the man can punch Steel's lights out, the petrol station jumps forward in time. Cue credits.

Sue: It's really good, this. I've got no problem with it at all.

Episode Two

Me: Cynthia Payne.
Sue: What?
Me: The prostitutes who were paid in Luncheon Vouchers, they worked for Cynthia Payne. I looked it up.
Sue: Oh, thank God. I was losing sleep over that.

Silver investigates the couple's car.

Sue: I bet it's got a megaflux capacitor under the hood.
Me: What?
Sue: You know, *Back to the Future*. This car's got funny doors that open the wrong way, too.

Sapphire drapes herself over the vehicle while Silver soaks up the view.

Sue: Oh for God's sake, you two. Get a room!

Meanwhile, Steel pumps the woman for information.

Sue: He's obsessed with learning people's names. Obsessed, I tell you!

The man wants to leave the petrol station and return to 1948. Silver tells him he'll only end up back at the petrol station again. So the man asks Sapphire to accompany him. "What would happen then?" he asks. "What would you like to happen?" is her reply.

Sue: She's a terrible flirt, don't you think? I'm not sure how I feel about that.

The man is crestfallen when it becomes clear Sapphire is only teasing him.

Sue: He reminds me of a miserable Mr Bean.

Sapphire hears a strange sound which reminds her of a cymbal or a triangle. Somebody wants them to know they're there. Cue adverts.

Sue: I'm sorry I'm not saying very much, Neil. I'm too wrapped up in the story and I don't want to miss anything.

Part Two begins with our heroes searching for the source of this mysterious sound.

Sue: You know, I still don't know what Steel's power is. Unless 'glaring at things' is one.

Sapphire doesn't understand why Silver – a mere specialist – was sent to investigate the time-break before a pair of operatives arrived.

Sue: So what's the difference between a specialist and an operative?
Me: The holiday pay is better.
Sue: Right.

As they continue to search for the sound, they stumble across an old man from 1925 who is convinced he's talking to some ghosts. Sapphire begins to panic.

Sue: Things must be bad if she's confused.

Silver admits that he wasn't briefed the usual way before he came here, only that he knew he had to come.

Sue: I'd love to see one of their briefings, but I bet we never do.

Sapphire is convinced something isn't quite right.

Sue: Maybe their boss is testing them. Maybe this is their annual appraisal.

Time jumps forward 20 minutes and suddenly it's raining.

Sue: It's hard to believe they filmed this in a TV studio, it's amazingly well done. I'd like to show this to my students, but they'd just laugh at me. Look at it! It's marvellous.

Sapphire can hear footsteps coming towards them, out of the rain.

Sue: It's getting scary, now.

Sapphire notices a trail of muddy footprints on the floor.

Sue: Whoever it is, they don't know how to wipe their feet.

A shadow forms on the screen. The shadow of a man.

Sue: "Is that you, Dave? Wanna buy some pegs, Dave?"

Cue credits.

Sue: They've definitely saved the best till last.

Episode Three

The speaking clock is stuck in an endless loop: "It will be 9.24... It will be 9.24... It will be 9.24..." and so on.

Me: That's interesting. This predates Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark's *Dazzle Ships* by at least a year!
Sue: What the fuck are you talking about, Neil?
Me: Nothing. Never mind. Oh, look... I've just noticed that Sapphire is wearing blue stockings this week.
Sue: Yeah, of course you have.

The silhouette of Papa Lazarou manifests into Johnny Jack. Sue is very

disappointed when he doesn't start talking like a demented lunatic.

Sue: Oh, he's been in stuff before...
Me: Go on.
Sue: *Doctor Who*. He's been in *Doctor Who*.
Me: No he hasn't.

Of course he bloody has. He was in bloody Flatline. *How I'm expected to lecture Sue on Christopher Fairbank's CV when I can't even get that right is beyond me. Anyway...*

Sue: I recognise his pockmarks.
Me: Well that should narrow it down a bit.
Sue: He looks like he's been skiing.
Me: *What?*
Sue: He's burned his nose and cheeks. Either that or he's pissed.
Me: Right, well, he was in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, pet.
Sue: I knew that, pet.

Johnny Jack claims to be a travelling entertainer. Sapphire and Steel are immediately suspicious.

Sue: That's right, blame the travellers. I don't know why they just don't ask him what year is it.

They ask him what year it is. Johnny says it's 1957.

Sue: There must be a connection. Let's see... 1925, 1957, 1948, 1981...

Sapphire saves Sue the bother – it doesn't make any sense. And then she decides to take another look around, at which point she is confronted by three men from three different time periods, all dressed in identical grey suits. Cue adverts.

Sue: What the fuck was that all about? Is that supposed to mean

something? EH?

Johnny Jack claims to be one of the best tambourine players in the country.

Sue: (*Laughing*) Is he taking the piss? How fucking hard is it to play the sodding tambourine?

It later transpires that Johnny is lying through his teeth.

Sue: (*Borderline hysterical*) If you're going to pretend to play a fucking instrument, at least go for one of the cool ones, like a fucking guitar!

Sapphire and Silver head outside to steal the couple's car while Steel keeps watch on the stowaways from the past.

Sue: Don't you think Steel looks tired?

Sapphire projects an image of the car to replace the one Silver drives into the garage.

Sue: Is this really necessary? They've already searched their car twice. And who are the others going to call if they catch them stealing it? The police?

Sapphire returns to Steel and then, after an awkward silence, she gasps in horror.

Me: Fucking hell! That scared the life out of me!
Sue: You can hold my hand if this gets too much for you, Neil.

Sapphire and Steel are in grave danger.

Sue: Oh no. Is Silver a traitor? Has he set them up? He wasn't supposed to arrive before they got there so he must be in on it. Oh no, I liked Silver!

The woman from 1948 offers to help, but Steel rebuffs her. Sapphire is sent

to talk to her instead, but she gets more than she bargained for when she discovers that the three men in the petrol station have been sent to kill them.

Sue: They're operatives!
Me: Which elements do you think they are?
Sue: How the fuck should I know?

Whoever they are, Sapphire thinks they answer to a higher authority.

Sue: Who's that, then? God?

Episode Four

Sapphire and Steel are in deep shit.

Sue: They should have listened to that woman when they had the chance.

It turns out the agency who want to harm Sapphire and Steel actually offered them a job once.

Sue: Maybe it's the difference between MI5 and MI6, but, you know, on a more intergalactic scale.
Me: That makes about as much sense as anything else I've heard to describe what the hell is going on. So yeah, let's go with that.

Steel decides to question the woman from 1948.

Sue: Oh, so *now* he wants to listen to her! Typical!

The woman tells him he should leave while he still can. The only problem is he can't. No one can.

Sue: Why can't they leave the same way they arrived? Can't they just teleport out of there?
Me: No.

Sue: Oh.

Sapphire and Steel have been lured to this place by Transient Beings.

Sue: Who are they when they're at home?
Me: They're the bad guys, Sue. That's all you need to know. Okay?
Sue: But...
Me: Sue, it's not worth it. Just enjoy the last 10 minutes knowing that they're the bad guys. That's all there is to it.
Sue: But...
Me: Please!

The woman from 1948 starts repeating herself, like a stuck record.

Sue: Is she a robot?

She's been fitted with what looks like a couple of transistors, and when they are removed from her body, she slumps, lifeless, into Steel's arms.

Sue: She *is* a robot! Well, I didn't see that coming.

Her partner walks through a glass door without opening it first, like the Terminator in a sports coat.

Sue: Would it have killed him to use the bloody handle?

The man is unstoppable.

Sue: They're playing a James Bond version of the theme tune, now. And this guy is a bit like Jaws, isn't he? But with nicer teeth.

The Transient Beings use a small wooden box to travel through time.

Sue: Is it bigger on the inside?

Silver makes a replica of the box and Sapphire peers inside so she can see her future. Unfortunately, all she sees is empty space.

Sue: Oh look, it's the end credits.

Steel is determined to help the woman from 1948, who isn't a robot after all.

Sue: I'm shocked. Steel actually cares about someone other than himself. What brought that on all of a sudden?

Silver opens the box and the Transient Being from 1925 is sent hurtling back to the Triassic Period.

Sue: I bet the Master wishes he had one of those. It even shrinks people as it sends them back in time. Actually, that looked really good, that. A great special effect for its time.

When Johnny Jack is given the same treatment, it is left to Steel to confront the man from 1948.

Sue: It's the battle of the boxes! Who will open their box first? The tension is unbearable. And why is Jimmy Page playing the incidental music all of a sudden?

Steel comes face to face with the Transient Being. They both reach for their boxes and...

Sue: So who won?

Once the dust has settled, we find ourselves in a cafe in 1948, where the mysterious couple have just met.

Sue: Ah, right! Steel must have sent the bad guy back in time, and now this couple will have to live their lives in an endless loop or something like that. That's clever. Maybe Steel isn't completely useless, after all.

Or is he?

Sue: What? EH? NO! Steel had ONE JOB and he couldn't even do that properly!

When Steel opens the door to the cafe he's confronted by endless space.

Sue: So they're stuck in a TARDIS that doesn't work? Right...

Sapphire and Steel are trapped in a cafe for eternity.

Sue: I hope the larder is well-stocked.

The final shot of Sapphire and Steel framed in a window hanging in space sends a shiver down my spine. Sue, on the other hand, is a little more optimistic.

Sue: I'm not that worried. Silver will sort it out.
Me: Silver isn't there.
Sue: Are you sure about that? He could be on the loo.

The Score

Sue: That was definitely the best one. I really enjoyed that. It was pretty scary, the direction was really good, the sets were amazing, and the ending was really disturbing. Yeah, I liked that a lot.

9/10

Me: So, given a choice, what would you call that story?
Sue: That's easy – *Battle of the Boxes*.

OUTRODUCTION

Hartlepool, July 2016...

Sue: The first thing I want to say is this… They can't leave it like that!
Me: They already did, Sue.
Sue: It's not too late. McCallum and Joanna are still alive, aren't they? Just pick it up 30-odd years later in the same cafe. Simple.
Me: It's a very grim ending. Like *Blake's 7*.
Sue: No way. They all died in *Blake's 7*.
Me: Except Avon.
Sue: Yeah, except Avon. Still, *Blake's 7*'s ending was proper sad. Sapphire and Steel could be immortal for all we know. Yes, they'll get bored of that cafe after a while, but I'm sure they'll work something out.
Me: They can't be immortal because Lead's dead.
Sue: (*Laughing*) Lead could have retired for all we know! Look, it's fine. They'll escape eventually.
Me: Well, according to Big Finish...
Sue: (*Sighing*) Here we go...
Me: Never mind. Moving on, I have some questions that have been sent in via *Twitter* and *Facebook*...
Sue: I bet most of them are rude.
Me: Don't worry, I chucked those out. Anyway, lots of people (well, three: Kevin Farrell, CDK and David White, to be precise) want to know which elements we would be if we were operatives.
Sue: Have you got a list of elements I could look at?

After a quick trip to Wikipedia...

Sue: Right. So you'd be Nobelium, Neil.
Me: Thanks. What's my superpower?
Sue: Being able to say, "I'm Nobelium" without laughing.
Me: And what about you?
Sue: I'd be Einsteinium, and I'd be really clever.

Me: But with shit hair.
Sue: *Einsteinium and Nobelium*. I can't see it working. Not even on Sky One.
Me: Dave Sanders wants to know how you'd get Sapphire and Steel out of that cafe trap.
Sue: Silver would get them out.
Me: Has he been on the loo for the last 35 years?
Sue: No, but he'll manage it somehow. They'll say something like, "What took you so long?" and simply pick up where they left off. Haven't we covered this already?
Me: So you wouldn't recast it, then? Because there's a rumour going around that the show is coming back.
Sue: It depends on McCallum and Joanna, I suppose. Maybe they could film a scene at the beginning where Silver rescues them. (Is the actor who plays Silver still alive? He is? Good.) And then they could change their appearance. Because they can. They can do anything. Because they're Time Lords.
Me: For the last time...
Sue: I'm joking, Neil! They just work for the Time Lords.
Me: So who would you choose to play Sapphire and Steel in a new series?
Sue: Cumberbatch would make a good Steel. He's good at acting aloof. And Emily Blunt could be Sapphire.
Me: Who?
Sue: She's very good, Neil. Trust me.
Me: David Geldard wants to know how Sapphire and Steel would have voted in the EU Referendum.
Sue: Oh for God's sake, stop going on about the bloody Referendum! They wouldn't have cared less. And they wouldn't have been eligible to vote, either. Next!
Me: Daniel Tessier wants to know if you think Sapphire and Steel get annoyed when people point out that they aren't really elements.
Sue: Hmm. Well, it's not as if they walk up to people and say, "Hello, we're two elements called Sapphire and Steel." So I don't understand why people would point that out.
Me: Fair enough. Alistair Cowan wants to know what you would include

in a *Sapphire and Steel* cookbook.
Sue: Roast chicken with rosemary and take-back-thyme.
Me: Roast swan, surely?
Sue: I think it's still a hanging offence to eat swan.
Me: Hugo Rune wants to know what the transuranic elements look like.
Sue: Don't we all. Erm... Big blobs of gas, probably. I'm not a chemist.
Me: Kevin Jordan wants to know why Silver was a specialist rather than an operative.
Sue: How the fuck should I know? Ask *Wikipedia*! Isn't anybody going to ask me what my favourite item of furniture was?
Me: Chris Orton asks: if the Doctors had appeared in *Sapphire and Steel*, which elements would they have played?
Sue: (*Sighing*) Pass me that list of elements again... William Hartnell would have played Arsenic, because he could be quite poisonous.
Me: And a bit of an arse.
Sue: Sylvester McCoy would have been Berkelium.
Me: I think that's a transuranic element, so he couldn't be used where there is life.
Sue: That's a shame. And Jon Pertwee would be Boron.
Me: Can I have a go?
Sue: If you insist.
Me: Colin Baker would be Palladium, because he always sounds like he's on stage at the London Palladium.
Sue: Neil!
Me: Tim Drury wants to know: *Sapphire and Steel* – did you understand a bloody word of it?
Sue: Not really, no.
Me: Does that bother you?
Sue: Not really, no.
Me: So, you enjoyed it, then?
Sue: Yes, I did. Mostly.
Me: What did you like the most?
Sue: The lighting and the set design. Actually, the direction was excellent. They did some amazing things with light and sound, which still work today. It just goes to show what you can do with the basics. I also liked

some of the ideas they introduced, like people trapped in photos, and taking back time. It was certainly unique.
Me: And what did you like the least?
Sue: Steel. His relationship with Sapphire reminded me of Jon Pertwee and Jo. In other words, it was abusive. That put me right off. And some of the stories were too long.
Me: Anything else?
Sue: The other thing that really irritated me is that we never saw who Sapphire and Steel worked for. They could have been bad guys for all we know.
Me: Finally, can you sum up *Sapphire and Steel* in three words?
Sue: Confusing, intriguing and meandering.
Me: Thanks, Sue.
Sue: My favourite item of furniture was the farmhouse table in the first story. Just in case you were wondering.

THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT

This blog was originally commissioned by Robert Crowder

Sue: So what are we watching now?
Me: *The Quatermass Experiment*.
Sue: I've seen it before, haven't I? It was live, wasn't it?
Me: Yes, it was.
Sue: And David Tennant's in it. Excellent.
Me: This is a different *Quatermass*. Sorry.
Sue: Is it the one where they find aliens in a tube station in London? I remember that one being quite good, as well.

I tell her to wait and see. And just for the record, I've never subjected Sue to the original Quatermass Experiment *before. I'm not completely stupid, you know.*

Me: Before we begin, what springs to mind if I say Quatermass?
Sue: David Tennant.
Me: Anything else?
Sue: Yes, aliens in the Underground. I just told you that.
Me: Right. Incidentally, this is the only TV show we're going to blog that was made before you were born.
Sue: Is it a cave painting? Is that what you're trying to say?

Contact Has Been Established

Sue immediately misidentifies the theme music.

Sue: They use this music in *Star Wars* a lot. And this isn't live, either. This is stock footage of a rocket.
Me: Of course it's stock footage! It's 1953! Actually, forget that.

They wouldn't launch a real rocket into space for a TV show in 2015!
Sue: I know. I'm just waiting for the live bits to start. It's exciting.

Today is a very special day for the British Experimental Rocket Group.

Sue: This is basically NASA in somebody's bedroom in England, isn't it? Oh, and she's evil.

She's pointing at Judith Caroon.

Sue: She's lit like the Bride of Frankenstein. She's definitely the murderer.
Me: There hasn't been a murder yet!

It doesn't take Sue long to fixate on the actors' plummy accents.

Sue: They should be having this conversation in a train station instead of Mission Control. This guy even looks like Noel Coward; he's wearing a cravat and everything. All he needs is a pipe.

'This guy' is, of course, Professor Bernard Quatermass. I wonder if he reminds her of William Hartnell's Doctor.

Sue: Not really. He's a lot more laid back. Look, he's giving his colleague a friendly pat on the shoulder. He seems nice.

After establishing that The Quatermass Experiment *is basically* Apollo 13 *meets* Brief Encounter*, Sue asks the next obvious question:*

Sue: Does the whole episode take place in one room? I feel like I'm listening to the shipping forecast. It's just people reciting numbers at me.

Quatermass has launched a manned rocket into space, but it's "gone too far".

Sue: Just like our blog, Neil. It's gone too far.

Oh, and Mission Control reminds Sue of something else.

Sue: It looks like a Kraftwerk concert.
Me: The technicians do look like they're playing with their modulators.
Sue: That's one way of putting it.

The screen fades to black. However, when it fades back up again...

Sue: Oh no! We're still in the same fucking room! Argh!

And then she brings the mood down a notch.

Sue: All these actors are probably dead now.
Me: That's a bit morbid.
Sue: (*Pointing at Judith again*) My mam used to wear clothes like hers. This feels very close to home for me. I can remember when adults actually looked like this.

Meanwhile, in Croydon...

