

= The Power of Three ( Doctor Who ) =

" The Power of Three " is the fourth episode of the seventh series of the British science fiction television programme Doctor Who that aired on BBC One and BBC One HD on 22 September 2012 . It was written by Chris Chibnall and directed by Douglas Mackinnon .

In the episode , alien time traveller the Doctor ( Matt Smith ) spends time on Earth with his travelling companions Amy Pond ( Karen Gillan ) and her husband Rory ( Arthur Darvill ) while he awaits activity from millions of small cubes that appeared overnight .

" The Power of Three " focused on Amy and Rory 's point of view and the impact of the Doctor 's influence on their lives , as they would be leaving in the next episode . The story was inspired by The Man Who Came to Dinner and the story of the MSC Napoli . The episode also saw the return of UNIT and introduced their new scientific advisor , Kate Stewart ( Jemma Redgrave ) , daughter of Brigadier Lethbridge @-@ Stewart . The episode featured brief cameo appearances by Lord Sugar and professor Brian Cox . Despite being the penultimate episode in the first block of the series , " The Power of Three " was the last to be filmed , and was thus the last episode for Gillan and Darvill .

The episode was watched by 7 @. @ 67 million viewers in the UK . Critical reception to the episode was generally positive , highlighting the emotion and humour , although many critics derided the solution to the plot .

= = Plot = =

Amy and Rory have tried to adjust to normal life without travelling with the Doctor . One day billions of small black cubes appear around the globe , but they appear to be inert and invulnerable . The Doctor arrives to help , having been alerted by news stories . UNIT storms the Williams ' house soon after in response to the Doctor 's arrival ; the UNIT force is led by scientific adviser Kate Stewart , the daughter of the Doctor 's friend and former UNIT commander , Brigadier Lethbridge @-@ Stewart . Kate explains that they have no idea of the purpose of the cubes and hope the Doctor can help . After several days of watching the cubes without anything out of the ordinary occurring , the Doctor decides there is no problem and puts Rory 's father Brian in charge of watching the cubes as he returns and departs in the TARDIS .

Over the following year , Amy and Rory live out their lives , making commitments despite not knowing if they will always be around . The Doctor visits them at their wedding anniversary party and takes them on a trip for seven weeks , though returns them a few minutes after leaving . Brian notices their absence and , in private , asks the Doctor the fate of his previous companions . The Doctor admits that while most had left on their own or were left behind , some have died , but promises that will not happen to Amy or Rory . Humanity forgets about the cubes ' arrival , and use them as paperweights and similar mundane functions . Unknown to anyone at the hospital where Rory works , a young girl with a cube controls a pair of identical orderlies with distorted faces to capture a few selected patients .

A year after their arrival , the cubes start to activate , scanning the world 's information networks and acting in self @-@ defence . The Doctor realises that the cubes are part of a " slow invasion " . While Rory and Brian go to the hospital to help those injured by the cubes , the Doctor and Amy are summoned to the UNIT headquarters under the Tower of London where Kate shows them several cubes under investigation , every single one behaving in a different fashion . The cubes then simultaneously display the number 7 and slowly count down . Meanwhile , at the hospital , Brian is taken by the two orderlies to a lift , where they disappear . Rory soon follows and finds that the back of the lift is a portal to a spaceship in Earth 's orbit .

The cubes all open when they reach zero , appearing empty , but soon reports of people dying from cardiac arrest appear from around the globe . The Doctor finds that one of his own hearts has stopped , and realises that the cubes sent out an electrical impulse that killed about one @-@ third of the human population . Kate 's team traces a communication from the cubes to seven different outposts across the world , including one at Rory 's hospital , and the Doctor and Amy race there .

Amy uses a defibrillator to restart the Doctor 's heart . They find the girl , who the Doctor realises is an android , and disable her before locating the lift and the portal .

Aboard the ship , Amy and Rory rescue Brian while the Doctor encounters a hologram of a member of the Shakri , who , according to Gallifreyan legend , were self @-@ appointed " pest controllers " in the universe . The Shakri states that he and six other ships tied to the other outposts are there to wipe out humanity before it spreads across the galaxy , and prepares to launch a second wave of cubes to kill even more before disappearing . The Doctor uses the ship 's computer to reverse the shock the cubes gave to the original victims , restoring them , and the three escape the ship before the feedback from the cubes causes it to explode . As the world recovers , the Doctor prepares to leave when Brian insists that Amy and Rory go with him , stating the adventures they have with him are a once @-@ in @-@ a @-@ lifetime opportunity . He tells the Doctor to " just bring them back safe " . The three say goodbye to Brian and depart in the TARDIS .

= = = Continuity = = =

The Doctor tells Brian that a few of his previous companions have died ; this is a reference to Sara Kingdom , Katarina , and Adric . At one point , the Doctor , Amy , and Rory relax and eat fish fingers and custard , a reference to " The Eleventh Hour " . Amy and Rory 's meal at the newly opened Savoy hotel is ruined by " a Zygon spaceship parked under the Savoy " ; the Zygons previously featured in the Fourth Doctor serial Terror of the Zygons and would appear again in the 50th anniversary special The Day of the Doctor ( 2013 ) . The Tower of London had previously served as a UNIT base in " The Christmas Invasion " and was mentioned as such in " The Sontaran Stratagem " . The Doctor also mentions having a metallic dog that could hover ; this refers to K @-@ 9 , the robotic dog of the Fourth Doctor .

