

= City of Death =

City of Death is the second serial of the seventeenth season of the British science fiction television series Doctor Who , which depicts the adventures of a time @-@ travelling humanoid alien known as the Doctor . It was produced by the BBC and first broadcast in four weekly parts between 29 September 1979 and 20 October 1979 on BBC1 . The serial was written by " David Agnew " ? a pseudonym for David Fisher , Douglas Adams , and Graham Williams ? and directed by Michael Hayes .

City of Death features the Fourth Doctor (Tom Baker) and his companion Romana (Lalla Ward) . Set mainly in Paris in 1979 , the plot concerns a scheme by an alien , Scaroth , to steal the Mona Lisa to finance experiments in time travel in the hope of averting the accident that marooned him on Earth four hundred million years previously , which began the existence of life on the planet as well .

The serial 's original storyline was devised by Fisher but was heavily re @-@ written by script editor Adams , aided by producer Williams . It was the first Doctor Who serial to film on location outside of the United Kingdom ; the production team worked in Paris during April and May 1979 . The studio work was completed in June .

Broadcast during a strike that took ITV (the BBC 's rival) off the air , City of Death scored high ratings . The fourth episode was watched by over sixteen million viewers , the highest UK television audience ever attained by an episode of Doctor Who . Although , in retrospect , it has been regarded as one of the best serials from Doctor Who 's classic run , the initial reception was not as positive , with criticism of the humorous tone .

= = Plot = =

While leisurely enjoying the city of Paris with Romana , the Doctor feels the effects of time distortion . At the Louvre while admiring the Mona Lisa , he encounters the Countess Scarlioni wearing an alien bracelet used to scan security systems . The Doctor and Romana meet Inspector Duggan , who has been tailing Count Scarlioni for some time ; Scarlioni has placed a large number of lost art treasures on the market , and Duggan fears the Scarlionis are looking to steal the Mona Lisa . Though the three are briefly captured by the Countess , the Doctor helps them to escape and explore the Count 's mansion , where they discover equipment by Dr. Kerensky to experiment with time , the source of the Doctor 's time distortions . They also discover , behind a wall , six exact copies of the Mona Lisa , each painted by Leonardo da Vinci himself .

Leaving Romana and Duggan to continue to investigate in the present , the Doctor uses his TARDIS to visit Leonardo 's workshop . There he is captured by Captain Tancredi , whose appearance is the same as Count Scarlioni . Tancredi reveals he is Scaroth , the last of the Jagaroth race , stranded on Earth and fragmented through time due to an explosion of their spacecraft on Earth 400 million years ago . Seeking to restore himself and his race , Scaroth has aided human technological advancement , while remaining in contact with the other fragments of himself . Tancredi , in this era , has convinced Leonardo to paint 6 copies of the Mona Lisa , so that when Scarlioni steals the known painting in 1979 , he can then sell it seven times , substantially funding the completion of Dr. Kerensky 's work . When Tancredi leaves the Doctor under watch by a human guard , the Doctor knocks out the guard , uses a felt @-@ tip marker to write " This is a fake " on the six blank canvases and leaves instructions for Leonardo to paint over the text , as to allow them to track the copies in the future by X @-@ raying them . The Doctor escapes when Tancredi suffers a temporary collapse caused by his other selves .

The Doctor returns to the present and learns that Scaroth has succeeded in stealing the Mona Lisa . Furthermore , Scaroth has killed Dr. Kerensky and threatens to do the same to the entire city of Paris if Romana does not complete Kerensky 's work . The Doctor convinces the Countess that her husband is not human , and she sees his true face , but the Count kills her before she can react . With the time equipment fixed , Scaroth uses it to travel back 400 million years in hopes to stop the explosion of his ship . Though Romana reveals that the equipment will bring him back after two

minutes , the Doctor asserts that it is enough time for Scaroth to stop the explosion of the Jagaroth ship , itself the source of the spark of energy that created the beginnings of life on Earth ; should Scaroth prevent the explosion , every native living being on the planet will never have existed . The Doctor , Romana , and Duggan race to the TARDIS and travel back to intercept Scaroth . Duggan punches Scaroth unconscious before he can stop the ship . Scaroth 's body returns to the present as the ship attempts to take off and explodes , assuring the development of life on Earth .