Sue: Bloody hell, this is impressive. Is this a studio set? Wow! Look at that!

Quatermass's rocket has crash-landed in a suburban back garden.

Sue: It's just like *EastEnders Live*, this.
Me: Everything was live back then, Sue. They didn't have a choice in the matter.
Sue: I'd completely forgotten it was live, to be honest. That's probably because all the actors were used to it. I bet they all made their living on the stage.

The rocket has left a trail of devastation in its wake.

Sue: The Blitz wouldn't have been that long ago. I bet this touched a raw

nerve when it was first broadcast.

An old lady and her cat are rescued from what remains of her obliterated home. Thanks a lot, Quatermass!

Sue: Ooh, I'd love a pair of wooden ladders like that. And this old lady is definitely dead now.
Me: So's the cat.
Sue: Now you're just being cruel.
Me: It's a bit risky asking an elderly woman to clamber down a ladder on live television, don't you think?
Sue: Like I said, they're professionals. You wouldn't catch Danny Dyer doing something like this, and he's half her age.

A journalist named James Fullalove decides to investigate.

Sue: Finally, somebody I recognise. Don't ask me what his name is, but he's definitely been in *Doctor Who*.
Me: It's Paul Whitsun-Jones. And yes, he was in a Jon Pertwee story called *The Mutants*.
Sue: Is he dead?
Me: Yes.
Sue: Thought so. He doesn't look like a journalist; he looks like a dealer on *Four Rooms*. Or a bookmaker.

A local bobby attempts to keep the peace as the population of Croydon runs around him like headless chickens.

Sue: Here's Dixon of Dock Green again. He's always around when an unexpected spaceship turns up. Do you know what, Neil? It's pretty good, this.

A reporter with a goatee beard reminds Sue of someone.

Sue: It's Toby Hadoke. Or rather it's Toby Hadoke's granddad. It's uncanny.

Me: Toby's currently writing a book about Quatermass.
Sue: Then we probably shouldn't be watching this. He'll think we stole the idea from him.

Sue agrees to concentrate on the programme's eponymous hero for a few seconds.

Sue: It takes guts to call your lead character Bernard. You don't see that many heroic Bernards. There's Bernie the Bolt, Bernie Clifton, Bernie Winters...
Me: This is a new definition of the word 'heroic' that I was previously unaware of.
Sue: Well, Bernie Winters had a heroic dog.
Me: Right...
Sue: And don't forget Bernard Cribbins.
Me: Okay, you got me there.

A newsreader informs Great Britain that a spaceship has crashlanded on Wimbledon Common.

Me: The Wombles will be livid when they wake up tomorrow.
Sue: If you came home and switched your TV on at this point, that news report would have given you one hell of a fright. Especially if you lived anywhere near Wimbledon Common.
Me: What time do you think this programme was broadcast?
Sue: Five-to-midnight. It says so on the clock behind the newsreader's head.
Me: Try again.
Sue: I don't know. 8pm? It's not for kids. It's too slow for kids.

A radio reporter arrives at the scene.

Sue: It's turned into a drama-documentary, now. This is years ahead of its time, Neil. It holds up remarkably well. It's very well written, too. Hang on... is that Hilda Ogden?

Quatermass is asked about his decision to send men into "the outer space". Meanwhile, his colleagues struggle to open the door to the rocket.

Sue: Those high frequencies have driven all our cats away. Are you sure this isn't Kraftwerk?
Me: Says the woman who thought my vinyl copy of *Radioactivity* was damaged because it was "popping too much at the beginning".

And then the door to the rocket opens...

Sue: This is tense. Does an alien jump out? I bet it looks shit.

Victor Caroon stumbles out of the rocket instead. However, the two astronauts who accompanied him into the outer space are nowhere to be found.

Sue: Did the other guy get peckish and eat them?

Persons Reported Missing

Sue: Oh, I like this. I like this *a lot*.

She's referring to the opening voiceover which summarises everything that happened in the last episode.

Sue: I wish they'd done this on *Doctor Who*. It would have been so much easier for me to keep up.
Me: They did do this on *Doctor Who*, once. In 1986. And you still didn't have a clue what was going on.

The press are all over Victor Caroon like a bad smell. And to make matters even worse, a wife of one of the missing astronauts is on her way to England so she can reunite with her husband. Awkward.

Sue: She's coming by comet. Is she an astronaut as well?

Me: It's a type of plane, Sue.
Sue: Oh.

A police constable investigates the empty rocket with Quatermass.

Sue: What are the police going to do about this, exactly? Send a panda car into space? And is the policeman supposed to be this thick? Was he hit on the head by falling debris, because it sounds like he's brain damaged.

The policeman is a science fiction enthusiast.

Sue: Oh, it all makes sense now.

And then, after a noticeable dip in image quality ("At least it's still moving," says Sue), we see Judith Caroon caring for her husband as he recovers in hospital.

Sue: She'd be a pain in the arse to live with. No wonder he decided to be an astronaut; he probably wanted to get as far away from her as possible. Listening to her whining on and on in that posh, stuckup voice of hers must have driven him mad.

Sue's right – the Caroons' marriage is on the rocks, mainly because Judith is having an affair with Dr Gordon Briscoe.

Sue: I bet she met him at a train station.

As Quatermass comforts the wife of one of the missing astronauts in an airport departure lounge, Sue stands up and strides towards our television with a cushion in her hand.

Me: Where are you going?
Sue: I'm sorry, but it's doing my head in.

She attacks the TV with the cushion.

Me: What are you doing?!
Sue: I'm trying to kill this sodding fly. Oh...

The fly she's trying to kill has been dead for years.

Me: Live TV. Exciting, isn't it?
Sue: It's fucking massive! Are you sure the rocket didn't bring alien insects back with it?

Dr Briscoe examines the husband of the woman he's currently boffing.

Me: David Tennant played Dr Briscoe in the 2005 remake.
Sue: Well, he's no David Tennant, that's for sure. Now, if he *was* David Tennant, I wouldn't blame her for leaving her husband. She'd be crazy not to.
Me: I am still here, you know.

Victor Caroon is metamorphosing into something else, but Sue is too distracted to notice or care.

Sue: There must be more than one fly inside this studio. There's a fly on every camera!
Me: It must have happened when they were transferring the film to videotape, which probably happened live as well.
Sue: I'm waiting for someone with a rolled-up newspaper to come along and swat it. It must have been a nightmare not being able to intervene. I feel for them. My students broadcast live music shows on *YouTube* every month, so I know how it feels when everything goes tits up in the gallery and you can't do anything about it. It's shit.

Quatermass plays some newsreel footage to Victor in the hope that it will jog his memory about the fate of his crewmates.

Sue: This is very sad. And eerie. It's giving me the creeps.

In the footage, Judith asks Victor to bring something back with him.

Sue: What the fuck was he supposed to bring back? I don't think they have a duty free shop on the Moon, dear.
Me: Maybe she wanted him to sign the divorce papers while he was up there.

The rocket blasts off.

Sue: Bloody hell! How fast was that? That was quicker than the *Millennium Falcon*!

Quatermass shows us his irascible side when Victor stubbornly refuses to emerge from his semi-catatonic state.

Sue: Quatermass definitely reminds me of William Hartnell's Doctor now. He is a moody arse, after all.

Suddenly, and rather unexpectedly, Victor Caroon begins speaking fluent German.

Sue: That's it, blame the Germans. They must have paid him to sabotage the rocket. Ha! And I thought it was aliens.

Back at the British Experimental Rocket Group, Detective Inspector Lomax is fondling one of Bernard's model rockets.

Sue: Is this what Quatermass uses to launch his mice into space?
Me: Lomax looks like he wants to turn it into a lava lamp.
Sue: That reminds me: how come the British can afford to send men into outer space, but they can't afford to light their own offices? I can't see a bloody thing in this scene.

Meanwhile, Quatermass' colleague has discovered a strange powered substance secreted behind the rocket's instrument panels.

Sue: So throwing a cocaine party in outer space turned out to be the worst idea ever. Who knew?

The episode concludes with Paterson freaking out.

Sue: How long has he been examining that rocket for? He's grown a fucking beard!
Me: That's oil on his face, love.
Sue: Oh.

And then the Queen pops in to remind us to tune in for the third episode next week.

Sue: (*In her best posh accent*) Coming next, my husband and I will show you how to make the perfect cucumber sandwich.

That's when I tell her that the remaining episodes of The Quatermass Experiment *don't exist any more.*

Sue: Stick the recon on then.
Me: Erm... There isn't one.
Sue: Bloody *Quatermass* fans. Why weren't they recording it on their little tape recorders?
Me: It's 1953, Sue. Just owning a television back then would have been a luxury.
Sue: So that's it, then? There's nothing else?
Me: Yes, that's it. What do you think happens?
Sue: Oh, that's easy. The powder is a plague from outer space, and Quatermass has to stop Croydon from catching it.
Me: Not quite.
Sue: Well don't leave me in suspense. Tell me!
Me: Okay. So in a nutshell, Victor Caroon has absorbed his two crewmates into his body, which explains why he can speak German all of a sudden...
Sue: Ooh, that's clever. I think.

Me: And then he mutates into a giant space plant and takes over Westminster Abbey.
Sue: Stop taking the piss, Neil. Do I look like I was born yesterday?

The Score

Me: What are you going to give that out of 10?
Sue: Don't be stupid. I've only seen the first two episodes. The other four episodes might be really good. Or they might be really crap.
Me: Just score the first two episodes, then.
Sue: I don't see the point, to be honest, but if it keeps you quiet:

7/10

Sue: I'm probably being too generous. I can see how it's influenced loads of stuff - especially *Doctor Who* - and it was definitely years ahead of its time, so you have to give it credit for that. And I enjoyed it, even though it was a massive waste of time because I can't see how the bloody thing ends. But I'm used to disappointment living with you, Neil

THE AVENGERS

This blog was originally commissioned by Frank Shailes

Me: What can you tell me about *The Avengers*, Sue?
Sue: Well, there's Iron Man and Captain America and... I'm joking. I used to like *The Avengers*.
Me: When did you watch it? Because you've never watched it with me.
Sue: I have no idea, but it was definitely something I saw when I was growing up. I can't remember that much about it, really, but I know I liked it.

I navigate to the Episode Selection screen on the DVD.

Sue: So which one are we watching? I bet it's *The Cybernuts*.
Me: Cybernauts.
Sue: Whatever.
Me: No, it isn't that one.
Sue: Is it *Death at Bargain Prices*?
Me: Sadly not.
Sue: *Dial A Deadly Number*?
Me: Nope.
Sue: But that means... But it's the middle of summer, Neil!

Too Many Christmas Trees

After she stops hitting me, Sue sings the theme tune. Badly.

Sue: The biggest problem I have with *The Avengers* is Patrick Macnee doesn't do anything for me. His lips are too thin. You can't trust a man with thin lips. And he's a bit too old for Emma Peel, if you know what I mean. It doesn't seem appropriate, somehow.

Steed is dreaming of a shite Christmas...

Sue: Oh no. This is going to be a weird one, isn't it?
Me: Well, quite a few episodes of *The Avengers* are a bit weird.
Sue: Not as weird as this one, I bet. I definitely don't remember this. What year is it?
Me: 1965.
Sue: Well that explains it, then. I would have been four years old. No wonder I can't remember it.
Me: You probably saw the repeat.
Sue: Well, I definitely don't remember it being like this.

Steed is dreaming of a huge pile of presents.

Sue: This would have been perfect on Christmas Eve, Neil. You fucking idiot. And if I was in a more festive mood, these bloody sleigh bells wouldn't be doing my head in either.

Steed's dream turns into a nightmare when Father Christmas shows up.

Sue: Ooh... Scary Santa. Definitely not for kids!

When Steed finds a dead man under a Christmas tree, Santa laughs his head off. Steed, on the other hand, is horrified.

Sue: I hope he kept the receipt.

Emma Peel arrives at Steed's flat early the next morning.

Sue: I miss those milk bottles. Do you remember those milk bottles, Neil?
Me: I'm not looking at the milk bottles, love.
Sue: No, of course you aren't. I don't blame you, though. Diana Rigg is one of the most beautiful women who ever lived. In fact, I'd be worried if you didn't fancy her.

Steed tells Emma about his dream.

Sue: Steed doesn't have any superpowers, does he? He's just a regular guy, isn't he?
Me: Yeah, he can't fly or anything like that.
Sue: So he's basically a Kingsman, then. Is that it? Like Colin Firth.
Me: Pretty much, although Steed's anal sex jokes are slightly less gratuitous.

The man who Steed dreamt about last night has died for real.

Sue: Ooh, now I'm definitely interested.

Later that day, Steed falls asleep on the sofa and has another Christmas-themed dream.

Sue: This reminds me of *The Prisoner*. Was everyone who worked in television in the 1960s off their tits on drugs? They must have been.

Evil Santa is still laughing his head off.

Sue: I'm glad we didn't watch this on Christmas Eve. It would have given me nightmares.

When Steed wakes up, he's delighted to discover that he's received a Christmas card from Cathy Gale, although what she's doing at Fort Knox remains a mystery.

Me: Do you get that joke? It's very metatextual.
Sue: (*Sighing*) Here we go again... No, I haven't got a clue.

I tell her that it's a reference to Honor Blackman's appearance in Goldfinger.

Me: Like I said, it's very meta.
Sue: Give it a rest, Neil. It's just a joke. You don't have to write an essay about it, you know.

A publisher named Brandon Story has invited Emma to a Christmas party, and Steed agrees to accompany her. However, when they arrive at the publisher's house, Steed quickly recognises it from his nightmare.

Sue: It's very well-directed, this. It's got a feature film quality to it. The sets are lovely, too.

Elsewhere in the house, a group of ne'er-do-wells are conspiring against Steed.

Sue: Are they Satanists or something? Are they into black magic? They're definitely up to no good, whoever they are.

Because Storey is a Charles Dickens enthusiast, his guests are given fancy dress costumes to wear. Steed grumbles about getting a costume themed around the Old Curiosity Shop *as Mrs Peel sits on a four-poster bed. "I've always rather fancied myself in one of these", she says, bouncing up and down. Steed looks at her and replies, "So have I".*

Sue: I had no idea this programme was so pervy!

As Steed and Emma enjoy a stiff drink, they are introduced to the shady conspirators.

Sue: These villains are so polite. I bet they'll be awfully sorry when they're eventually caught.

Another guest – Dr Felix Teasel – pours Steed a glass of wine.

Sue: There must be something in the alcohol. That would explain all the weird dreams, I guess. And this guy is obviously a baddie. Just look at him! Could be any more suspicious?
Me: Frank (the guy who nominated this episode) wants to know if you recognise the actor who's playing him. His name is Edwin Richfield.
Sue: Was he in *Doctor Who*?

Me: Yeah, obviously.
Sue: I have no idea.
Me: Well, he once played a giant slug...
Sue: Oh, for fuck's sake!

Steed decides to have a lie-down. Sue wishes she could join him. But not like that.

Sue: Does Steed ever get it on with Emma? Or would that ruin the sexual tension?
Me: I'm pretty sure they don't get it on.
Sue: Good. There's something not quite right about the idea. I mean, Steed's very charming, but he's no James Bond. He's more like James Bond's older brother. The one he takes on double-dates to make himself look good.

Steed's thoughts are seemingly controlled by the bad guys.

Sue: I don't understand how they're actually doing this. Have they drugged him? Or brainwashed him? It must be something like that.

Steed, suddenly dressed as Sydney Carton, dreams about a guillotine. A French woman places a basket on the floor so it will catch his decapitated head.

Sue: She looks like an evil version of Barbara from *Doctor Who*. I'm not having that!

Santa howls with laughter and then the guillotine begins to fall towards Steed's head.

Sue: That was very cheap. Effective, but cheap. It's quite good, this.

The woman from Steed's dream arrives at the house.

Sue: Okay, they must have brainwashed him into giving away state secrets. Just like *The Prisoner*. I get it now. I think.

Emma arrives at the fancy dress party dressed as Oliver Twist.

Sue: You'd better get to the buffet quick. You won't be allowed back for seconds.

Janice Crane volunteers to demonstrate her ESP powers to the assembled guests.

Sue: She's basically evil-Barbara meets Derren Brown meets Mystic Meg. It must be a trick.

And then the penny drops.

Sue: So they're actual telepaths. Real, actual telepaths?
Me: Yes.
Sue: From another planet?
Me: No.
Sue: Oh. I didn't know *The Avengers* was science fiction. I thought it was spies and karate and stuff like that. Are there any episodes with aliens in them?
Me: Yes.
Sue: Really? I never knew that. What a shame.

Steed gives Emma her Christmas present – a pen that dispenses tear gas.

Sue: He really knows how to treat a woman. And I bet that'll come in handy in (*Glancing at her watch*) about 10 minutes.

Just as Emma begins to get to the bottom of the evil-doers' scheme, Dr Teasel pulls out a gun and takes her hostage.

Sue: I knew he was evil! I could tell the moment I clapped eyes on him.

They're all in on it, you know.

The house is full of telepathic spies.

Sue: It's like *Babylon 1965*.

Thankfully, Steed is one step ahead of the villains.

Sue: Steed reminds me of Doctor Who.
Me: In what way?
Sue: Well, he never tells anyone what the fuck is going on, either.
Me: Does Emma act like a *Doctor Who* companion?
Sue: God no. She'd be sitting in a corner, screaming. She's more like the Doctor than a companion. She's even dressed like William Hartnell.

Emma manages to escape from Dr Teasel's clutches.

Sue: This is more like it. This is what I think of when I think of *The Avengers*: Emma Peel kicking the living shit out of some bloke. I don't know why she doesn't use her tear gas, though.

Steed tells Emma that Teasel works for the security services.

Sue: Oh, make your sodding mind up!

Steed and Emma sing to each other in order to distract the telepaths.

Sue: This is absolutely brilliant. You'd never catch Mulder and Scully doing something like this. I love it. It's ridiculous.