= = Production = =

The episode 's title was originally reported as " Cubed " , but was later announced as " The Power of Three " . Chris Chibnall had previously written the Doctor Who episodes " 42 " ( 2007 ) , " The Hungry Earth " / " Cold Blood " ( 2010 ) , and the second episode of the seventh series , " Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " . He was also a major contributor to the spinoff series Torchwood . " The Power of Three " is his second contribution to Doctor Who 's seventh series , after " Dinosaurs on a Spaceship " . Chibnall described " The Power of Three " as " a lovely big Earth invasion story " but different from the ones done before , as it focused on Amy and Rory 's time with the Doctor and the impact of him on their lives . He stated it is told more from Amy and Rory 's point of view than ever before , and is about celebrating them before they leave in the following episode . Chibnall 's brief from showrunner Steven Moffat was to " live with the Doctor ? The Man Who Came to Dinner , Doctor Who style . " Chibnall was also inspired by the story of the MSC Napoli . Smith put disgust into the Doctor 's remark concerning Twitter in the episode , reflecting his real @-@ life decision to stay off the social network .

At Chibnall 's request , " The Power of Three " sees the return of UNIT , which first appeared in The Invasion ( 1968 ) and became a regular feature during the Third Doctor ( Jon Pertwee ) era . The episode reveals that Kate Stewart is now running UNIT ; she is the daughter of Brigadier Lethbridge @-@ Stewart and previously appeared in the Reeltime Pictures direct @-@ to @-@ video films Downtime and Dæmos Rising played by Beverley Cressman . Following the death of actor Nicholas Courtney in early 2011 , the Doctor learned of the Brigadier 's death in the sixth series finale " The Wedding of River Song " . Matt Smith enjoyed working with Jemma Redgrave , describing her as " graceful , funny and charming and an absolute delight " .

The read @-@ through of " The Power of Three " took place at Roath Lock , Cardiff on 27 April 2012 . It was filmed by itself in the series ' third production block . Because of this schedule , it was the final episode Gillan and Darvill filmed as Amy and Rory . Their last scene filmed together was getting into the TARDIS with the Doctor after saying farwell to Brian ; when the doors closed Gillan , Darvill , and Smith hugged and started crying . Some exterior scenes at Amy and Rory 's house

were re @-@ shot in June and July 2012 , with Darvill briefly returning for the June re @-@ shoot . Producer Marcus Wilson stated that a " hundred " individual cube props were made , with " many more " added with computer @-@ generated imagery ( CGI ) . Amy and the Doctor 's conversation outside the Tower of London could not be filmed at the genuine location due to the London Olympics , so it was shot on studio in Cardiff and the live action was combined with other footage to create the illusion . The episode also features cameos from physicist Brian Cox and Lord Sugar , both of whom were long @-@ time fans of the program . Sugar 's cameo was in fact filmed on the set of The Apprentice , with director Douglas Mackinnon standing in for the person who was fired .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" The Power of Three " was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One and BBC One HD on 22 September 2012 . Overnight ratings showed that it was watched by an audience of 5 @.@ 49 million live . The final consolidated rating rose to 7 @.@ 67 million viewers , making it the thirteenth most @-@ watched programme of the week on British television , and the fifth highest rated on BBC One . The episode also received 1 @.@ 3 million requests on BBC 's online iPlayer , placing it fourth for the month on the site behind the first three episodes of the series . It also received an Appreciation Index of 87 , considered " excellent " .

= = = Critical reception = = =

" The Power of Three " received generally positive reviews . Dan Martin of The Guardian stated he " bloody loved " the episode , calling it " a nostalgic run through all the best bits of the Russell T Davies era " . However , he noted that it " also had the weaknesses of some of [ Davies ' ] adventures ? the ending was so underdeveloped that even a magic button couldn 't explain it ? but ' The Power of Three ' was , in every sense , completely gorgeous " . Neela Debnath , writing for The Independent , praised the way the episode showed the companion 's life outside the TARDIS and celebrated Amy and Rory , as well as the introduction of Kate Stewart and her connection with the Brigadier .

Radio Times reviewer Patrick Mulkern described it as " beautifully made television " and welcomed Kate as a " wonderful addition " . However , he stated that he did not " entirely buy the Doctor 's solution " . Keith Phipps of The A.V. Club graded the episode as a B + . Despite noting the plot was " fairly standard " and " easily foiled " , he wrote that the concept of the cubes and " slow invasion " was " a cleverly executed bit of business " . IGN 's Matt Risley rated " The Power of Three " a score of 8 out of 10 , writing that the first three quarters were " simply brilliant " because of the emotion and humour . However , he criticised the " rushed resolution " and the lack of explanation for the aliens at the hospital . Digital Spy reviewer Morgan Jeffery gave the episode four out of five stars , describing it as " an emotional , fun and involving Doctor Who episode " despite the disappointing resolution .

Russell Lewin of SFX gave the episode three and a half out of five stars , naming it as Chibnall 's best Doctor Who episode . While he noted that " the ending was potentially always going to be a let down ... And it is " , there was " much to enjoy beforehand " such as UNIT and the humour . The Daily Telegraph reviewer Gavin Fuller gave it a score of two and a half out of five stars , feeling that it was " treading water " as a lead @-@ in to the following finale . He described the first twenty minutes as " overpadded " and " heavy on exposition but little else " , and pointed out the unexplained action at Rory 's hospital . However , he enjoyed Amy and the Doctor 's conversation and the " countdown element and the mystery of the cubes " , but found the explanation unoriginal and the conclusion too easy .