In the present , Scaroth is killed by his henchman Hermann , who does not recognise him without his human mask , and a failure in the time equipment sets the mansion ablaze . By the time the Doctor , Romana , and Duggan arrive , the original and five of the six copies of the Mona Lisa have been destroyed , but one of the copies remains untouched . The Doctor proposes that since a copy of a painting by the original artist is not a fake , the painting should be considered the real work of art , reminding Duggan that art is worthless if its monetary value is all that matters . The Doctor and Romana say goodbye to Duggan at the Eiffel Tower .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception and writing = = =

Writer David Fisher had contributed two scripts to Doctor Who 's sixteenth season ? The Stones of Blood and The Androids of Tara ? and was asked by producer Graham Williams for further story ideas . Fisher submitted two proposals ; the first of these became The Creature from the Pit while the other , The Gamble with Time , concerned a plot to rig the casinos in Las Vegas to finance time travel experiments . Williams asked Fisher to rework The Gamble With Time as a spoof of Bulldog Drummond , a fictional detective from the 1920s . Fisher 's draft script centered around Scarlioni , a member of the Sephiroth race , who had become fractured in time in an accident . The script was mainly set in the year 1928 with the Doctor and Romana , aided by Drummond @-@ esque detective " Pug " Farquharson , on the trail of the stolen Mona Lisa , pursuing Scarlioni from Paris to Monte Carlo where his partner , the Baroness Heidi , is using time travel technology to cheat at roulette at the casino to fund Scarlioni 's time travel experiments . Other settings included Paris in 1979 , Leonardo da Vinci 's studio in the year 1508 and prehistoric Earth . At this point , production unit manager John Nathan @-@ Turner had worked out that the production team could afford to film on location in Paris with a stripped @-@ down crew . This necessitated a rewrite to Fisher 's scripts to move the action to Paris and , for cost reasons , to drop the 1920s setting . The Doctor 's robotic dog companion K9 also had to be removed from the script as the cost of bringing the robot dog and his operators to Paris was prohibitive .

However , Fisher was going through a divorce , and his personal situation meant that he was unable to perform the rewrites . This meant that script editor Douglas Adams , aided by Graham Williams , had to perform a complete rewrite of the story over the course of a weekend . According to Adams , Graham Williams " took me back to his place , locked me in his study and hosed me down with whisky and black coffee for a few days , and there was the script " . The revised script , now titled The Curse of the Sephiroth , was credited to " David Agnew " , a standard pseudonym used by the BBC and which had been previously used on Doctor Who for the season fifteen serial The Invasion of Time . The serial was subsequently retitled City of Death on 8 May 1979 . Adams would later reuse elements of City of Death , along with the unfinished Doctor Who serial Shada (1979 ; 2003) , in his novel Dirk Gently 's Holistic Detective Agency (1987) . In Part One , Romana makes a throwaway reference to a great art gallery called the Braxiatel Collection ; the Virgin New Adventures novel series would later expand on this , introducing the character Irving Braxiatel , a Time Lord . Braxiatel also appears in the Bernice Summerfield series of novels and audio dramas and in the Gallifrey series of audio dramas .

= = = Casting = = =

Julian Glover was a well @-@ established character actor who had previously appeared in Doctor Who as Richard the Lionheart in The Crusade (1965) . Glover was reluctant to don the Jagaroth mask created for scenes where Scarlioni had shed his human disguise as he felt the mask would impede his performance . As a result , he is doubled by Richard Sheekey in many of these scenes . Tom Chadbon was cast as Duggan on account of his resemblance to the Franco @-@ Belgian comics hero Tintin . Peter Halliday had previously appeared in several Doctor Who serials including The Invasion and Doctor Who and the Silurians .

Douglas Adams knew John Cleese and Eleanor Bron through his connections with Monty Python and the Cambridge Footlights . On learning that both would be working in BBC Television Centre on the day the art gallery scenes were to be recorded , he persuaded them to make a cameo appearance in a short scene written for " two Englishmen " . Cleese and Bron agreed on the condition that there be no pre @-@ publicity regarding their appearance ; Cleese wanted them to be credited as " Helen Swanetsky " and " Kim Bread " but the BBC declined . Cleese liked the name " Kim Bread " and used it in later projects . During recording , Cleese and Baker also recorded two short comedy skits for the BBC Christmas tape .