When Steed glances at Emma and tells the telepaths to put that in their crystal ball, Sue chokes on her tea.

Sue: Oh my. Did that actually happen? Did they actually just do that? Wow. That was a bit close to the bone.

Me: Oo-err, missus.

Steed and Emma find themselves a mirrored room.

Sue: Why have the villains got a mirror room, anyway? That's a bit kinky.
Me: Kinky? The mirrors are distorted – it's horrific!
Sue: True. Emma looks like Bruce Forsyth.

Emma shoots an evil footman before he can take them prisoner.

Sue: You go, girl! She hasn't changed a bit. She doesn't fuck about in *Game of Thrones*, either.

And then she manhandles another villain with great aplomb.

Sue: Use your bloody tear gas!

Steeds shoots Santa Claus and Emma complains that her pen is leaking tear gas. (I think that's how they described this episode in the TV Times*.)*

Sue: What was the point of bringing up the tear gas in the first place if she wasn't going to use it? I don't know if that's funny or they simply forgot about it.

It turns out that Brandon Storey masterminded these unsavoury shenanigans.

Sue: That was definitely a bit Scooby-Do.
Me: And he would have gotten away with it if it hadn't been for those kinky perverts.

The episode concludes with Steed trying to snog Emma under some mistletoe.

Sue: He's pushing his bloody luck. She's a married woman!

The Score

Me: So what are you going to give that, then?
Sue: Oh no, not again. What am I supposed to compare it to?
Me: Well, how much did you enjoy it?
Sue: Quite a lot. It was a bit too weird for me, and watching it in the middle of summer didn't exactly help, but the script was very funny – and a bit risqué – and the direction was excellent. Yeah, I liked that a lot. It was very well made. We should watch them all.

8/10

THE PRISONER

This blog was originally commissioned by Neil Smith

Because Sue is already familiar with The Prisoner *(see the last entry), I did everything in my power to find a fresh perspective on this groundbreaking show.*

Nicol: You've already made me watch this, Neil.~
Me: Really? That doesn't sound like me at all.

It seems I persuaded Nicol to watch it with me when the series was first released on DVD over 15 years ago. However, aside from being bored senseless, she barely remembers a thing about it.

Sue: You made me watch it as well, Neil. Twice.
Me: Did you watch *The Prisoner* before you met me?
Sue: I don't think so. My mam said it was too weird. Although I do remember the giant balls.
Me: Trust you to remember that.

Arrival

Sue: This title sequence begins like an episode of *Top Gear*.

During what is probably the best title sequence ever broadcast on British television (Sue and Nicol still prefer Game of Thrones*, the fools), we see the Village for the first time.*

Nicol: I've heard about this place. It was built by an eccentric millionaire, I think. It's still there. In Wales.
Sue: It looks lovely. Shall we go? Or is the place crawling with *Prisoner* fans?
Nicol: No, I think normal people go there as well.

The Prisoner explores his new surroundings, but when he tries to make a phone call, he's given the runaround.

Me: Does this remind you of anything, Nicol?
Nicol: Yes. *Wayward Pines*. But only because every time we watched *Wayward Pines*, you kept telling me it was ripping-off *The Prisoner*.
Sue: Oh yeah... It is quite similar. Except they don't end up being chased by SPOILERS from the SPOILER. At least I don't think they do...

After a short ride in a 'golf buggy', the Prisoner finds himself in a shop.

Sue: This is basically a local shop for local people, isn't it? Although I love the Cornishware on the shelves. Is this shop still there? If that shop's still there, we're going.

The Prisoner has been provided with a home away from home.

Sue: I don't know what he's complaining about. This is lovely. I wish I could move me to a nice retirement village like this.
Me: That could be arranged.
Sue: I'd never want to leave. I'd just chill out and put my feet up. You don't have to get a job, do you? Is it okay if you just potter about?

The Prisoner meets Number Two in the Green Dome, just in time for breakfast.

Nicol: Is that the same teacup from the beginning? You know, when he slammed his fist on the table. I'm sure it's the same pattern on the china.
Me: I have no idea.
Nicol: It could be an important clue.
Me: I'm sure I would have heard about it if it was.
Nicol: We should rewind and check.
Me: Ssh! This is a really good bit.
Nicol: Rewind it.

Me: Oh, for fuck's sake!

I play the title sequence again. There. It isn't the same teacup.

Me: Happy now?
Nicol: It's very similar. That's all I'm saying.

Sue changes the subject.

Sue: I love this set. It's basically an empty TARDIS.
Me: Patrick McGoohan is probably my favourite actor. I love him.
Sue: Don't get me wrong – he's very good – but he's always pissed off about something. Even when he's smiling, you can tell he's secretly annoyed. Actually, he's basically your role model, isn't he, Neil?
Me: Do you fancy him?
Sue: Not at all. Do you?
Me: A bit. It's his voice, I think.
Nicol: Are you sure you want to put this in a book, Neil?

There's some debate as to who is actually responsible for the Village.

Sue: Surely it's the people he used to work for.
Me: It could be the other side pretending to be the side he used to work for.
Nicol: The teacup makes it ambiguous.
Sue: It's obviously MI5. What's the big mystery?
Me: I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, briefed, debriefed or numbered!
Nicol: Stop showing off, Neil.

Number Two takes the Prisoner on a helicopter tour of the Village.

Nicol: There's a scene in *Wayward Pines* where the bad guy gives the hero a tour of the town in a helicopter.
Sue: It reminds me of Guernsey. And I bet you wouldn't have to pay tax

there.

The Prisoner and Number Two take a taxi to the main square.

Sue: Jesus! They can go pretty fast. I bet there are loads of traffic accidents in this place.

And then the Prisoner is introduced to Rover.

Sue: They didn't have a giant ball in *Wayward Pines*, Nicol.
Me: Unless you count Matt Dillon, of course.
Sue: I think the balls are really scary, actually.
Me: It's the noise they make. They scare the shit out of me.

Nicol tuts and shakes her head.

Nicol: Killer Zorbs? Really?

Nicol tuts again and shakes her head some more.

Sue: It's absurd, but it works.

A maid is sent to Number Six's apartment with more than cleaning on her mind, but he sends her away. "That's another mistake they've made!" he shouts at her.

Sue: I don't think that means he's gay. They must know what his sexual preferences are if they know how he takes his tea.

Number Six explores his new home.

Sue: It looks like the sort of house a hobbit would live in.
Nicol: I thought every house looked like this in the 1960s. You can't move for lava lamps.

A frustrated Number Six paces his apartment like a caged animal.

Me: I can't begin to express how much I love Patrick McGoohan's performance here.
Sue: Are you allowed to sleep in Patrick's bed if you go on holiday there? Or is that extra?

The Prisoner makes his first escape attempt, but the statues are following his every move.

Nicol: It's the head from *Art Attack!*

I don't know what she's talking about.

Sue: I'm glad we watched this episode, Neil. It's basically a travelogue. I'm getting to see the whole place. It looks amazing.
Nicol: Why are the bad guys riding a seesaw?
Sue: It does take up a lot of space, now that you mention it.
Me: I wonder if the staff fight over whose turn it is to ride it.

Number Six makes it as far as the beach, but a patrol car is sent to intercept him.

Sue: This is very James Bond all of a sudden.
Me: McGoohan was offered the role of 007, but he turned it down because Bond shagged about too much.
Sue: He would have been a very shouty Bond. He would have been a great Bond villain, though. There's something not quite right about him.

Number Six is smothered by Rover.

Sue: It's horrible.
Me: It's incredible.
Nicol: It's shit!

Number Six wakes up in a hospital bed.

Nicol: Just like *Wayward Pines*.

An ex-colleague named Cobb is recovering in the same ward.

Me: Who's that, Sue?
Sue: I don't know. I can't see his badge.
Me: It's Jerry! Margot's husband!
Sue: Fuck me. So it is. You'd think he be glad to get away from her for a while.

Cobb has been trying to escape from the Village for months.

Sue: Why couldn't he just enjoy his gardening leave? I don't see what the big deal is.
Me: Are you mad?
Sue: I wouldn't complain if I ended up living in a nice place like that rent free, that's all. Even the weather is nice. Are you sure this is set in Wales?

The Prisoner peers through a window that leads to the hospital's Group Therapy room. What he witnesses in there is so surreal, it would make David Lynch blush.

Sue: What the fuck?
Nicol: What just happened?
Me: Don't look at me!
Sue: I'm definitely going off this place, now.

Cobb kills himself by jumping out of a window.

Sue: That's a bit extreme. I'd tell them what they wanted to know, and then I'd order some cocktails.

The Prisoner is discharged from hospital. A sign on the lawn instructs

people to 'Walk on the Grass'.

Sue: That's because you'll be run over by one of those golf buggies if you don't. Look how fast that one is going! Jesus!

The Prisoner is taken to the Green Dome, where a brand new Number Two is waiting for him.

Sue: Was the original actor ill? Is that why they replaced him?
Me: I think it's trying to say it doesn't matter what bureaucracy looks like, they're all the same underneath. Or something like that.
Sue: It must be horrible for them, especially as their code-name means 'poo'.

The Prisoner is given a number: Six.

Sue: Shouldn't his number be higher than that if he's only just arrived? It should be in the hundreds, shouldn't it?
Me: Maybe they recycle the number when people die.
Nicol: Like in *Wayward Pines* when they replaced the sheriff.
Me: Yeah, okay Nicol, we get it.

The Prisoner makes contact with Cobb's heartbroken girlfriend. Luckily for him, she's got a ready-made escape plan.

Nicol: I'm saying nothing.

The Prisoner makes it as far as the helicopter, but it's a trap.

Sue: They just wanted to mess with his head. The bastards!

Even Cobb was in on it.

Me: How grim it that? His friend sold him out.
Sue: Doesn't that just prove that the people he used to work for are doing

this to him? So shouldn't he just co-operate? I don't get it.
Nicol: Mother! The place is full of spies!
Sue: Oh yeah. Maybe Cobb defected to the other side. I didn't consider that. Anyway, I still think I'd enjoy a fortnight's holiday there before I started kicking off about it.

The Score

Me: Well?
Sue: Hmm... Well, it's definitely years ahead of its time. All the surveillance stuff would have been science fiction back then, but today it seems quite tame. It's influenced loads of other TV programmes, as well...
Nicol: Like....
Me: Yeah, we know, Nicol.
Sue: It looked amazing, though. I may even take you to the Village one day. As long as you promise not to dress-up for a stupid parade.

9/10

Me: Why are you knocking a mark off?
Sue: The helicopter scene at the end went on far too long. The high-frequency whine scared our cats away, and I was getting a lovely cuddle from Rosie before she scarpered off.
Me: So you're marking it down because our cats were spooked?
Sue: Hey, if it were up to me, I wouldn't score these episodes at all. It's a stupid waste of time.
Nicol: I'll give it an eight. The only thing that dates it is the lava lamps. And the Zorbs. And the music. And the...
Me: Okay, thanks, Nicol. You can go now.

UFO

This blog was originally commissioned by John Williams

Sue's never seen UFO *before so I have to bring her up to speed.*

Sue: So it's *Men in Black* meets *Thunderbirds*?
Me: It's more like *Women in Purple Wigs* meets *Stingray*. But yes.
Sue: Is there anything else I should know?
Me: Yes, Peter Gordeno was in *UFO*.
Sue: Excellent!
Me: But he isn't in this episode.

A cushion bounces off my face.

Mindbender

As soon as I press 'play', I feel compelled to get up and dance.

Me: Best theme music EVER!
Sue: Sit the fuck down, Neil. You're scaring the cats.

She'll scare them even more a few seconds later when she yells at the top of her lungs…

Sue: Peter Gordeno!

Sue's very first crush was on Peter. Something to do with his dancing skills, apparently, and nothing to do with his ability to repel unidentified flying objects.

Me: That's your lot, love.
Sue: I hate you, Neil. And John Williams, too. Why couldn't he choose an episode with Peter Gordeno in it? Is that really too much to ask?

THE WIFE HAS BEEN ASSIGNED

The episode begins on a top secret Moonbase.

Sue: Does the lack of oxygen make their hair turn purple? I hope they're on extra wages for that.

SHADO prepares to launch some Interceptors.

Sue: Is that Daniel Craig?
Me: No, it's Steven Berkoff.
Sue: Fuck off!
Me: No, Berkoff.
Sue: Their spaceships look like bowling pins.
Me: What are you talking about, woman? It's an incredible design for a spaceship.
Sue: They don't look very aerodynamic to me.
Me: We're in space, Sue. It doesn't matter. Look at the Borg.
Sue: Good point. I still think they're front-heavy, though.
Me: To be fair, they do have a design flaw. They only have one missile, and once they've fired it, they're completely useless.
Sue: Just like you, Neil.
Me: I had an Interceptor when I was a boy. It was my favourite toy until I lost the missile.
Sue: And how long did that take?
Me: Half an hour.

Commander Ed Straker and Colonel Virginia Lake are monitoring the Interceptors' progress back on Earth.

Me: (*Pointing at Wanda Ventham*) That's Benedict Cumberbatch's mum.
Sue: Who's that standing next to her? Luke Skywalker?

A UFO has been spotted loitering near the Sea of Tranquillity.

Sue: It looks like a spinning-top.
Me: Great sound effects, though.

Sue: You love this programme. I can tell. You've got that glazed expression on your face again.

The UFO mysteriously disintegrates before the Interceptors can attack, and Straker heads to the Moon to investigate. You'd think he'd be happy they didn't have to use one of their missiles (they are notoriously difficult to replace, after all).

Sue: This programme feels very American to me. And it isn't just the accents – it's the production values as well. Although this music sounds like something you'd hear in a 1970s porn movie.

I have to admit that Barry Gray's jazz version of the UFO *theme is ridiculously sleazy*.

Sue: And he definitely *isn't* American. He's trying to be, but he isn't.

She's pointing at Lieutenant Andy Conroy (who's played by Al Mancini, an actor from Ohio), as he walks into a control room packed with Mexican bandits.

Sue: Eh? Is this actually happening, Neil?

A fight breaks out between Conroy and the Mexicans.

Sue: I'm confused. Are the aliens supposed to look Mexican? Is this a dodgy subtext about illegal aliens?

It finally dawns on her that Lt. Conroy is hallucinating.

Sue: His mate must have put some LSD in his space tea.

Conroy punches one of the Purple Wigs into next week.

Sue: There's blood everywhere! This isn't for kids. How come you were

allowed to watch this as a kid, Neil? What time was it on?
Me: That depended on where you lived. I think this episode was broadcast in a post-watershed slot, so I probably didn't see it when they screened repeats on Sunday afternoons in the mid-70s. At least I think it was Sunday afternoons. For some reason, I always equate *UFO* with Yorkshire Puddings.

Conroy shoots one of his colleagues in the gut, and the poor man ends up resembling a slow-motion corpse in a Sam Peckinpah movie.

Sue: The direction is excellent. There's a feature film quality to it. It doesn't feel like a television show.

Conroy imagines himself in a Wild West town, with Ed Straker and Paul 'I definitely would' Foster in hot pursuit.

Sue: Have they stumbled onto the holodeck?

I sigh.

Sue: This is a lot more adult than I was expecting.
Me: What were you expecting?
Sue: People walking around on *Thunderbirds* sets, and battles in space with lasers, and stuff like that. I wasn't expecting *this*.

At least she likes Ed's suit.

Sue: He's very stylish. His look is very mod. Even his hair is mod.

Paul Foster's fashion sense is even more striking (in the Trevor Brooking sense of the word).

Sue: I love his West Ham onesie.

However, before we can dwell on that, another member of SHADO goes

postal.

Sue: Can he see Mexicans as well?

No, Captain Lake can see spacemen. Lots and lots of spacemen.

Sue: He thinks he's stumbled into a Daft Punk concert.

Conroy takes Col. Lake hostage and Straker is forced to kill him.

Sue: She reminds me of Lady Penelope. I keep looking for the strings.

When Straker takes a stroll through the grounds of his top secret base, he doesn't give the monk, the Indian prince on a bicycle, or a rather large polystyrene hand so much as a second glance.

Me: I probably should have told you earlier that SHADO's top secret base is hidden beneath a film studio.
Sue: Oh. I thought he was hallucinating like the rest of them.

Straker is forced to negotiate with an egotistical actor named Howard Byrne.

Sue: Wait a minute. So he has to run a film studio while he's fighting aliens? But that's ridiculous. How does he find the time? Why don't they hire someone else to deal with this shit while he's off saving the world?
Me: Ken Russell was busy.

Straker is called to a meeting with his boss, Henderson.

Sue: It's all about budgets and money, isn't it? I wasn't expecting this at all.

Henderson accuses Straker's personnel of behaving like sheep. "Baaaa! Baaaa!" he cries. And that doesn't even come close to being the oddest thing about this scene because…

AND CUT!

Sue: Eh?

That's a wrap.

Sue: What the hell is going on?

It transpires that Ed Straker is actually an actor named Howard Byrne, who is playing a character called Ed Straker in a television show about UFOs. I brace myself.

Sue: So he's in a television show?
Me: You tell me.
Sue: Eh? Is it like this every week?

A dazed and confused Straker walks onto the studio lot.

Sue: It's basically *The Prisoner* meets *The Truman Show* meets *Thunderbirds*. And it's fucking mental.

When Straker sees himself in the distance, he decides to give chase.

Sue: The direction is incredible. It's very surreal. This must be his personal nightmare – dealing with actors.

Straker catches up with himself, but it's just an actor in a blonde wig. Or, if you're Sue:

Sue: Rob Lowe!

Straker wanders into the studio's cinema where they're about to screen rushes from the television show he's currently starring in.

Me: These clips are from earlier episodes. It's the best clip show in the

entire history of television. Don't you think?
Sue: I'm sure this would make more sense if you hadn't thrown me in at the deep end like this.

Straker watches a UFO-attack from the first episode.

