

= The Grinning Man =

" The Grinning Man " is a feature @-@ length episode of the BBC crime drama series Jonathan Creek , first broadcast on 1 January 2009 . The episode marked the series ' return to television following a five @-@ year hiatus , and saw the return of Alan Davies as the show 's titular sleuth . Stuart Milligan returned to the series as Jonathan 's boss , magician Adam Klaus , while the episode also introduced Sheridan Smith as Joey Ross , Jonathan 's crime @-@ solving assistant . The episode was written and directed by series creator David Renwick , who chose to revive the show as a means of delaying his retirement .

The central mysteries of the episode focused on an attic room whose occupants disappeared without trace overnight , and the kidnapped partner of a stage magician .

The episode was watched by 9 @. @ 91 million viewers and attained a 36 % audience share . Critical reaction to the episode from The Scotsman 's Paul Whitelaw and The Northern Echo 's Steve Pratt suggested that , at 120 minutes , the plot was overstretched . The Stage 's Mark Wright compared Smith favourably to her predecessor in the assistant role , Julia Sawalha as Carla Borrego , while both Scotland on Sunday 's Chitra Ramaswamy and Sian Brewis for the Leicester Mercury discussed the nostalgia invoked by the episode , as a result of the series having been off @-@ air since 2004 .

= = Plot = =

Set five years after the previous episode , " Gorgons Wood " , " The Grinning Man " begins by introducing the Gothic mansion Metropolis . Since 1938 , a number of visitors staying overnight in the mansion 's attic " Nightmare Room " have disappeared without a trace . Originally owned by a spiritualist , the mansion is now the property of his grandson , stage magician Lance Gessler (Nicholas Boulton) . Gessler lives with his mother , Constance (Judy Parfitt) , his partner Elodie (Jenna Harrison) , and their groundskeeper , Glenn (Ciaran McMenamin) . They offer shelter to paranormal investigator Joey Ross and her friend Mina (Naomi Bentley) when the two are caught in a storm . Mina elects to sleep in the Nightmare Room , and has vanished by morning . Constance calls in sleuth Jonathan Creek to investigate Mina 's disappearance .

Jonathan has recently begun a relationship with an old acquaintance , Nicola (Katherine Parkinson) , who is opposed to his investigative career , believing it to be too dangerous an occupation . Jonathan is still in the employment of the magician Adam Klaus , whose television series is receiving heavy criticism from viewers . To Jonathan 's bemusement , Klaus invests in the 3D pornography industry and begins dating the porn actress Candy Mountains (Jemma Walker) .

Investigating events at Metropolis , Jonathan deduces that Gessler 's grandfather was a Nazi sympathizer , who laid a trap in the attic room to kill one of his enemies without arousing suspicion . Jonathan and Joey spend the night in the room , but uncover nothing , save for a small vent in the canopy of the room 's four @-@ poster bed , which is opened when pressure is put on the mattress , releasing dead flies . The next morning , Jonathan comes to the realization that the vent above the bed was designed to leak a ectoplasmic fluid onto the room 's occupants as they slept , meaning they would need to bathe in the adjoining bathroom . Upon realizing the secret behind the disappearances , Jonathan races back up to the attic with Glenn . Unfortunately , Joey had already climbed into the bath , which has descended and released her into a water tank below the room , where the corpses of previous victims (including her friend Mina) remain , drowned and decomposing . The bath has not yet returned to its position so Jonathan and Glenn are able to rescue her . The mystery resembles the real @-@ life case of the Jarmans , the sixteenth @-@ century owners of the Ostrich Inn in Slough (Berkshire) , who killed wealthy travelers by tipping them into a barrel of boiling water via a hinged bed in one of the bedrooms .

During the investigation , Gessler 's partner , Elodie , is kidnapped . Joey follows Gessler from his stage show one night , and observes him slashing Elodie 's throat . She , Jonathan , and Nicola later discover Elodie 's dead body , but when they return with policemen , the corpse has been switched for a prop dummy . Glenn reveals that he and Elodie were in love , and had recently married in

secret . He suspects that Gessler may have murdered Elodie out of jealousy after she confessed their marriage to him . The police , however , receive a video of Elodie walking through a park the morning after she was supposedly murdered , with the day 's newspaper in plain view for validation . Jonathan realizes that Gessler had manipulated Delia Gunning (Ellen Ashley) , the editor of the local newspaper , into printing a fake copy a week in advance . By making the video before killing Elodie , he could deflect suspicion from himself , leading the police to believe that she had faked her own death and run away . Gessler ensured the front page 's authenticity by having Delia create the day 's headline herself , releasing a briefcase full of bees in the middle of a local council meeting . Jonathan 's suspicions became aroused as the following story about the construction of a motorway through six villages would have been far more engaging as a front @-@ pager . Jonathan and Joey arrive at Delia 's home just in time to save her from being murdered by Gessler , who later commits suicide by gassing himself in his car .