= = = Filming = = =

City of Death director Michael Hayes had previously directed the Doctor Who serials The Androids of Tara (1978) and The Armageddon Factor (1979) . He also had experience filming in Paris , having worked there on adaptations of Maigret (1960 ? 63) and other Georges Simenon stories for the BBC . Location filming took place in Paris between 30 April 1979 and 3 May 1979 . It proved a difficult shoot as the dates coincided with the May Day holiday period , which meant that many of the locations chosen for filming were closed , necessitating considerable improvisation on the part of the cast and crew . Model filming was conducted at Bray Studios between 8 May 1979 and 10 May 1979 . These concentrated on the shots of the Jagaroth spacecraft taking off from the prehistoric Earth and were overseen by Ian Scoones , a veteran of Gerry Anderson 's Thunderbirds . Following rehearsals , production moved to BBC Television Centre where the remaining scenes were recorded in two blocks ; the first between 21 May 1979 and 22 May 1979 and second between 3 June 1979 and 5 June 1979 .

Tom Baker found filming in Paris to be a very different experience to what he was used to in the UK where crowds would gather to watch the filming and meet the stars . Doctor Who was not shown in France at the time and so the cast and crew were largely ignored . Lalla Ward found City of Death the most challenging Doctor Who serial she worked on but was pleased with the final outcome , saying , " We had to film loads of scenes in the rain and cold ... there was no glamour in it at all ... it was different from the ordinary stories too and I like the finished result " . Seeing her costumes as an important part in creating the role of Romana , Ward clashed with costume designer Doreen James , rejecting the silver catsuit James had designed for her for the story . Ward came up with the idea for the schoolgirl costume she wore in conjunction with Baker , recalling , " I thought it would be fun to wear something that little girls probably hated wearing because it might cheer them up ... I didn 't bank on the fact that I 'd also get loads of letters from their fathers saying ' Cool School uniform ! ' " .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

City of Death was broadcast on BBC1 over four consecutive Saturdays beginning on 29 September 1979 . At this time , industrial action had blacked out rival broadcaster ITV and as a result , the serial scored very high ratings , averaging 14 @.@ 5 million viewers over the four episodes ; 16 @.@ 1 million watched the fourth episode , the largest audience ever recorded for an episode of Doctor Who . The story was repeated on BBC1 across four consecutive evenings from Tuesday to Friday , 12 - 15 August , 1980 , achieving viewing figures of 6 @.@ 3 , 5 @.@ 5 , 5 @.@ 6 and 5 @.@ 9 million viewers respectively .

Audience appreciation ratings were taken for the first two episodes of City of Death , and both

episodes attained a respectable score of 64 % . Listings magazine Radio Times published two letters from viewers regarding City of Death . Les Rogers of Hastings praised the serial 's cast and the location filming ; less impressed , however , was Paul R. Maskew of Exeter who felt the show was being played for laughs . Responding to similar criticisms from viewers , Douglas Adams wrote , " If the programme didn 't move and take a few risks then it would have died of boredom years ago " . Several viewers wrote to point out the discrepancy between the start of life on Earth of 4 @,@ 000 million years ago and the date given in City of Death of 400 million years ago . Graham Williams replied , " The good Doctor makes the odd mistake or two but I think an error of 3 @,@ 600 million years is pushing it ! His next edition of the Encyclopedia Galactica will provide an erratum " . Another viewer wrote to point out that the atmosphere of the primordial Earth would have been poisonous to the Doctor and his companions ; Douglas Adams responded to this criticism , citing dramatic licence .