Sue: Does the studio film his adventures? Is that how they raise the money to keep the base going? They film the aliens' invasion attempts, make a film out of it, and the profits go back into fighting the next invasion. Is that how it works?
Me: No! He shouldn't be seeing this. This is his life. Look, this is the episode where his son dies.
Sue: His son was killed by aliens?
Me: No, his son is knocked over by a car and Straker has to make a choice between saving his son's life and killing some aliens. And – *spoiler alert* – his son dies.
Sue: No way! So why aren't we watching that episode instead?
Me: You get the best of both worlds with this one. Look, there's Philip Madoc.
Sue: So this actually happened? For real?
Me: Yes, as Paul says, it's a great episode.

Straker tries to make Paul see sense, but Paul says he's an actor named Mike Billington. So Ed smacks him in the face.

Sue: Bloody hell! That must have hurt!

Paul/Mike grins knowingly.

Sue: Either he's into that sort of thing, or he's involved in whatever the hell this is.

Straker takes us on a frantic tour of UFO*'s sets.*

Sue: This is brave thing for a television show to do. To reveal how they

make the programme, I mean. Especially back then.
Me: They don't just break the fourth wall, they show us what was holding it up in the first place.
Sue: This is the sort of thing you'd see on *Community*. I can't get over how ahead of its time this is.

Straker returns to the office where he first began to lose the plot. He recites his dialogue back at Henderson again, only this time the scene climaxes with Straker smashing a moon rock to smithereens. And, as luck would have it, this rock just happens to be the source of his mind-bending hallucination.

Me: And that isn't even *UFO*'s most controversial hallucinogenic trip. What a show!

The episode ends with a close-up of the smashed rock on an office carpet.

Sue: They should sweep that up and blast it out the airlock before it's too late.
Me: They aren't in space, Sue!
Sue: Oh, I thought he was only imagining that he was on a film set. Now I'm *really* confused.

The Score

Sue: That was fucking mental!
Me: What will you give it out of 10?
Sue: It deserves a high score. It was very stylish, and clever and years ahead of its time. The direction was brilliant, and the lead actors were great, too. If I'd watched the rest of the series, I would have understood it a little more, and it probably would have got a 10, but since you made me watch this one first:

8/10

THE TOMORROW PEOPLE

This blog was originally commissioned by Matthew Trulock

Me: What do you know about *The Tomorrow People*, Sue?
Sue: All the children were blonde.
Me: That's *Children of the Damned*.
Sue: In that case, I don't know.
Me: Yes, you do. You've seen the American remake.
Sue: I have?
Me: Don't you remember? Telepathic teenagers living in a subway station with a sentient overhead projector named TIM. Ring any bells?
Sue: Not really.
Me: Pretty young men running around with no shirts on? No?
Sue: Oh, yes. It's all coming back to me now.
Me: Anyway, we're not watching that, we're watching an episode from 1975 instead.
Sue: So I won't see any topless men. Is that what you're saying?
Me: Well...

A Man For Emily
1: The Fastest Gun

In a spaceship that looks suspiciously like an egg box, a young man dressed in cowboy boots, some exceptionally tight underpants, and not much else, frankly, is enjoying a snooze.

Sue: Oh, *hello...*

She doesn't recognise the actor playing Elmer at first.

Sue: Am I supposed to recognise him?

Me: Do you want to see it again?
Sue: Go on, then. You've twisted my arm. I won't know what his name is, though. You know what my memory is – FUCKING HELL!

It's Peter Davison.

Me: Don't get too excited, love. He's just a boy.
Sue: His hair is a problem, but I could have fixed that.

Before I can tell her that Peter Davison is wearing a wig, the programme's iconic title sequence kicks in.

Sue: (*Trying to sing along*) I like the music.
Me: It's Dudley Simpson.
Sue: Is it really? It's the most melodic thing he's ever written.
Me: Did you notice the foetus at the beginning? You don't see that many foetuses on children's television.
Sue: It's terrifying. Especially that hand. Bloody hell, this is a bit fucked-up, isn't it?

Elmer is rudely awoken by his sister Emily (aka Sandra Dickinson).

Sue: Wasn't Peter Davison married to her in real life?
Me: Yes. Their daughter will grow up to marry David Tennant. How weird is that?
Sue: I feel like we're about to watch a sex tape. I mean, what is this room supposed to be, anyway? It looks like an S&M dungeon. Probably.

When Elmer is fully dressed (sorry, Sue) Emily takes him to the Momma. Sue is dumbstruck as bowls of guacamole, 'tickling boots' and Peter Davison being forced to lick his sister's high-heeled leather stilettos vie for her attention.

Sue: Bloody hell. Are the Tomorrow People like this all the time?
Me: They aren't the Tomorrow People, Sue.

Sue: Thank fuck for that!

Later, in the Tomorrow People's secret London Underground base...

Me: *These* are the Tomorrow People, Sue.
Sue: Oh. I feel like I've gatecrashed a school disco. *(Pointing at John*) Isn't he a bit old to be hanging around in a youth club? (*Pointing at Tyso*) And her hair is a right mess.

Yes, Sue thinks Tyso is a girl. Anyway, the Tomorrow People's supercomputer doesn't recognise the alien ship that has entered Earth's orbit.

Sue: TIM is basically Zen, but not as moody.
Me: Or HAL, but not as psychotic.
Sue: Or my sat nav, but not as portable.

The Momma and Emily discuss gender politics.

Sue: The mother figure reminds me of that woman in the stupid programme with the puppets.
Me: *Pipkins*?
Sue: No, the other one. The one with the terrible movies.
Me: You mean *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*.
Sue: Yeah. That one. I've also worked out why these idiots are speaking American. It's because they hired Sandra Dickinson and they thought it would be easier if they got Peter and his mum to talk like her. It's obvious when you think about it.

The aliens have actually tailored their speech, clothing and mannerisms to fit Wild West stereotypes because they've been intercepting TV signals from Earth.

Sue: It's not exactly *Firefly*, though, is it? And thank God they didn't intercept any transmissions from the Playboy Channel.

As John and Elizabeth are left to flounce around outside the aliens' spaceship – brought vividly to life via some of the worst CSO ever committed to videotape – Sue comes to a conclusion:

Sue: This is, without a doubt, the most fucked-up thing you have ever made me watch, Neil. And you made me watch *Blake's 7*.
Me: I don't know what to say. Will sorry do?
Sue: Why don't they just teleport onto the fucking ship? What is their plan, anyway? *Who are these people*?

The Momma monitors these events on her spherical television set.

Sue: You could buy those TVs in *Rumbelows*. I remember there was one in their front window for *years*. It was state-of-the-art, but no one could afford it. Not up here, anyway.

Elizabeth ends up on the alien ship; the Momma and Emily are thrilled when she turns out to be a woman.

Sue: Are they opening a brothel up there? WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON, NEIL?

The aliens are running dangerously low on guacamole and Elmer is sent to Earth to search for avocados.

Sue: Nice product placement for Guinness, there. I bet they didn't pay a penny for that.

Elmer strolls into a greengrocer's.

Sue: It's Peter Davison I feel sorry for. I'm surprised he worked again after this. This is enough to put anybody off acting for life.

Elmer tries to walk off with an armful of fresh fruit and fish, and when the grocer intervenes, Elmer shoots him dead.

Sue: Bloody hell!

There's blood everywhere. Two old ladies applaud wildly, believing they're on Candid Camera.

Sue: What the hell? This is a bit grim all of a sudden.
Me: This was broadcast on a weekday afternoon. This was proper kids' telly.
Sue: No way! But... But they can't do that!

TIM tells the Tomorrow People that Elmer has gone postal.

Sue: It's basically Hungerford out there, kids.
Me: Yeah, so don't forget to wrap up warm when you go out.

Stephen jaunts to the scene of the crime and fixes the dead grocer's wound.

Sue: So they can bring people back from the dead, as well? Is there anything the Tomorrow People *can't* do?
Me: They struggle to make tank-tops look good.

Elmer heads for the pub.

Me: The landlord's cat is definitely dead now.
Sue: Stop it.

And then Sue's jaw hits the floor when the Momma decides to touch herself inappropriately. I'm not making this up. It's essentially Fifty Shades of Grotbags *at this point.*

Sue: I take it back. They *did* intercept transmissions from the Playboy Channel.
Me: I think I'm going to be sick.

The only way the Tomorrow People can get Elmer safely off Earth is to make

him stand on a doozlum pin. And yes, that's as stupid as it sounds.

Sue: For a bunch of telepaths, they don't half like to hear themselves talk.

TIM locates Elmer just as the Tomorrow People are about to tuck into a plate of tasty beef burgers.

Sue: I don't think that was scripted. I think they were running out of time so they decided to have their dinner while they were still filming the episode. Something to do with child labour laws, probably.

Stephen and John jaunt to the pub that's being terrorised by Elmer. It's fun for the whole family!

Sue: Is this supposed to be funny, Neil? Because it's quite bleak. I think it's trying to say something profound about the effects of watching too much violence on television. Which is a bit rich given that we've just seen a shopkeeper with a hole in his stomach.

The episode concludes when the police apprehend the baby-faced murderer before he can kill any more "galoots".

Sue: The credits are very trippy. Which makes sense, I suppose, because you'd have to be off your tits to follow this rubbish.

2: Here We Go Round The Doozlum

The Momma and Emily go nuts when they discover that Elmer has been arrested.

Sue: This is dreadful, Neil. It's the screeching that's killing me. How did Peter Davison put up with this in real life?

TIM explains that Stephen "reanimated" the dead greengrocer killed by Elmer earlier.

Sue: So one of their superpowers is that they can turn you into a zombie? So what happens to that greengrocer now? Does he live forever? Is he like Captain Jack? Will he start eating people?

Tyso heads to the police station where Elmer is being held, armed with a box of bees. When the police are attacked by the insects, one of their number shouts, "Bees!" just in case there's any confusion about what's happening. And then Elmer's jailbreak turns into a protracted runaround, complete with speeded-up comedy pratfalls. Sue sings 'Yakety Sax' as I bury my head in my hands.

Sue: Look at the size of those potholes. They're proper 1970s potholes, them.
Me: They'll be slipping on white dog poo next.

John leads the police on a car chase so slow, a cyclist inadvertently becomes embroiled in it. And then, when the excitement becomes too much for the audience to bear, John jaunts to safety.

Sue: I'd love a Land Rover Defender like theirs.
Me: Are you absolutely sure that's a Land Rover Defender? You know what happened when you misidentified a Land Rover on our *Doctor Who* blog. I still get emails about that.
Sue: Okay, I'd love a four-wheel drive like that. That should shut the cunts up.

Stephen and Liz search for Elmer's doozlum pin in a nearby field.

Me: That cat is definitely dead now.
Sue: STOP IT!

Stephen accidentally steps on the doozlum pin and is transported to the aliens' ship instead. Emily and the Momma torture him with aggravated slapstick.

Sue: This is a bad panto.
Me: Oh no it isn't.
Sue: Oh yes it fucking is.
Me: This isn't a typical *Tomorrow People* story.
Sue: So why are we watching it, then?
Me: A semi-naked Peter Davison was simply too irresistible to pass up, I guess.
Sue: Well, it wasn't fucking worth it. Couldn't you have shown me a picture of a semi-naked Peter Davison and then put a good episode on instead? This is torture!

Elmer is transported back to his ship, and it looks like everything will be wrapped up nicely. The only problem is they've still got an episode left to fill.

Sue: Please, for the love of God, end it there!

John jaunts to the aliens' ship in a desperate attempt to string things out. He is immediately threatened with rape.

Sue: Whoever wrote this rubbish was shit-scared of women.
Me: The Momma is squeezing Elmer's banana. How's that for symbolism?

John escapes from the aliens' clutches, but it's too late – Emily has the horn (and we're not talking about her trombone). The Momma orders Elmer back to Earth so he can find a mate for his sister.

Sue: What the fuck? No amount of naked Peter Davison is worth this, Neil.

Elmer returns to the pub he terrorised a few hours ago. It's open for business, of course.

Sue: The staff should be in counselling instead of pulling pints like nothing happened. I suppose people were a lot harder in the 1970s. They just got on with it.

The Prime Minster calls TIM to complain about Stephen's decision to flaunt and jaunt.

Sue: So the Tomorrow People work for the government?
Me: No, they don't. But the Prime Minister comes to their base for milkshakes now and again. He's basically their dad, and he bollocks them when they get into trouble with the police. It's complicated.
Sue: It's fucking stupid.

Elmer activates the pub's jukebox and forces the landlord to dance.

Sue: Oh no. Is he dancing to Gary Glitter?
Me: Oh God. Just when you thought this couldn't get any worse.

It isn't Gary Glitter – it's Kenny (the band, not the Tomorrow Person) with 'The Bump', which resulted in a short-lived dance craze which Sue remembers fondly (and even demonstrates). And, as an extra special bonus, according to the band's Wikipedia *page, none of the members have been arrested recently. So that's good.*

Sue: This is ridiculous. You wouldn't catch Doctor Who wasting his time on these idiots. This would be beneath him.

The police storm the pub and arrest Elmer. Hang on a minute, that's how the first episode ended!

Sue: ARGHHHHHHH! Make it stop!

3: Shotgun Wedding

Sue: This title sequence doesn't suit the show. It should be more like a sitcom. Something light and fluffy. It should prepare you for what you're actually going to see. This title sequence makes it look like *The Tomorrow People* is a programme about serial killers who prey on small children. The music is brilliant, though. It's completely wasted on this drivel.

Elmer is released from jail, but he forces John onto the doozlum pin, who is transported to the alien ship instead. John is greeted by Emily and the Momma, who are dressed as majorettes. Because this programme isn't fucked-up enough.

Sue: John looked directly at the camera, there. It's as if he's pleading with someone to get him out of the programme. His agent, probably.

John tells Emily that she really isn't his type.

Sue: Now there's a surprise. I never would have guessed.

The Momma explains how the aliens' reproductive system works.

Me: This is the closest I ever came to having someone explain the birds and the bees to me while I was growing up.
Sue: Why doesn't that surprise me, either?

When John refuses to comply with Emily's demands, she activates his tickling boots.

Me: Even the Chuckle Brothers would have thought twice about this.
Sue: I'd say it was for kids – really young kids, mind – but how can a programme that's this obsessed with sex be for kids? God, the 1970s were a dark time.
Me: I can't believe you didn't watch *The Tomorrow People*, Sue. You were 13 years old at the time. You were its target audience! And it was on ITV. I thought you were allowed to watch ITV?
Sue: I was probably too busy clawing my own eyes out.

Stephen escorts Elmer to the Tomorrow People's secret base.

Sue: Where is this place, anyway?
Me: It's a disused London Underground station.
Sue: Oh, so it's like *Torchwood*, then?

Me: Well, they don't own a pterodactyl, but yes, sort of.
Sue: It can't be a coincidence; Russell T Davies must have loved *The Tomorrow People*.
Me: Well, like I said, some of the episodes are quite good.
Sue: Don't keep reminding me!

Elmer tells the Tomorrow People everything they need to know about the aliens, including the fact that the females eat their manboys once they've finished with them.

Sue: As bad as this is – and it's really bad – Peter Davison is still very watchable. He's easily the best thing in this. Oh look, he's tickling TIM's balls.

Back on the alien ship, Emily snaps at John's little finger.

Sue: I bet it won't be his finger she bites off first.

And then Sandra Dickinson channels Shirley Temple ("The good ship Cosmic Eye*" – really?) before farting like a trombone. No, wait – it's the Momma playing an actual trombone. Phew.*

Me: We're through the looking glass now, people.
Sue: Oh, we went through that *hours* ago.

John puts Emily across his knee and spanks her.

Sue: This is shocking. I don't know what else to say. I feel numb.
Me: I grew up with this programme, Sue.
Sue: That explains a lot.

John offers the ship's occupants a new life on Earth.

Sue: Stick them in Butlins; they'll fit right in.

Instead, the Momma becomes a fishmonger (because she sounds like a fishwife) and Emily begins working in a bar (because she looks like a young Barbara Windsor).

Sue: Get outta my pub!

But what about Elmer? What job could he possibly do on Earth?

Sue: If he gets a job as a vet, I think my head will explode.

Elmer becomes a traffic warden instead, and the episode ends with him writing a ticket for the Tomorrow People's jeep Land Rover four-wheeled drive.

Sue: Wah-wah-wahhhh!

But the biggest laugh of the evening is saved for the credits.

Sue: Scientific advisor? SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR?!

The Score

Sue: Good grief. That was dreadful. In fact, I think it's probably the worst thing you've ever made me watch. And you made me watch…
Me: *Blake's 7*. Yes, I know.
Sue: I was going to say *Broadchurch*.

1/10

Me: Generous.
Sue: I would have given it less if it wasn't for Peter Davison. Peter Davison is great in everything. Even shit like that.

SPACE 1999

This blog was originally commissioned by Jamie Baverstock

Me: What do you know about *Space 1999*, love?
Sue: It's set in space in the year 1999, love.
Me: You don't have a clue, do you?

I explain to her that UFO *didn't go to a second series, and Gerry Anderson had to promise that his next show wouldn't feature any boring episodes set on Earth, and that's why he blew the Moon out of Earth's orbit and... Sue is barely listening to me.*

Sue: It sounds like the sort of thing you'd watch. I gave it to you for Christmas, once. And by 'gave it to you', I mean you ordered it off the internet for yourself and I wrapped it.
Me: That was the first season Blu Ray. The first season was very dark and existential. The second season, erm, wasn't.
Sue: Is the episode we're about to watch from the second season?
Me: Yes.
Sue: So we're watching *Space 2000*, then?

The Rules of Luton

Sue: This is very American, especially the music. (*Pointing at Martin Landau and Barbara Bain*) And they look familiar. Oh, I get it now. It *is* American.

Captain Koenig, Tony and Maya are searching for a habitable planet for the Alphans to settle on, because, as Sue points out, the Moon could bump into anything*, and then where would they be?*

Me: I used to have a massive crush on Maya.
Sue: (*Choking on her tea*) WHAT? Are you serious?

Me: Yeah. Big time.
Sue: (*Laughing*) But she's got sideburns! She looks like Wolverine!
Me: She's a shape-shifter. Like *Manimal*, only sexier.
Sue: She looks like she should be working in a garage.

Koenig and Maya explore the planet while Tony heads back to Moonbase Alpha to fix a leak. However, when Koenig and Maya stop to eat some berries, they inadvertently commit mass murder. Oh no! Our heroes have broken the first rule of Luton!

Sue: Luton? I thought you said they never went back to Earth?
Me: Not Luton, silly. It's *Loo-ton*.
Sue: And Luton is ruled by fruit? Actual fruit?

Trees, actually.

Me: It's a bit like *The Happening*, but with fewer hot dogs.
Sue: Eh?
Me: Never mind.

The trees deploy three monstrous space criminals to punish Maya and Koenig, the berry-eating bastards.

Sue: I don't know what's worse – the monsters or the music. Seriously, this is dreadful. *Doctor Who* never stooped this low.

It takes a while for Sue to acclimatise to these monsters – an elderly Chewbacca with conjunctivitis, Leatherface meets Little Ted, and the Cowardly Lion. Amazingly, she doesn't *recognise David 'Gan' Jackson beneath all that fur, either. Trust me, if you haven't seen this episode – DON'T*.

Me: Whacka-whacka-whacka. Sorry, this incidental music is hilarious.

The monsters are lugging huge tree stumps around with them, which really

slows them down (and they weren't that fast to start with), so when one of them replaces his club with one he finds later, Sue loses it completely.

Sue: You just dragged that thing behind you for five miles! WHAT WAS THE FUCKING POINT?

Moonbase Alpha can't rescue Koenig and Maya because Luton has mysteriously disappeared.

Sue: It's too embarrassed to show its face.

Maya and Koenig put some distance between themselves and the monsters by crossing a river.

Sue: The monsters can't swim. Their papier mâché masks will fall apart if they touch the water.
Me: They should cut some trees down and make a raft. That'll teach the trees a lesson.

Koenig attempts to negotiate with three aggressive elms.

Sue: Which tree is talking now? Is it the one in the middle? I'm sure his voice is familiar.
Me: It's Edward Woodward.
Sue: Is it really?
Me: No.

Maya transforms into a bird of prey.

Sue: Why doesn't she turn into an elephant and step on them? Or a rhinoceros? Or a fucking dinosaur!

Maya flaps about as an eagle instead (the bird, not the spaceship; that would be silly).

Sue: She's a fat lot of use. She could at least shit on the monster's head – that might help.
Me: I can't believe I was going to buy the second season of *Space 1999* on Blu Ray later this year. I must be mad.
Sue: Brilliant. So what the hell am I going to get you for Christmas now?

Koenig realises that Luton is completely devoid of animal life. "The only bird we saw was you," he tells Maya as he limps away.

Sue: That's a bit sexist. Oh, wait...

Sue has suggestion for Maya:

Sue: If he's struggling to walk, why don't you turn into a fucking donkey and carry him?
Me: Are you sure you don't want a whiskey?
Sue: No thanks. And you should slow down. How many have you had now?
Me: Nowhere near enough.
Sue: Is *Space 1999* always this bad?
Me: No. Some of the episodes are quite good, actually. Especially the early ones.
Sue: Why aren't we watching one of those, then? Do people really hate us that much?
Me: That reminds me – the person who requested this episode has a question for you. Jamie wants to know: if you had Maya's gift, what would you transform into, and what would you do?
Sue: I'd turn into a bee and I'd sting Jamie for nominating this fucking episode. No! Wait! A wasp! Then I could sting him more than once.
Me: Brave heart, Susan. We're nearly halfway through this.
Sue: Only halfway? Fuck's sake...

Maya and Koenig take some time out from their busy schedule to discuss some stuff which happened in an episode I can't remember and Sue doesn't care about.

Sue: I can't believe you fancied her Did you have a thing for Elvis as well?

Koenig tells Maya about 1987. Christ, it was horrible. But then Earth got its shit together and Koenig smiles as he remembers humanity's glorious achievements.

Me: Yeah, and they're all dead now because the Moon got blown out of orbit *on your watch*. Remember that?
Sue: I keep expecting John Denver to start singing. Or Joan Baez.

As Koenig and Maya debate their next move, Sue fears for their safety.

Sue: Is that tree going to attack them?
Me: No, it's just a light breeze.
Sue: Oh.

One of the monsters turns invisible (did I mention that the monsters have superpowers?), so Maya turns into a dog and sniffs him out.

Sue: I hope she doesn't stop for a crap.
Me: That dog is definitely dead now.
Sue: Stop it!

Maya growls at the invisible enemy. This confuses the creature so much, it drops a boulder on its own head and dies.

Sue: Pass me the fucking whiskey, Neil.

Sue spends the next five minutes shaking her head and refilling her glass. And then Maya transforms into an eagle once again.

Sue: Anyone would think they'd hired an eagle for the day.

Maya is trapped in a basket made from chicken wire.

Sue: Just turn yourself into an insect, you idiot. She could easily get out of that, Neil!

Koenig picks up a wooden club and staggers towards the last remaining monster.

Sue: So the trees want these two to fight to the death using their dead friends as weapons? They haven't thought this through, have they?

We try to imagine what crime this monster must have committed to wind up here, and we conclude that he probably took a shit in the forest and wiped his arse on some shrubbery.

Sue: And what crime did I commit to end up watching this rubbish? Tell me that!

The monster and Koenig are allowed to communicate with each other during their hour of combat.

Sue: They're making it up as they go along!

Koenig throws a dead tree at the monster. It misses.

Sue: He dragged that log all the way down that hill, and that's the best he could do? Pathetic!

Koenig kills the monster with a home-made bola, and then he rescues Maya before her superpower can wear off.

Sue: That was a lucky escape. That chicken wire could have scratched her elbow, and that's quite nasty if you haven't had a tetanus jab.

The trees are very angry (or maybe it's just a stiff breeze) but – shock twist! – the plants decide to overthrow their deciduous overlords.

Sue: So the plants *want* to be eaten?
Me: They're tomato plants, Sue. What else are they going to do besides turn up in a salad? Write poetry?

Tony is also in for a shock when Luton suddenly reappears out of nowhere.

Sue: Eh? What? How? Oh, forget it. I don't fucking care!

Moonbase asks Koenig for his co-ordinates, but there's no need – Tony's already found them.

Sue: How the hell did he do that? It's a fucking planet!
Me: This must be Luton airport.

When they return to Moonbase Alpha, Tony gives Maya an exotic plant as a gift. The idiot.

Me: That plant kills everybody next week.
Sue: He should have given her a razor.

The Score

Sue: Fucking hell. That's the worst thing you've ever made me watch. Nothing else even comes close. What's the worst score I've ever given something?
Me: You gave Slyvester McCoy's first *Doctor Who* story minus-one out of 10.
Sue: Well, in that case:

-2/10

Me: We should watch an episode from the first season. Some of them are...
Sue: Too late! I'll never watch *Space 1999* again. You've killed it. Next!

LOST IN SPACE

This blog was originally commissioned by Robbie Moubert

Of course I had to invite Sue's brother to this one...

Gary: I loved *Lost in Space* when I was growing up.
Me: When did you last see an episode?
Gary: I dunno. Forty years ago?
Sue: We aren't like you, Neil. We don't watch things over and over again until the joy has been sucked out of it. We both have lives, you know.

Even so, Gary can still remember the first episode like it was yesterday, and he spends the next five minutes telling us everything we need to know about the Robinson family, the duplicitous Dr Smith, and basic premise of the show. He's genuinely excited, bless him.

Gary: I hope it's one of the early episodes. They were the best.

I press 'play'.

The Great Vegetable Rebellion

Sue: The production values are very good. Much better than *Space 1999*, that's for sure.
Gary: It's in colour. I've never seen *Lost in Space* in colour before.

I pause the episode so Sue and Gary can reminisce about their old black-and-white Rediffusion television set (the one with the tuner nailed to an adjoining wall). It's riveting stuff, but June Lockheart's face is beginning to burn itself into the television we own now and we press on.

Gary: (*Pointing at Penny Robinson*) She was one of the von Trapp kids in *The Sound of Music*.

Me: Sod that. (*Pointing at Will Robinson*) That's Lennier from *Babylon 5*!
Gary: Who?
Sue: (*Pointing at Judy Robinson*) Wasn't she on *Bewitched*?
Gary and Me: No!

Dr Zachary Smith is up to no good, for a change.

Sue: Is he the bad guy, Gary?
Gary: Yes. And he's as camp as arseholes.
Sue: (*Trying to change the subject and failing miserably*) He looks like Liberace. And he's married. He's wearing a wedding ring.
Gary: He isn't married. Trust me.

Dr Smith wants to visit a planet that's rich in vegetation so he can – wait for it – gather some flowers for a robot's birthday party.

Gary: He definitely isn't in Kansas any more.

Dr Smith picks a flower and it screams at him. (In agony or ecstasy? – it's impossible to say.)

Sue: Hang on a minute. Have they landed on Luton?
Gary: Since when has Luton looked like a garden centre?
Sue: This is exactly the same plot as *Space 1999*. Only the production values are better.

Oh dear, I think Sue spoke too soon.

Sue: What the fuck?

Oh look, it's a giant talking carrot.

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?
Gary: I definitely don't remember this...

We're so stunned by the giant talking carrot, we barely notice the title sequence.

Sue: The music is very catchy. I'll give it that. But seriously? A carrot?

And that's about as good as it gets for Lost in Space. *Apologies in advance if you're a dyed-in-the-wool Lostinspaceian.*

Sue: I'm sorry, Gary, but no matter how bad *Doctor Who* got, and sometimes it was fucking terrible, you never saw any talking carrots.
Me: Although it did come pretty close a couple of times.

Dr Smith runs away and bumps into a man with purple hair.

Sue: Is he supposed to be a beetroot? Because he isn't selling it to me.

Willoughby is actually half-man half-lettuce, because Tybo (the giant talking carrot) gets his kicks from turning people into vegetables. He's basically Josef Mengele meets Alan Titchmarsh.

Gary: He should turn Dr Smith into a cucumber. He'd probably enjoy that.

Back on Jupiter (the spaceship, not the planet)*, the Robinsons' robot finally makes an appearance.*

Gary: It's Robby the Robot!
Me: No, it isn't.
Gary: Oh yes it is.
Me: It really isn't.
Gary: Is.

Fuck it. Life's too short.

Gary: I can't believe you didn't know that, Neil.

Dr Smith refuses to leave the planet because he's suddenly 'become one' with nature.

Sue: Are you sure he hasn't been smoking the plants?

The Robinson clan divert to the planet so they can search for Dr Smith. The sound of plant life being killed as our heroes hack away at the foliage with their machetes sounds like they've accidentally interrupted some frisky nudists hiding in the bushes. "It's as if the plants feel pain," says Penny as John chops down another flower and it orgasms loudly.

Sue: Stop fucking killing them, then!

At this point, Sue's brother begins to look ashamed.

Sue: I can't believe you actually watched this shit, Gary. This is much worse than *Doctor Who*! Did you make me watch this shit instead? You did, didn't you?

Will and Judy discover that their robot (whose name definitely isn't Robby) is covered in roots and vines because he stopped to take a well-deserved rest.

Sue: You don't need to rest! You're a fucking robot!

Will, Judy and the robot with no name set out to find Dr Smith (luckily for them, their ship is overflowing with spare machetes).

Sue: Put your fucking machetes away – there's a path, there! Look, the robot is rolling down it, you murdering idiots!

They eventually find Dr Smith hugging a tree. And no, that isn't a euphemism.

Sue: And I thought *Space 1999* was bad. *Space 1999* is *Babylon-fucking-5* compared to this!

Me: Come on, Gary, defend this. Tell me how *Lost in Space* is better than *The Krotons*. Go on.
Gary: The What-ons?
Sue: Even *The Toymaker* (sic) is better than this rubbish!

Tybo locks John, Maureen, Penny and Don in a greenhouse, and when John dicks around with its thermostat, he accidentally makes it snow.

Sue: That isn't snow. That's Grade-A Columbian cocaine. It's the only explanation I can come up with for this nonsense.

I let Sue and Gary into a little secret: two cast members were suspended for laughing too much on the set during the filming of this scene. The studio would have reprimanded all three of them, but someone had to fly the spaceship in the next episode.

Sue: You can hardly blame them. It's as if they've accidentally filmed the Christmas party.

OH NO!! Penny has turned into a... hippy.

Sue: She looks lovely with flowers in her hair. Why are they so upset? It's not as if she's been transformed into a radish or something.
Gary: (*Singing*) She is 16 going on 17...
Me: ARGH! The pain! The pain!

Will and Penny are attacked by an angry nettle.

Me: Stranger danger, Will Robinson!

Meanwhile, John wonders if it's possible that the manual shut-off switch that he's found beneath the greenhouse will shut everything off.

Sue: ARGH! JUST DO IT!

And then the giant talking carrot takes some time out from his busy schedule to water himself. It's almost erotic.

Gary: I can't believe I missed an hour on *Grindr* for this.

John finally decides to activate the manual shut-off switch. I mean, why the fuck not, eh?

Sue: HE SHOULD HAVE DONE THAT 10 MINUTES AGO!

Meanwhile, Dr Smith has been transformed into a giant stick of celery, and Will Robinson brings the house down when he tells Willoughby to stop nibbling on his friend. We're laughing too much to say anything even remotely coherent for the next five minutes. I could have paused the episode, but that would have been crazy. Anyway, young Will is convinced that Dr Smith is acting exactly like a real *stick of celery would.*

Sue: How many sticks of celery have you talked to recently? Eh?

And then Dr Smith breaks into song, probably because this isn't weird enough already. Its lyrics include the line: "Doctor Smith with his coat so gay" which must be the understatement of the century.

Gary: What is this carrot hoping to achieve, exactly?
Sue: He wants to make a salad.
Me: You should see the body parts he uses for the hard boiled eggs.

Will Robinson threatens the malevolent vegetable with a machete.

Sue: What are you waiting for, lad? Turn him into crudités!

Tybo is finally defeated when his water supply runs out. Dr Smith runs off into the undergrowth demanding "Moisture! I must have moisture!"

Sue: Russell T Davies has definitely seen this. More than once, I bet.

Dr Smith returns to his usual cantankerous self, and the purplehaired lettuce-man promises to nurse Tybo back to health, which presumably means he'll be terrorising hapless visitors again in no time at all. Cue credits.

Sue: What the fuck?

The Score

Gary: *Lost in Space* was really good when it first started. And then it went a bit stupid. That was one of the stupid ones.
Me: No shit, Sherlock.
Sue: Neil won't show us any good episodes, Gary. He always shows you the worst one he can find. He's a...
Me: I didn't choose this episode! This isn't my fault! Do you honestly think I enjoyed that?

Gary leaves the room before I can extract a score from him, but Sue doesn't hesitate:

-10/10

That isn't a typo, by the way. That's minus *10 out of 10. Oh dear. Still, it could have been worse. It could have been the Matt LeBlanc movie.*

WORZEL GUMMIDGE

This blog was originally commissioned by Bradley Forssman

Sue: *Worzel*-fucking-*Gummidge*? For fuck's sake, Neil. What's next? *Bagpuss*?
Me: I always feel uncomfortable when I watch *Worzel Gummidge*.
Sue: Does it remind you of your unhappy childhood?
Me: No, it reminds me that I used to be a massive twat.
Sue: Used to be?

Once upon a time, I betrayed a Worzel Gummidge *fan.*

It was the late-1990s and I was into Babylon 5. *And because I couldn't wait for the episodes to show up on Channel 4, or for Bit Torrent to be invented, I had no choice but to befriend an American* Worzel Gummidge *fan on the internet in order to get my fix.*

Actually, he was interested in the spin-off series, Worzel Gummidge Down Under*, but that isn't important. What is important is that episodes of* Worzel Gummidge *were extremely hard to come by if you happened to live in Florida in 1998.*

Anyway, as luck would have it, the episodes he so badly needed were about to be broadcast on UK Gold every Sunday at 9am. So we formed a symbiotic relationship and both of us were very happy.

The only problem was I didn't trust the timer on the NTSC VCR I'd imported to play my Babylon 5 *episodes on, which meant I had to wake up ridiculously early every Sunday morning and record the programme manually. And on those very rare occasions where I actually managed to stay awake, I edited out the adverts for him too.*

And then Babylon 5 *finished. But that was okay because there was only one episode of* Worzel Gummidge Down Under *left to record – the season finale! – and then my American friend would have the complete set.*

However, that particular Sunday morning I was hungover (I was drinking to forget the last episode of Babylon 5*), so when my alarm went off, I muttered a half-remembered, "Fuck it" and went back to* sleep.

Sue: I don't know how you can live with yourself!
Me: When I told you about this at the time, you thought it was hilarious.
Sue: Has he got the episodes now?
Me: I expect so. They're probably on *YouTube*. But that isn't the point. I still feel terrible about it. Especially when, 10 years later, I almost bumped into him at a *Doctor Who* convention in Los Angeles. And by that I mean I spotted him in a crowd and ran in the opposite direction. I'm a such coward. Anyway, I'm not the one on trial today.

I press 'play'.

The Trial of Worzel Gummidge

Me: So, what do you know about *Worzel Gummidge*, Sue?
Sue: It was shown on Sunday afternoons, and my younger brother, Kenny, was terrified of it. Me and Gary used to make fun of him because he'd hide behind the sofa when it was on. It didn't help that our mam looked a bit like Worzel Gummidge when she was drunk, mind.

Worzel winks at the audience.

Me: Yeah, that is pretty scary, I suppose.
Sue: I felt sorry for him. Worzel, I mean. Not our Kenny. He's got a shit job, freezing his balls off in a field like that. Who'd want a job like that?

If that wasn't bad enough, Worzel is perpetually at war with the crows.