City of Death was voted into seventh place in a 1998 poll of the readers of Doctor Who Magazine to find the best Doctor Who story ; the magazine commented that it " represented the height of Doctor Who as popular light entertainment for all the family " . In 2009 , Doctor Who Magazine readers voted it in eighth place . In a more recent 2014 poll , the magazine 's readers voted it fifth best Doctor Who story of all time . A 2008 article in The Daily Telegraph named City of Death one of the ten greatest episodes of Doctor Who . John Condor , writing in the fanzine DWB in 1991 , hailed the story as " the best blend of kitsch , surrealism , fantasy and comedy @-@ drama seen in our favourite Time Lord 's annals " . Vanessa Bishop , reviewing the serial 's DVD release , described it as " imaginatively written , well @-@ performed and beautifully made , City of Death is a story where pretty much everything works " . Reacting to the serial , as part of Doctor Who Magazine 's ongoing " Time Team " feature , Jacqueline Rayner said " you 're suddenly , almost violently , made aware this is happening in our world ... with people just getting on with their business and two Time Lords walking through it . I don 't think I 've ever experienced that with Doctor Who up till now ... it 's the tiny touches of mundanity amid the fantastical that lift the story even higher " . Charlie Jane Anders and Javier Grillo @-@ Marxuach of io9 included it on their list of " 10 TV Episodes that Changed Television " , citing " the sharp dialogue and clever use of time travel [that] prefigure everything Steven Moffat has done with the series in recent years . " The A.V. Club reviewer Christopher Bahn described City of Death as the " gem " of the seventeenth season , finding Adams ' subtle comedy script " easily the funniest and most quotable the series ever achieved " . While he praised Scarlioni 's costume and the mask , he felt that more could have been done with using Paris as a filming location .

However , Doctor Who fandom 's initial response to the serial was not so positive ; John Peel , writing in the fanzine TARDIS in 1979 , decried it as " total farce ... I simply couldn 't believe this was Doctor Who ... the continual buffoonery is getting on my nerves " . A similar view was held by Gary Russell who , reviewing the VHS release in 1991 , said , " City of Death , like most Douglas Adams material , is overrated and misses the mark for me , falling between the stools of good pastiche and bad parody and making fairly unsatisfactory viewing " . This line was countered by Vanessa Bishop who called it " the Doctor Who story it 's alright to laugh at ... we must now accept that City of Death is funny ? because if we didn 't the Crackerjack @-@ style sleuths , scientists and all ... would leave it knocking about near the bottom of all the Doctor Who story ranking polls " and , responding to the criticisms about the levels of comedy , that " it 's precisely these things that make it seem so special " . Reviewing the serial in 2011 , Patrick Mulkern of Radio Times stated he disliked the smug tone to the humour and Ward 's " snooty " portrayal of Romana . Despite this , he noted that the serial had good production values and direction , as well as a few jokes that he enjoyed .

= = Commercial releases = =

= = = In print = = =

City of Death is one of five Doctor Who serials from the series ' original run (1963 ? 1989) not to

have been novelised by Target Books ; the others are The Pirate Planet , Shada , Resurrection of the Daleks , and Revelation of the Daleks . Target approached Douglas Adams on a number of occasions with a view to commissioning a novelisation , offering their standard advance of £ 600 ; Adams replied saying , " I don 't want to be embarrassing but I do have a tendency to be a best @-@ selling author " . Target , concerned that their regular authors would seek better terms , refused to change their offer . Several years later , Target editor Nigel Robinson offered an advance of £ 4 @,@ 000 ? double what was the standard advance at the time ? but Adams again declined . Adams was unwilling to allow another author to write the novelisation . However , after Adams ' death his estate allowed Gareth Roberts to write an adaptation of the unfinished serial Shada , which was published by BBC Books in 2012 . In 2013 , Roberts announced that he was working on a novelisation of City of Death , to be published on 21 May 2015 . Roberts later announced that James Goss was working on the book instead .

= = = Home media = = =

City of Death was released on VHS videotape in April 1991 with a cover by Andrew Skilleter . It was re @-@ issued on VHS in 2001 . A DVD of the serial was released in 2005 , which incorporated numerous special features including a commentary by actors Julian Glover and Tom Chadbon , as well as director Michael Hays , and the behind @-@ the @-@ scenes documentary " Paris in the Springtime " . This serial was also released as part of the Doctor Who DVD Files in Issue 37 on 2 June 2010 . On 1 January 2013 , AudioGo released a two @-@ hour soundtrack of the serial , narrated by Lalla Ward . Ian Scoones ' storyboards for City of Death 's special effects sequences were published in Peter Haining 's book Doctor Who ? 25 Glorious Years in 1988 , and a Scaroth figure was released by Harlequin Miniatures in 1999 .