Sue: Is that Jon Pertwee's real voice?
Me: No, he didn't speak like that all the time.
Sue: No, silly. I mean is doing that voice himself, or is it done later in post-production?
Me: No, Jon's doing it all himself.
Sue: There was a canister of helium, just off-camera?
Me: No.
Sue: Wow. He's even more talented than I thought.

Worzel use a giant slingshot to launch potatoes at the crows.

Sue: He's basically invented *Angry Birds* 30 years too early.

While Worzel gets up to mischief, a man dressed in black looks on in despair.

Sue: Is that the Crowmaster?
Me: Close enough.
Sue: He looks like the child catcher from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

The Crowman takes Worzel to a cow shed. Worzel's friends, Sue and John, decide to investigate.

Me: Do you recognise her?
Sue: No. Should I?

I tell her that her namesake is played by Charlotte Coleman; she remembers her from Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit.

Me: She died from an asthma attack at a ridiculously young age.
Sue: Well, that was cheerful. Thanks for that, Neil. I'll think about that during the funny bits.

The Crowman has summoned the local scarecrows to a secret meeting.

Sue: They're fucking zombies. Look at them! It's *Dawn of the Living Scarecrows*! Now I know why Kenny used to shit himself.

As the scarecrows lumber eerily across the countryside, Aunt Sally arrives at the shed on the back of a cart.

Sue: Aunt Sally used to scare Kenny the most. Gary would sneak up behind him and scream, "Aunt Sally's going to get you! Aunt Sally's going to get you!" He was traumatised, poor kid.

Me: So why are you laughing?

As soon as his peers finish assembling in the shed, Worzel is accused of crimes against scarecrowing.

Sue: The crows must be having a field day while this is going on.

Sergeant Beetroot brings order to the court.

Sue: This is the second time you've made me watch a man pretend to be a beetroot.
Me: He was a lettuce.
Sue: Whatever. Either way, there are a lot of vegetables in our next book.
Me: Do you recognise the actor who's playing the beetroot?
Sue: It's not Arthur Mullard, is it?
Me: God no! It's Bill Maynard. You know. Selwyn Froggitt.
Sue: Sorry, you've lost me now.

She doesn't even recognise Catweazle.

Sue: He reminds me of William Hartnell. If William Hartnell let himself go or fell into a haystack, that is.
Me: Geoffrey Bayldon was offered the role of the Doctor, but he turned it down. More than once, I believe.
Sue: Good! He's bloody terrifying!

Aunt Sally takes to the stand.

Sue: Didn't you tell me once that Una Stubbs...
Me: Ssh... You're missing the best bit. Aunt Sally has just admitted that she's shagged a beetroot.
Sue: Wow. That's even worse!

And then Sue asks a very important question:

Sue: Why are they alive?
Me: Fuck knows.
Sue: Well, there must be a good reason. What would be the point, otherwise? Why would you bring something to life that's going to be strapped to a pole in the ground? It's insane.

Aunt Sally testifies against Worzel.

Sue: Remind me why he fancies her again. Because she's fucking horrible!
Me: What do you think of Jon Pertwee's performance?
Sue: Oh, he's brilliant. This can't have been easy.
Me: Do you prefer Jon Pertwee as Worzel or the Doctor?
Sue: Oh Worzel, easy. He's more down to earth in this. And he looks like Rod Stewart, too.

Aunt Sally cross-examines herself.

Sue: That was excellent. The script is very funny. There are definitely plenty of jokes for the adults.

Worzel hopes to escape to Bulgaria.

Sue: Bulgaria? Whoever wrote this is a genius.

Worzel is found guilty, and Sue and John are forced to intervene.

Sue: The scarecrows will have to kill them now. They can't leave any witnesses.
Me: Is this the sort of thing you used to tell Kenny?

When it comes to defending poor Worzel, the children are literally lost for words.

Sue: This is very funny. I bet Nicol would have enjoyed this when she was six years old.

Me: She would have been too busy watching *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*.

Worzel's sentence (the compost heap) is suddenly rescinded when he admits he's been sheltering some baby birds in his chest cavity. Like that explains everything.

Sue: Wouldn't it be funny if they turned out to be crows and he had to kill them with a potato in the next episode?

Worzel returns to his field with a spring in his step.

Sue: I don't know why he's so happy. It's a shit job. And why is he alive in the first place? It's so cruel.

The Score

Me: So what are you giving that?
Sue: I don't know. I definitely enjoyed it, although I'm sure I would have enjoyed it a lot more if I'd watched it with my imaginary grandchildren, instead of on a Friday night with my stupid husband, but you can't have everything.
Me: But apart from that you enjoyed it?
Sue: It was all right, I suppose. The script was quite funny. Bizarre, but funny. Jon Pertwee was surprisingly good. Oh, and it was definitely for kids, so:

7/10

Sue: So what's next, then? *The Magic Roundabout*?

THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS

This blog was originally commissioned by Derek Handley

Derek wanted us to watch Part two, but Sue wasn't having that.

Sue: We have to watch the first episode otherwise I won't have a bloody clue what's going on.

Part One

Me: Does this ring any bells?
Sue: I don't think so.
Me: I can't remember whether you've watched this with me before or not.
Sue: Well, I definitely know what a Triffid is.
Me: So what can you tell me about them?
Sue: They're plants that kill people.
Me: Anything else?
Sue: They come from outer space.
Me: No! They don't come from outer space!
Sue: Okay, don't get your knickers in a twist.
Me: I got into an argument with Brian Pern about this on *Twitter*; his *Day of the Triffids* musical makes the same mistake.
Sue: So where do they come from, then?
Me: Russia. **Sue**: But you blame Russia for everything, Neil. Especially Brexit.

The Day of the Triffids *begins with Bill Masen in hospital. His eyes have been bandaged and he only has his Dictaphone for company*.

Sue: I think I do remember this. Is everybody dead?
Me: You could be confusing this with a different British film.

Sue: There was a film version of *The Day of the Triffids*?
Me: Well, yes, but that's not what I meant. It will come to you eventually.

Bill must be bored, because he spends his time reminiscing about the rise of the Triffids.

Me: I told you they came from Russia.
Sue: But this guy in the flashback sounds French to me. I can tell it's a flashback because they've smeared Vaseline all over the camera.
Me: He is French. The French nicked the seeds from the Russians.
Sue: Should I be taking notes?

A Triffid stung Bill when he was a little boy.

Sue: His dad was Richard Stilgoe?
Me: His dad was William Morgan Sheppard, actually.
Sue: You say that like it means something.
Me: He's been in loads of stuff – *Babylon 5*, *Doctor Who*… Loads of stuff! Even his son has been in *Doctor Who*.
Sue: He has a very deep voice. Is he still alive? Because I think he may have throat cancer.

Bill and his father examine the Triffid that has wandered into their back garden.

Sue: Their balls are very hairy.

The general public regard the Triffids as a laughable novelty, especially when they start walking around.

Me: Do you think the Triffids look stupid, Sue?
Sue: Not really, no.
Me: I like the way the programme gives you permission to laugh at them, because they do look a bit ridiculous.
Sue: You'd shit yourself if one of them turned up in our garden. We

should make a plastic one and put it outside the house. That would scare off the crows.
Me: Not to mention the postman.

Bill realises the nurses who were supposed to remove his bandages are over an hour late.

Me: How long would you wait before you took the bandages off yourself?
Sue: I would have ripped them off by now.

I think Sue has fallen for Bill. The dead giveaway is when she says he reminds her of David Tennant.

Me: I think the scariest thing about the Triffids is that noise they make.
Sue: I know what you mean. They sound like Hannibal Lecter.
Me: I beg your pardon?
Sue: You know when he says he wants some nice Chianti, and he makes that funny noise with his mouth? Well, that's what the Triffids sound like to me, only worse.

Bill remembers a conversation he had with a colleague at the Triffid farm where he works, about the plants' ability to communicate.

Sue: Are the Triffids shagging now?
Me: No, that's the sound of an electric typewriter in the background.
Sue: Oh, for a minute there I thought they were really going for it.

Back in the present day, Bill prepares to remove his bandages.

Sue: Wait! I think I can hear the tea trolley coming.
Me: That's the incidental music.
Sue: Oh.

And then Bill remembers a comet appeared in the sky last night, and everybody watched the free firework display. Everybody except him.

Sue: Don't worry. You can always watch it on TV later.
Me: Have you worked out what's happened to everybody yet?
Sue: Did the comet kill them?
Me: Not quite.
Sue: Did it turn people to stone if they looked at it?
Me: Not quite.
Sue: Has it turned them into Triffids?
Me: (*Sighing loudly*) Not quite.

Bill removes his bandages and searches for help. He eventually finds the doctor who treated him earlier, but there's a problem – the doctor is blind. Cue credits.

Me: What do you think of it so far?
Sue: You know I hate being scared, Neil. And this is bloody terrifying.
Me: But nothing's happened yet.
Sue: I know, but I'm still a bag of nerves.

Part Two

Me: What do you think of the theme music?
Sue: You call this music? I bet you couldn't hum it. Whatever it is, it's making me nervous. I won't have any nails left by the end of this.

Bill's tour of the deserted hospital is bleak to put it mildly.

Sue: I hope he doesn't walk into the maternity ward.
Me: Does this remind you of anything else yet?
Sue: Yes, it does. Is there a scene where a man is killed by his own lawnmower?
Me: No. I think you're confusing this with *The Happening*, one of the worst films ever made.
Sue: I'm sure the plants were responsible.
Me: No, it was definitely M Night Shyamalan's fault.

A blonde woman gets into her car and drives away.

Sue: I hope she can see, or this will end in tears.

When she stops the car next to a group of blind people in the street, one of them begs for help.

Sue: I can't tell if she's deaf or she's just being cruel. Help them, for God's sake!

However, as soon as she offers her hand, she is attacked, threatened and captured.

Sue: How embarrassing would it be to be captured by someone who can't even see you?

Meanwhile Bill finds another young girl who can also see.

Sue: The children would have been in bed, so they wouldn't have seen the comet.
Me: Nicol would have gone blind, then. She never went to bed when she was supposed to.

The girl's father and mother, who are both blind, beg Bill to stay.

Me: What would you do, Sue?
Sue: I'd run away to the Lake District without a second thought. I'm sorry, but I would.

Bill explains that he was recently stung by a Triffid and almost blinded. But at least he didn't look at the comet.

Sue: That's right, rub it in.

The girl's father offers Bill shelter in exchange for his help.

Sue: Why would he need a shelter? He's got a house, hasn't he? That's a terrible deal. He should leave. Now.

People are already looting the shops for food, even though they don't know what they're eating until it's too late.

Sue: I can't watch this. That woman is going to eat a box of washing powder, for God's sake! I definitely would have remembered this if I'd seen it before. I don't think I'll be able to sleep tonight.
Me: It makes *Threads* look like *Doctor Who*.
Sue: I don't like it. It makes me feel uncomfortable.

A man who can still see leads a group of blind drunk football hooligans through the streets, only stopping to grab a young, helpless woman. Bill tries to intervene but he's given a good hiding and the girl is dragged away, screaming.

Sue: So, he's leaving that woman to be raped? I can't believe I'm watching this. What time was this on? Was it midnight?
Me: I think it was before the watershed – around 8:30pm, I think.
Sue: Fucking hell. That's unbelievable.

London's famous landmarks are completely deserted.

Me: Does this remind you of anything?
Sue: Yes. Fuck knows what it reminds me of, but it definitely reminds me of something. Is it *The Survivors* (sic)? Actually, this reminds me of that *a lot*.
Me: It's *28 Days Later*.
Sue: Oh yeah… What a rip-off!

Bill stumbles across the blonde woman who was captured by the perfidious blind man earlier. He is currently beating the life out of her so Bill steps in and twats him.

Sue: Bloody hell, this is grim.

Bill takes Josella (Jo for short) to the pub.

Sue: Is this the Queen Vic?

I think Sue's EastEnders *detector is on the blink.*

Sue: I reckon they must have asked Joanna Lumley to play her part, but she turned them down. She looks and sounds exactly like her. I bet Bill can't believe his luck.

Jo tells Bill she knew she was in trouble when she couldn't find her housekeeper.

Sue: How posh is she? She won't last five minutes out there. She's already shown that. In fact, I'll be surprised if she survives this episode.

As Bill and Jo plan their next move, Sue lays out, in laborious detail, how she would deal with this situation:

Sue: I'd find a van and head for a big supermarket, like Aldi.
Me: Aldi? It's the end of the world and you're going to an Aldi?!
Sue: Okay, I'd find the nearest Waitrose. Whatever. It doesn't matter.
Me: So the *Dawn of the Dead* tactic, then?
Sue: I'd fill the van with tins of food, bottles of water, medicine, you know, the sort of thing sort of thing you made us stock up in 1999 when you thought the world was going to end.
Me: Alcohol.
Sue: We'll make our own alcohol from potatoes.
Me: I can hardly wait.
Sue: And then I'd drive to B&Q for some tools and a generator or two, and then I'd drive to the Lake District and find a nice cottage with its own water supply.
Me: What about the Triffids?

Sue: I'd dig a ditch – I'd like to see them get over that.
Me: You have it all worked out.
Sue: Yeah, this post-apocalyptic survival thing is a piece of piss.

Jo and Bill encounter some Triffids at Jo's family home.

Sue: The only good thing about this situation is blind people and Triffids are pretty easy to dodge. I mean, let's face it, nothing's going to be running after them, is it? It could be worse.

The Triffids kill their victims with their stingers, and then they stand over them until they decompose, at which point they eat them.

Sue: Fuck's sake, Neil. This is horrible.

Bill attacks a Triffid with a pitchfork.

Sue: Go inside the house! Run upstairs! I bet the fuckers can't go upstairs.

Bill stabs the Triffid to death instead.

Sue: Watch out! You'll spray poison all over yourself! Oh, too late.

Bill and Jo return to their car, but it isn't long before they are confronted by another group of desperate locals.

Sue: It's turned into a zombie film. Just reverse over them!

Cue credits.

Sue: Bloody hell, Neil, that was tense. I'm exhausted. And look!

She waves her hand in my face.

Sue: No nails!

I stop the DVD.

Me: So, what score are you going to give that?
Sue: We haven't finished it yet.
Me: We're only watching the first two episodes.
Sue: Like hell we are. Stick the next one on.

Part Three

Bill and Jo's car is attacked by the blind mob.

Me: (*Pointing*) You see that guy over there, Sue. That's Morris Barry, that is. He directed *The Tomb of the Cybermen*.
Sue: Shut up, I don't care. I'm watching this. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

Bill is opening the car door.

Sue: RUN THEM OVER! For God's sake, Neil, the direction in this scene is terrible.
Me: They should ask Morris Barry to take over.

Bill wants to get his hands on a Triffid gun.

Sue: A Triffid gun? Why is that a thing?
Me: Triffids are dangerous. Haven't you worked that out yet?
Sue: I thought they just stuck them in a field and left them to it. Why would you need a special gun? I'm sure a shotgun would do the job just as nicely, and there must be loads of them in London.

Jo and Bill retire to a flat in a tower block so they can rest a while. Bill uncorks a bottle of red wine.

Sue: Let it breathe first, you savage! She won't like that at all. And why are they drinking wine out of a mug? And why is he eating his dinner with a

penknife? Did the comet destroy all the knives and forks in this flat?

Bill says they will have to leave London before it starts stinking like a sewer.

Sue: It's a bit late for that. This is London we're talking about.

Bill realises that the country will slowly fall apart.

Me: This is exactly what Brexit will be like.
Sue: Apart from the Triffids. **Me**: Whoopee-fucking-do.

That night, a blind couple are out harvesting cabbages when a Triffid strikes.

Sue: I bet the cabbages are laughing their arses off.

Jo is kept awake by the sound of someone crying for help.

Sue: That would get on your tits after a while. The sooner they fuck off to the country the better. I would be halfway there by now.

Jo climbs into bed with Bill.

Sue: The sounds of people dying in the streets isn't going to get her in mood, so he should probably keep his hands to himself. God, this is so depressing.

Early the next morning, Bill and Jo head for the city's university because they saw somebody signalling there the night before. When they arrive, they find Maurice Colbourne arguing with what's left of the army, who couldn't give a shit, frankly.

Sue: Oh, it's whatshisface from whatsitcalled.
Me: Well spotted.

Maurice tries – and fails – to help the large group of blind people he's

somehow managed to assemble together.

Sue: At least he tried. I'd have my feet up in my new cottage with a nice cup of tea by now.

Things are so bleak, Bill and Jo have to stop for a cigarette.

Sue: I could do with a tab about now.
Me: You've given up.
Sue: I know, but this programme makes me want to start again.

Bill and Jo agree to locate some supplies for the survivors who are currently holed up in the university. As they finish loading a van, they watch as a blind man struggles valiantly down the street to his certain doom. And they don't lift a finger to help him.

Me: Our heroes, ladies and gentlemen.
Sue: They can't save everybody, can they? I mean where do you draw the line?
Me: It's one person, Sue. They have a van. They are about to drive to a safe place, with food and people who can look after him. Would it have killed them to help one person?
Sue: Look, if it was me I'd be in the Lake District on my second cup of tea.

A meeting is called in the university's lecture hall.

Sue: You'd think they'd find a meeting place that didn't have quite so many steps, what with all the blind people and everything.

The survivors' de facto leader doesn't think the Triffids pose much of a threat.

Sue: I really hope he gets eaten by one now.

When the men are told that they will have to take several wives if they want

to repopulate the planet, a couple of middle-aged men in the audience can barely contain their joy.

Me: I'm surprised he didn't start pumping his arm up and down.

Jo tells Bill that men are just a means to an end now.

Me: Well, this is romantic.
Sue: It definitely isn't for kids, that's for sure.

Bill asks Jo to be one of his three wives, and Jo agrees if she can pick the other two.

Me: I bet she picks the ugliest women she can find.
Sue: You are so bad-minded, Neil. But yeah, I would.

Bill is woken in the middle of the night by the smell of burning.

Sue: How did the Triffids set fire to this place? I'm confused.

Bill decides to investigate but he is overcome by the fumes. When he wakes up later, he's been tied to a bed.

Sue: Okay, now I'm confused. How did the Triffids tie him up?

Cue titles.

Me: Have you seen enough? We can stop here if you like. **Sue**: We can't leave it like this. Let's watch one more.

Part Four

Bill has been kidnapped by Jack Coker (Maurice Colbourne). Coker believes that sighted people should help the blind whether they like it or not.

Sue: What a bastard. Did he ever think about asking him nicely first?
Me: He's using the old carrot and stick routine, only he's fresh out of carrots.
Sue: Everyone's scared of the carrots, Neil.

There then follows 20 of the bleakest minutes ever broadcast by the BBC, at least until Threads *came along and maybe not even then.*

Sue: This looks like an average Sunday in Stockton-on-Tees.

Or maybe not… Anyway, Bill's new job entails him escorting blind people to the shops so they can loot them.

Sue: Surely it would be a lot quicker, not to mention easier, if he stocked up the van himself.
Me: But what would stop him pissing off to the Lake District?
Sue: His conscience.
Me: You said you'd run away the first chance you got!

One of Bill's party is shot in the head, while another is attacked and killed by Triffids. To be honest, it's not the greatest first day at work.

Sue: I'd almost forgotten about the Triffids. In fact, they don't need the Triffids at all. They could easily make a version of this without them.
Me: They already did. It's called *Survivors*.
Sue: Oh yeah… Anyway, do you know what these Triffids remind me off?
Me: Go on.
Sue: Emu.
Me: Of course they do.
Sue: It's the long necks and threatening gestures that do it. Oh, and bits of them are bright orange.

Bill steals a car.

Sue: Great. Now run the lanky fucker over.

A Triffid spits deadly venom at the windscreen.

Sue: So fucking what? Just flick your wipers on, turn around and RUN IT OVER! Why is this so difficult?

Bill is forced to make a decision – stay and help the blind or run away and search for Jo.

Sue: What would Greg do?
Me: Greg from *Survivors*? He'd probably fuck off to Norway in a hot air balloon like he always does.

A teenage girl is sent to Bill's room in an attempt to persuade him to stay.

Sue: Unbelievable.
Me: I know.
Sue: Prime time BBC1. Are you absolutely sure about that?
Me: Yes, Sue, I know.

Bill rejects the girl's clumsy advances but decides to stay anyway. However, when he wakes the next morning, everyone has gone. Only the girl is left – and she's dying from an unexplained disease. But don't worry, readers, Bill leaves her with enough drugs to kill herself. Phew, eh?

Sue: Un-fucking-believable.
Me: Yeah, I know.
Sue: And now he fucks off to the Lake District. The End. Because I don't think I can take much more of this. And why are these people ill all of a sudden? Did a Triffid sting them?
Me: I don't think so.
Sue: That girl was all over Bill last night, so why hasn't he got the same disease as her? Did looking at the sky make you sick as well as blind? Because that doesn't seem fair.

Bill scours London for Jo.

Sue: Stop telling everyone you meet that she's blonde. They're blind!

The episode concludes with Bill returning to the university, where somebody is waiting for him.

Sue: Bloody hell.
Me: What's wrong?
Sue: I have to watch the next one. I need to know if he finds her or not. I'm a bag of nerves, but I'm well and truly hooked. You bastard.

Part Five

It isn't Jo who's waiting for Bill – it's Coker.

Me: I don't know why Bill doesn't plant him in the face, no pun intended.

Bill tells Coker that he simply must find Jo.

Sue: He's on a promise, you know.

Bill and Coker discover a small community of well-meaning – but totally out of their depth – Christians.

Sue: They look like zombies to me.
Me: Plants versus zombies. That has a good ring to it. We should definitely look into that.

Coker restores electricity to the floundering community.

Sue: He's turned into Greg. He's even wearing the same sort of jumper as Greg.
Me: You can stop drooling, love. I am sitting here, you know.

Coker wants the community to stop letting blind people in.

Me: He's changed his tune!
Sue: He's gone from one extreme to the other. He'll be eating them next.

The Christians won't repopulate the planet without getting married first, so Bill and Coker hit the road again.

Sue: The Lake District is that way.

Bill is momentarily bewitched by a scarecrow when they stop to refuel.

Sue: Did he really think it was Jo standing in that field? The cheeky sod. Is he going blind as well?

Coker decides to try talking sense into the Christians while Bill searches for Jo in the Sussex Downs.

Sue: Did I mention he was on a promise?

As he heads south, Bill ends up adopting a little girl and her dog.

Sue: And they all lived happily ever after. The End.

Bill miraculously finds Jo a few days later.

Sue: Okay, fine, they can end it here instead. This is nice.

Jo was living with some blind people until they went out one day to look for help and never returned.

Sue: And you let them go out on their own? Are you mad?

Bill tries to rendezvous with Coker, but all he finds are lots of dead Christians. Cue credits.

Sue: Okay, I've seen enough. Let's end it here.

Me: We can't end it here!
Sue: But it's depressing.
Me: Maybe there's a happy ending.
Sue: Does the little girl's dog survive?
Me: I can't remember.
Sue: They wouldn't kill a little girl's dog, would they?
Me: Her younger brother was lying face down in the mud, so all bets are off when it comes to her dog, Sue. But there's only one way to be sure. I mean, if we stop now, I don't know about you but I'll always believe that her dog was eaten by a Triffid. However…

Schrödinger's dog swings her decision.

Sue: Okay, I give in. Let's do it.

Part Six

The final episode takes place six years later. Eat your heart out Battlestar Galactica.

Me: The dog probably died of old age.
Sue: For fuck's sake, Neil!

You can tell it's six years later because Bill's beard is totally out of control.

Sue: Did the comet destroy the world's scissors? Look at the state of him!

Bill has carved out a comfortable life for himself with Jo, their adoptive daughter, their son, a blind couple and their child. There's no sign of a dog.

Sue: And they've got a nice Aga stove and a lovely Welsh dresser. What more could they want? The End.

An electric fence keeps the Triffids at bay, until one day they break through and Bill has to roast them alive with a flamethrower.

Sue: It's a shame you can't eat the Triffids. Just think of the stew you could make with that lot.
Me: They're plants, Sue, not vegetables.
Sue: A nice salad, then.

Bill and Jo take walk on a beach, because the Triffids can't walk on shingles.

Sue: Spread shingles around the house, then, you dick!

Bill believes that the comet may have been a spy satellite that went rogue and blinded everyone by mistake.

Sue: Like they haven't got enough to worry about without his lunatic conspiracy theories.

Jo wonders if we destroyed the world by accident.

Me: Like Brexit.
Sue: Oh, do be quiet, Neil.

Coker turns up at Bill's house in a helicopter, and even Jo is pleased to see him.

Sue: Yeah, thanks for kidnapping my boyfriend and chaining me to some blind people. Here, give us a big kiss.

Coker offers Bill a job on the Isle of Wight.

Sue: Of course! The Isle of Wight! Why didn't I think of that? That makes perfect sense. Go there. The End.

However, before Bill's family can pack up and leave, they are visited by a group of uniformed men who want to create a militarised feudal society.

Sue: I like the way the Triffids aren't the world's biggest problem – it's

other people. They haven't learned a bloody thing, have they?

Bill gets the soldiers drunk so he can sabotage their armoured tank.

Me: I would have put rat poison in their wine.
Sue: I must admit, it is a waste of a good tank.
Me: If Greg was in this programme, he would have made the wine, cultivated the poison and hot-wired the tank.
Sue: (*Sighing*) I know…

Bill's family escape from the compound, but in doing so they leave the gates open for the Triffids.

Sue: I was going to say that was an awful thing to do, but if these heavily-armed soldiers can't escape from a couple of Triffids, they don't deserve to live. I don't care how hungover they are.

The story concludes with Bill's family running away to the Isle of Wight.

Sue: Is that it? They can't leave it there. I want to see them get on a boat.
Me: They were probably killed a hundred yards down the road.

Cue credits.

The Score

Sue: It was very good, and certainly well made, but it was too bleak for me. I know you like being depressed by grim TV, Neil, but where was the light relief? I don't think there was a single joke in the whole programme. It was three hours of unrelenting misery.
Me: I'd forgotten how grim it was.
Sue: And we never did find out about the dog.

8/10

BUGS

This blog was originally commissioned by Liam Hutchinson

Me: Do you remember anything about *Bugs*?
Sue: No.
Me: We definitely watched it. It's what BBC1 broadcast on Saturday nights in the mid-1990s instead of *Doctor Who*.
Sue: You're still angry about it. I can tell.
Me: I should probably let it go. It has been 20 years. To be honest, I don't remember anything about *Bugs*, either, apart from who's in it, but I do remember being terribly angry about it at the time. Sorry, I think I've been triggered.

Episode One:
Out of the Hive

Armed police escort a man carrying a large rectangular case to a waiting helicopter.

Sue: That must be one hell of an expensive snooker cue.

The helicopter pilot, Ed, is played by…

Sue: Oh, it's whatshisface from *Neighbours*. Craig something… I definitely know this… Hang on… Craig McLachlan.
Me: I'm impressed.
Sue: I don't know where I pulled that name from.
Me: It's because you bought all his records. You had no taste in music when I first met you. I mean, you actually thought Jimmy Nail was a good idea.
Sue: (*Wistfully*) I loved *Crocodile Shoes*…
Me: I rest my case.

As soon as Ed's helicopter is airborne, a rival helicopter gives chase.

Sue: They'll crash into Anneka Rice if they're not careful.

This helicopter chase certainly gets Sue's pulse racing.

Sue: It's pretty good, this. They've paid for a couple of helicopters and they're definitely going to use them. It feels really modern. I like they way they've cut little holes in the windows for their guns. I bet it's draughty, though.

A woman with a Russian accent, who is observing this high-octane chase from the ground, concludes that Ed's helicopter has been cornered.

Sue: (*Laughing*) How do you corner a helicopter? It can fly straight up, for fuck's sake!

Ed shoots the enemy helicopter's tail rotor and it plummets to the ground.

Sue: STOP THE CLOCK!

BOOM!

Sue: Too late.

Cue titles.

Me: Does this ring any bells?
Sue: None at all. Are you sure we watched this on a Saturday night? Weren't we out having a good time?
Me: We used to drop an E during the opening titles. Don't you remember?
Sue: You'd have to take some Ecstasy to make this theme music bearable.
Me: Do you know who Brian Clemens is?
Sue: No idea.
Me: He created *The Avengers* and *The Professionals*.

Sue: Did he? I expect this to be bloody amazing, then.

After the breathless excitement of the opening sequence, we enter the relative calm of a secret government agency called the Hive. There's no sign of Bodie or Doyle lounging behind a desk, more's the pity.

Sue: Is that David Walliams?
Me: No, it's Jesse Birdsall.
Sue: Oh yes, he was in *Eldorado*. He's rubbish.

Jesse, aka Nick Beckett, receives a phone call from the man with the expensive snooker cue (which is actually a device for jamming satellites). He tells Nick there's a traitor in the Hive, but before he can elaborate further, he's shot dead by the woman who believes you can corner helicopters. Beckett thinks he heard gunshots before the call was terminated, but he can't be sure.

Sue: Is he deaf as well as stupid?

Beckett contacts a woman named Roz. She's something of an expert when it comes to recognising gunshots in the middle of phone calls. Anyway, she's played by Jaye Griffiths.

Sue: She's been in loads of stuff.
Me: Name one thing, apart from *Bugs*, that you've seen her in, Sue. I'll wait.
Sue: Er… *The Bill*?
Me: It would be quicker to name all the actors who *haven't* been in *The Bill.*
Sue: Whatever. She's really good.

Beckett steals the DAT tape that recorded his phone call.

Me: What's with the electro-porn soundtrack all of a sudden?
Sue: I thought this was the latest album by Tangerine Dream.

Me: Actually, this saxophone solo is very familiar…

Beckett's attempts at subterfuge are thwarted and the tape is returned to the Hive.

Sue: Worst James Bond ever. Why doesn't he go around to his friend's house? If he isn't there then he's probably been shot. End of.

Beckett is framed as a double agent, but he manages to escape from the Hive thanks to Roz, who takes Beckett for a very bumpy ride around Canary Wharf in what has to be the worst car chase ever committed to video tape.

Sue: Where is everyone? Where are all the other cars?
Me: This series takes place in a depopulated world of the future. Like *Hollyoaks*.

A pursuing car overturns spectacularly for no discernable reason.

Me: They closed all the roads, and made sure there were no pedestrians around, and that car still managed to crash into something. Fuck's sake…

Beckett will have to break into the Hive and steal the tape again. Luckily for him, Ed is one of Roz's neighbours.

Sue: That's when neighbours become good friends.
Me: I'm gobsmacked. What are the chances of that?

Ed parachutes into the Hive and retrieves the tape. I must have fallen asleep while he was doing this because I was awoken by the sound of gunfire. At least I think it was gunfire. If only there was a way to be sure…

Sue: Were these soldiers trained by UNIT? Because they couldn't hit a barn door if their lives depended on it. And why can't they run and shoot at the same time? They might actually hit something that way. Bloody hell, they really are fucking useless.

Roz examines the recording with her specialist equipment and concludes that the bloke who called Beckett was – wait for it – shot.

Sue: I can't believe it's taken them 30 minutes to work that out.
Me: This is so exciting, I think Jesse Birdsall is hyperventilating.

Beckett is determined to find out who framed him.

Me: He delivered that line with the passion of a man who's just realised that his newsagent short-changed him last week.
Sue: He's rubbish, but he was flavour of the month back then.
Me: Yes, and that flavour was dog shit.

Meanwhile the woman who likes to corner helicopters meets the person who framed Beckett in a restaurant. She passes him an envelope before heading off to the loo. Seconds later, the restaurant explodes.

Sue: Bloody Russians, assassinating innocent people in restaurants.
Me: Yeah, that would never happen today.
Sue: It's really dated the programme.
Me: I can't take it seriously any more.

Roz hacks into the Hive's top-secret Computer Recognition Ageing Programme. At least that's what I think it's called.

Sue: That would have been cutting edge back then.
Me: Possibly. Still boring, though.
Sue: I quite like it. Well, I like her. She's great.

Beckett realises that his boss is the real traitor. But before he can do anything about it, his boss kidnaps the pair of them and Roz is tied up in the back of her car as it heads for a crusher. Thankfully, Ed rescues her in the nick of time. Oh wait, he doesn't.

Sue: Oh no! She was my favourite character!

It's fine. Roz rescued herself off-camera ages ago.

Me: So, the last five minutes were spent trying to save her fucking car?
Sue: I like it. It means she didn't need his help.
Me: How did she escape, then? Did she hack her way out of the car with her digital watch?
Sue: Calm down, Neil.

The next morning, Ed gives Beckett's boss a poppy that contains a hidden camera.

Sue: It's *The Professionals* meets *Watchdog*.
Me: Except that sounds like something I'd actually watch.

Beckett's boss is caught red-handed as he attempts to steal the super-secret satellite jammer, so he shoots his way out of the building. Or maybe he used a knife? Roz will have to analyse the tape to be sure. Anyway, the Russian woman (or maybe she's Spanish) has tied Beckett to some nice wooden beams. At least Sue thinks they're nice. Maybe it's because Jesse Birdsall is tied to them. Anyway, she's just about to shoot him…

Me: I hope she records his death or they'll never know how he died.

…when Ed comes to the rescue.

Sue: She shot him four times at point blank range. How the fuck did she miss him?
Me: Maybe she was firing blanks. Pass me the tape and I'll get it analysed.
Sue: Okay, Neil, enough already.

Our heroes (and I use the term loosely) trick the Russian woman (or maybe she's Italian) into heading for the heliport, even though she doesn't like helicopters very much.

Me: Maybe she was cornered in one, once.

Sue: Does this mean there's a helicopter chase every week? That's going to cost them.
Me: They should spend the money on acting lessons for Jesse Birdsall.

You know I said earlier that we witnessed the worst car chase ever committed to videotape? Well I lied. THIS is the worst car chase ever committed to videotape.

Sue: Where the fuck is everybody?

The Russian decides to drive her car onto a road that hasn't been finished yet.

Sue: At least they won't be able to corner her.

And then her car explodes in mid-air.

Me: WHAT THE FUCK? Since when did thin-air make cars explode?
Sue: (*Laughing*) I think they triggered the explosives too early. I'm sure they were supposed to go off when the car hit the ground. Oh dear, that is hilarious.
Me: Imagine if that had happened to Thelma and Louise. The film would have ended with a freeze-frame of them both burning to death.

The episode concludes with one of those really annoying scenes where the main characters stand around laughing at how funny and clever they are and OH, PLEASE KILL ME NOW!

The Score

Sue: I enjoyed that.
Me: You did?
Sue: Yeah, I loved the concept. The acting was a bit dodgy…
Me: A BIT?
Sue: …and the script could have been funnier, although the joke at the

end about her compact car was brilliant. Why are you crying, Neil? Anyway, I think they should bring it back. All that technology is really dated now – I think you can do everything they did on a mobile phone today – apart from the helicopter bits, which you could always replace with some drones. Anyway, what I'm saying is they could easily update it. *Bugs* is probably more relevant now than it was back then.

8/10

Me: I thought it was awful. Worse than that, it was boring.
Sue: Did it bug you, Neil? Did it? Did it bug you?
Me: Stop it, Sue. I will kill again.

CRIME TRAVELLER

This blog was originally commissioned by Antony Lyell

Another day, another half-arsed replacement for Doctor Who…

Episode One:
Jeff Slade and the Loop of Infinity

The title sequence features clocks and guns floating in space. Obviously.

Me: JUST MAKE *DOCTOR WHO*!
Sue: Have you been triggered again?
Me: YES!
Sue: These titles are very…
Me: YES! I KNOW!

Sue's EastEnders *detector starts going haywire…*

Sue: It's David Wicks!
Me: Michael French, actually, but whatever.

Michael French is Jeff Slade (yes, really), a detective who works with "that woman off Brookside*" and his 12-year-old partner, DS Morris.*

Sue: Is it bring your son to work day?

Jeff is part of a delicately poised stake-out until he defies a direct order and allows the suspect to escape in a car. Jeff jumps on a motorbike and a high-octane chase through the streets of Reading ensues. It's marginally better than the one in Bugs.

Sue: It isn't exactly *The French Connection*, is it?
Me: The closest this chase gets to *The French Connection* is the branch

they just passed on the high street.
Sue: No they didn't. Fcuk off.

Jeff follows the villain to the roof of multi-storey car park. The villain tries to run him over, but this results in him driving his car off the roof and into a canal, killing himself instantly.

Sue: At least the car didn't blow up in mid-air. That was a pretty good stunt, actually. I'm impressed.

Jeff is a cop on the edge who doesn't play by the rules but always gets results. Only he doesn't actually get any results, so he's fired. Thankfully, Holly Turner – forensic scientist, friend and colleague – decides to help him out.

Sue: She reminds me of Scully.
Me: This was made at the peak of *X-Files* mania, so yeah that was probably the general idea. If only the BBC had their own sci-fi show which could have competed with it. But no, they had to rip off American shows and…
Sue: Shut up, Neil.

Holly has a time machine in her flat.

Me: Look at the state of it.
Sue: That's what I imagine a real time machine would look like. It looks realistic.
Me: It's a mess.
Sue: Yeah, but it looks like it might actually work.

Holly turns on the machine. Lights start flashing and everything.

Sue: She's basically a female Doctor Who. Is this why don't like it very much, Neil?
Me: Of course not!
Sue: I think you have a problem with strong female time travellers.

Me: But.. But I loved Romana! I loved both of them!
Sue: I think I've hit a nerve.

Holly travels a few hours into the past.

Sue: So, her TARDIS doesn't actually move, then?
Me: No, and it's a lot smaller on the inside, too. It's shit!
Sue: At least she doesn't have to worry about parking.

Holly has arrived at a point in time before Jeff managed to screw everything up.

Sue: If I were her, I'd put the lottery on first. But that's just me.

Holly retrieves some crucial evidence that will allow Jeff to solve the case later, and then she rushes back to her flat before a countdown on her digital watch reaches zero.

Sue: What happens if she doesn't make it back in time?
Me: She turns into a pumpkin.

At least Jeff's boss is pleased.

Sue: It's very progressive, this. There's a strong female boss who doesn't take any shit from anyone, a clever female scientist with a time machine…
Me: And a plank of wood as the male hero.
Sue: I like him. Yes, he's a bad boy, but he can't help it.
Me: You do know he isn't playing David Wicks, don't you? I know it's hard to tell given Michael French's acting range, but I thought I'd better check.

Holly tells Jeff that she has a time machine back at her flat.

Sue: Why would she do that? That's a bit unbelievable.
Me: Yes, I know. They are talking about time machines and neither of them have mentioned the word 'TARDIS' yet. It doesn't make any sense.

How can you talk about time machines and not mention the TARDIS?
Sue: Yeah, but was *Doctor Who* still a thing in 1997? Would the audience remember what a TARDIS was back then?
Me: That's right, rub it in.

Holly tells Jeff she can't travel into the future because it doesn't exist yet, and she can only travel a few days into the past, at most.

Me: How shit is that?
Sue: It's realistic. Well, as realistic as time machines go, I suppose. At least there aren't any stupid aliens in this.

Jeff's next case involves a man named Lombard who has supposedly committed suicide inside a locked room. It should be an open and shut case, but…

Sue: Where's all the blood? He shot himself in the head, so where's the blood gone?
Me: That'll be the space vampires; they sucked him dry before they shot him.
Sue: Really?
Me: No. It's because *Crime Traveller* is fun for the whole family, if you can believe that.

Jeff investigates the crime scene.

Sue: That's right, make sure you put your fingerprints on everything. Well done.

Lombard's son mistakes Jeff for the caterer, which means Jeff has been to the house before.

Sue: It's all gone a bit timey-wimey. I like it. It's basically a modern episode of *Doctor Who*, except it makes sense.

Jeff convinces Holly to let him travel in time with her, because if they go back to a time before Lombard died, they can discover the truth. However, before they can leave, they are distracted by the sound of a car crashing outside her flat.

Sue: That'll be them coming back later. I bet the Moff loved *Crime Traveller*.

Holly tells Jeff that he can't meet himself because that would break the first law of time.

Me: And still nobody mentions *Doctor Who*…
Sue: Give it a rest, Neil.

Jeff can't contain his excitement when he realises he's travelled a few hours into the past.

Me: This isn't the 18th century, mate. Calm down.
Sue: Where's the nearest bookies?

Jeff and Holly incapacitate the caterers who have been booked to turn up at Lombard's house so they can take their place.

Sue: That was a bit extreme.
Me: I'm sure they changed the past by doing that, but the rules she set out don't make a lot of sense.
Sue: You're right – this is just like *Doctor Who*.

Jeff and Holly arrive at Lombard's house.

Sue: This guy is a right pain in the arse. I hope somebody did kill him. I've only just met him and I want to kill him, the pompous twat. And there's something I don't understand – how come they don't find Slade's fingerprints all over the crime scene later?
Me: Yeah, but he put his prints all over the house in the future, so it

wouldn't matter, would it?
Sue: Yeah, but wouldn't it be funny if he framed himself for murder?

Jeff isn't impressed when Holly admits that she doesn't know how to make a cheese soufflé.

Sue: What a twat.
Me: Finally, we're getting somewhere.
Sue: Yeah, he's a bad boy, but…
Me: Oh, for fuck's sake.

Jeff throws the gun away so the crime can never be committed.

Sue: If that doesn't work, the police will find a gun with Slade's fingerprints all over it in the bushes. He's definitely framing himself.

Jeff confronts Lombard, who has another *gun.*

Sue: Or maybe Slade kills him! Wouldn't that be brilliant?

Despite Jeff's best efforts, Lombard is shot and killed in the locked room. But instead of kicking the door in, or calling for help, Jeff climbs out the rear window of the adjacent room so he can clamber over the balcony to the other window and peek inside. The berk.

Sue: Meanwhile, as he pisses around on that balcony outside, the murderer quietly leaves the room and locks the door. Considering this is such a clever programme, it can be incredibly stupid at times.

The murderer pokes a gun out of the window and shoots at Jeff. The bullet grazes his thick forehead and Holly finds him recovering on a sun lounger, dazed and confused, as usual.

Me: I'd ditch him as my assistant if I were her. He's fucking useless.

Jeff remembers to remove his fingerprints from the scene of the crime.

Sue: It's a bit late for that!

And then they hurry back to Holly's flat.

Sue: I bet he goes to the bookies first. I know I would.

Jeff goes to the bookies.

Sue: So, he isn't completely stupid, then.

There's a mad rush to get back to Holly's flat before they are both trapped in a loop of infinity (which is basically Groundhog Day *without the jokes) and in their haste to make the deadline, they cause a car to crash outside Holly's flat.*

Sue: I love this. I would happily watch more of these. What's not to like? It's funny, exciting, clever, believable. I mean, what's your problem, Neil?

When they return to the present, Jeff's gunshot wound disappears.

Sue: That will turn out to be important in a future episode. I bet he nearly dies and she has to drag him back to her flat before it's too late. I can't wait to find out.
Me: You'll have a long fucking wait.

Jeff identifies Lombard's business partner as the murderer because… reasons. The woman from Brookside *is pleased and Jeff treats Holly to a slap-up meal.*

Me: Why is this restaurant projecting a giant clock on the wall?
Sue: Don't worry, I'll knock a mark off the score for that.
Me: Thank God for that.

Holly tells Jeff that the bet he placed in the past never happened, because it couldn't have happened. Could it?

Me: EH? WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK?
Sue: Calm down, Neil.
Me: So how did ANYTHING happen in that episode?

Cue titles.

Me: Jesus, that was painful. Oh, look, Anne Dudley did the music.
Sue: See, I told you this was good.
Me: You don't even know who Anne Dudley is!

The Score

9/10

Sue: I loved that.
Me: Are you taking the piss?
Sue: No. Can we watch another one, please?
Me: I tell you what, we'll blog it for our next book, *Adventures with the Ex-Wife in Space*.
Sue: Now I want to watch it even more.

DOCTOR WHO

This blog was originally commissioned by Matt Hills

Me: This is the last time I'll ever ask you to watch an episode of *Doctor Who* with me for a blog. I promise.
Sue: If I was given a pound every time you promised me that, I'd have six pounds now.
Me: This time I actually mean it. Unless Philip Morris isn't full of hot air, which he is, by the way. He voted for Brexit, you know. I saw him on *Facebook* moaning about fishing quotas one day, so I replied, THE EU IS DESTROYED. THE END. He didn't get the joke.
Sue: Neither do I.
Me: Anyway, it doesn't look like you'll ever have to watch *Marco Polo* again.
Sue: So, there is a God, after all?
Me: Meaning, this is probably the last one.
Sue: Probably?
Me: Definitely. Unless the latest *Evil of the Daleks* rumour is true. Which is isn't.
Sue: Shall we just skip to the end? I thought it was fabulous, 10 out of 10.
Me: The episode we're watching tonight was chosen by Matt Hills. You met him once, when he visited the university.
Sue: *The* Matt Hills?
Me: Yeah.
Sue: Oh no. He'll probably expect me to say something clever. He's a proper academic and everything.

The episode begins with a young man named Elton encountering the TARDIS on some wasteland.

Sue: So, what's this one called, then?
Me: *Love ampersand Monsters*.
Sue: Do you have to be a cunt all your life, Neil?

Elton recounts his story to a webcam.

Sue: He's a blogger, then? This is a bit meta, isn't it? So that's why Matt Hills choose this episode. Come on, Neil, say something intellectual about how meta this episode is.
Me: Er…
Sue: Come on, you started a PhD in *Doctor Who*. Make something up!
Me: Doesn't this scene remind you of *The Benny Hill Show*?

The Doctor and Rose are chased by an alien as an astonished Elton watches from the sidelines.

Sue: This reminds me of something else.
Me: Yes, I know. I pitched a script to Big Finish once for an audio adventure called *Gareth*. It was basically the same plot as this. They turned me down.
Sue: No, I mean I'm sure I've seen this before in *Doctor Who*. I think they go around to his house later.
Me: Oh, you're thinking of Clive. This is a completely different super-fan.
Sue: They should meet up for a drink and exchange notes.
Me: Clive's dead. He was killed by the Autons, remember?
Sue: It's what he would have wanted. So, are you still annoyed about the Big Finish thing?
Me: Of course not.
Sue: Well, it has been 15 years, and you only mention it once a month now, so that's progress, I guess.

Elton witnessed the same Auton invasion that killed Clive, as well as the Sycorax spaceship which appeared over London on Christmas Day.

Sue: So what? Who didn't see that? Does that mean everyone in London has a Doctor Who blog now? Get over yourself, pet.

It turns out that quite a few people have been running blogs dedicated to the Doctor's adventures, and before Elton knows it, he's joined a community of

like-minded individuals.

Me: Can you see what they are doing here, Sue?
Sue: Yes, I'm not completely stupid. This is about *Doctor Who* fans.
Me: Yeah, this episode is basically a love letter to fandom.
Sue: It looks more like a support group for people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.
Me: Same thing.
Sue: Is this what it's like when you go to that pub in London without me? You swap recipes?
Me: No, but we have been known to dance to ELO.

And then Victor Kennedy turns up and ruins everything.

Sue: Is it the Master?
Me: Really?
Sue: I'm joking for old time's sake. But seriously, is it the Master?

No, it's Peter Kay.

Sue: I don't remember this episode at all. I'm sure I would have remembered this if Peter Kay was in it.
Me: Well, I know you didn't watch it when it was first broadcast…
Sue: How can you possibly remember that?
Me: Because I kicked you out of the caravan when it was on.
Sue: Charming.
Me: I was recording a live podcast with my friends, remember?
Sue: You're as bad as Elton. Did you swap any recipes?
Me: Only a couple. John Williams' carrot cake was delicious.
Sue: Actually, it all makes sense now, because you used to record songs, too. Do you remember that one time you got Damon to sing a cover version of something or other…
Me: *Chasing Pavements* by Adele. Or maybe it was Amy Winehouse…
Sue: Whatever it was, Damon can't sing, bless him, and he sounded like a cat being tortured to death. This was back when the house was still being

built, and while he was screaming his lungs out, some builders walked in and you had to explain what the fuck it was you were doing. Now *that* was funny.
Me: It was so bad, we had to cut it from the podcast. And our standards were pretty low.

Meanwhile, in Love ampersand Monsters…

Me: This guy, Victor Kennedy, is supposedly based on somebody famous in *Doctor Who* fandom. Who do you think it is?
Sue: I have no idea. The only people I know in *Doctor Who* fandom are you, Damon and John Williams. And I haven't seen Damon and John Williams in years. What did you do to upset them?
Me: Come on, you know this. Who is *Doctor Who*'s biggest fan?
Sue: Steven Moffat.
Me: Apart from him.

Victor Kennedy starts bossing Elton's friends about.

Sue: Is it Ian Levine?
Me: Give that woman a king-sized Aero!
Sue: But I like Ian Levine. He's a fascinating man. So why is this guy like Ian Levine?
Me: Because he sucks the joy out of everything.
Sue: Are you sure he isn't based on you, Neil?

Elton inserts himself in Jackie Tyler's orbit so he can get closer to Rose.

Me: Does this remind you of when we first met?
Sue: Not really. Elton is useful around the house. Look, he knows what a fuse is and everything.

Jackie likes having Elton around.

Sue: Yeah, he's the total opposite of you, Neil. Okay, he runs a silly blog,

and yes, he's clearly got problems, but at least he knows how to locate the stopcock.

Speaking of which, Jackie invites Elton to, er, splash out.

Sue: (*Laughing*) NOT FOR KIDS!

Before we know it, Elton is naked from the waist up.

Sue: Nice six-pack… Have I mentioned that Elton is the total opposite of you, Neil?

Jackie realises that Elton has been using her to get to Rose.

Sue: It makes you think, this. They never had to deal with this in the old series. The Doctor's companions are basically missing persons at the end of the day.
Me: Have you noticed anything odd about this episode yet? We're about 30 minutes into it.
Sue: It's a lot funnier than usual, but apart from that, no, not really.
Me: And you call yourself a David Tennant fan?
Sue: Oh yeah… Where the fuck is he? Is he on holiday? Is he doing a William Hartnell this week?
Me: It's because they had to film a Christmas special – they filmed most of this episode without him so they could keep to the original schedule.
Sue: It works. I didn't even notice until you mentioned it. Of course, now that you *have* mentioned it, I'm really pissed off.

Victor Kennedy reveals his true self.

Me: This monster was designed by a *Blue Peter* viewer.
Sue: Don't be cruel, Neil.
Me: I'm not joking!
Sue: So, all the monster designers were working on the Christmas special as well?

Me: No, this was intentional. The prize for coming up with the best design was your monster appeared in an episode of *Doctor Who*.
Sue: They actually chose this on purpose? Knowing they'd have to use it? Are they mad?
Me: The *Blue Peter* viewer wasn't very happy about it, either. He said it should have been the size of a double-decker bus. Oh, and Sad Tony was robbed.
Sue: What?
Me: Never mind.

The Abzorbaloff has consumed Elton's friends, and one of them is trapped in the worst possible place.

Sue: Is this supposed to be Ian Levine talking out of his arse?

The Abzorbaloff absorbs Ursula before chasing after Elton.

Sue: Oh. My. God. You can see his pubic hair.
Me: That's his underpants.
Sue: I hope to God you're right, Neil. Christ, imagine if this thing was the size of a bus. Fuck's sake.

The Abzorbaloff comes from Raxacoricofallapatorius' twin planet, Clom.

Me: This is very silly.
Sue: (*Laughing*) Bloody funny, though.

Ursula defeats the Abzorbaloff by squeezing herself, like a big, sentitent spot.

Sue: Can we apologise to Matt Hills, please? I am literally lost for words.

The Doctor arrived at Elton's house when Elton was a little boy to defeat an alien shadow monster. Unfortunately, he arrived too late to save Elton's mother.

Sue: Have you still got those tissues handy?
Me: Of course I have, I'm watching new episodes of *Doctor Who*.
Sue: So Elton really did need counselling for post-traumatic stress disorder, after all.

But it's not all bad news: the Doctor saved Ursula. Sort of.

Sue: Is Elton imagining this? This isn't really happening, is it? It can't be… Is he in hospital?

The episode concludes with Elton admitting that he still has a love life of sorts.

Me and Sue: Noooooooooooo!

The Score

Me: Ten out of 10?
Sue: Let's not be too hasty.
Me: But it's a David Tennant episode of *Doctor Who*. It's got to be 10 out of 10, surely?
Sue: He was barely in it! Oh God, it's such a shame. Everything up until the moment Peter Kay started running around naked was absolutely brilliant. It was so funny, and quite moving in places. But then it fell apart at the end. It's as if Russell was up against a deadline and simply gave up.

7/10

Me: And that's it, our very last proper *Doctor Who* blog. Again. Well done.
Sue: And we finished with a man getting a blow job from a paving slab. Why do I get the feeling you did that on purpose, Neil?

PREVIOUSLY

THE MISERABLE GIT
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 1
Foreword by Rob Shearman

THE SCRUFFY DRUNK
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 2
Foreword by Toby Hadoke

THE POMPOUS TORY
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 3
Foreword by Paul Cornell

THE MAD ONE
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 4
Foreword by David Quantick

THE (STILL) MAD ONE
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 5
Foreword by Andy Miller

THE FIT ONE
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 6
Foreword by Jenny T Colgan

THE COURT JESTER
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 7
Foreword by Simon Guerrier

THE CRAFTY SOD
THE WIFE IN SPACE VOLUME 8
Foreword by Una McCormack

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