The " Grinning Man " the title refers to is the subject of a Hieronymous Bosch painting , which hangs in the attic Nightmare Room . Once the episode 's mysteries are resolved , Constance confesses that she rescued the painting from a burning room decades previously , leaving an elderly uncle to die as she did so . She has Glenn assist her in burning the painting in Metropolis ' grounds . The episode ends with Jonathan , Joey , and Adam arriving at a restaurant to celebrate with their significant others . Adam discovers that he has been conned by Candy , and will not be receiving any return on his pornography investment . Joey receives a call from her partner , Alec (Adam James) , who reveals that he is in Miami with Nicola and the two are now seeing one another . As the maître d ' (Graham Vanas) arrives to lead them to their private booth , Jonathan jests ; " Three for the Nightmare Room " .

= = Production = =

David Renwick made the decision to revive Jonathan Creek for a Christmas special as a means of " deferring retirement " . He considered the alternative of developing an entirely new series to be too lengthy a process , and regarded reviving Jonathan Creek as the " safe decision " . He described the process of formulating a plot for the episode as an " agony " and a " torment " , revealing that he had stopped writing the show in 2004 partly due to a lack of ideas . Renwick explained : " Inevitably , you set up a series which is all about impossibilities that then have to have a rational explanation , by definition it 's going to be pretty challenging stuff for a writer . So God knows why I ever embarked on it in the first place . " As well as writing , Renwick also directed the episode , which was produced by Nerys Evans ; Jonathan Creek 's former Producer Verity Lambert died of cancer in November 2007 . Davies noted that he and Renwick met quite regularly following Lambert 's death , and when Renwick suggested to the BBC that they revive Jonathan Creek , the broadcaster " bit his hand off for it " . " The Grinning Man " was commissioned by Jane Tranter , Controller of BBC Fiction , with Lucy Lumsden , Controller of Comedy Commissioning , stating that the station was " delighted to have Jonathan Creek back on BBC One " . Renwick was prepared for a negative reaction to the show 's revival , describing how : " People say , Oh Jonathan Creek 's coming back . Fantastic . ' And then they watch it and go : ' God , what a mistake . ' Which is what happened with One Foot in the Grave . So I tend to expect the worst . "

Davies had suspected that Renwick would one day revive Jonathan Creek , explaining that Jonathan 's fate had been left open , unlike Renwick 's other famous character - One Foot In The Grave 's Victor Meldrew , who was killed in a hit and run in the show 's last episode . When the production of " The Grinning Man " was announced in June 2008 , Davies commented : " For the last five years whenever I 've passed a locked room I 've thought there might be a mystery lurking behind it , so I 'm very happy to return to Jonathan Creek and to have something to actually solve . " He stated that reprising the role after such a lengthy hiatus was initially strange , and that : " I couldn 't remember my lines on the first day . I 'd sort of forgotten how precise you have to be when you work on a Jonathan Creek episode . " He praised co @-@ star Sheridan Smith in comparison , describing how : " Sheridan is extremely good at all that stuff , which works in a similar way to the script , in that she 's a very bright , sharp character and Creek 's a bit rusty and hasn 't really been

doing it for a while . So sure enough , on the first day , she knows all her lines and makes her mark . And I 'm going , ' Hang on a minute , stop showing off ' " . Upon receiving the episode 's script , Davies had gained a stone in weight since last playing Jonathan Creek , almost five years previously . Renwick suggested that they include Davies ' weight gain in the plot , presenting the character as having " gone to seed " . Davies , however , did not want to play a " fat Creek " , and lost weight before filming began , stating : " it was my choice not to let him go too much " . The actor discussed with Renwick how Jonathan may have developed in the intervening five years : " We talked about whether he ? d have changed , whether he ? d have done any investigating in the meantime . He probably didn ' t . He still does the same job and is locked in the same relationship with Klaus and feeling a bit put upon ? that hasn ' t changed at all ... and he still lives in a windmill " . In a change from the original , Cobstone Windmill was used for the exterior shots , replacing Shipley Windmill , which had been used for all other episodes . Davies grew his hair out again for the role , and wore his own duffel coat throughout the episode . The coat had become the character 's trademark in the show 's first series , with Davies explaining that : " After we did the first series , I could never wear it off screen again , because people started doing the Danse Macabre [theme] music everywhere I went . So it 's just been in the wardrobe for 12 years . "

Previous series of Jonathan Creek had featured first Caroline Quentin , and then Julia Sawalha as Jonathan 's assistants Maddy Magellan and Carla Borrego , respectively . Quentin departed from the show at the end of its third series in 2000 in order to try for a second child , while Sawalha temporarily retired from acting in 2004 , having become so disillusioned that she was " dragging [her] self out of bed " by the end of the show 's fourth series in order to film episodes . Davies explained that Renwick had always believed Jonathan needed a sidekick character , and that : " You can 't really have Jonathan Creek without his sounding board when all the stuff is going on in his mind . In a novel you can have an interior monologue when a leading character is working out what 's going on , but for a film or television you have to have Dr Watson for Sherlock Holmes , it 's somebody for Holmes to explain it to . " For " The Grinning Man " , a new sidekick was created in the form of Joey Ross , played by actress Sheridan Smith . Renwick described the opportunity to work with Smith as a major catalyst in his decision to revive the show . The actress had previously appeared in his series Love Soup , and Renwick 's wife suggested pairing her with Davies in the new episode . Smith was approached about the role before the episode 's script was written , and after readily agreeing to take the part of Ross , Renwick wrote the character 's dialogue with Smith 's northern accent in mind . The actress found accustoming herself to " detective talk " the hardest part of the role , explaining : " You slow down , and then speed up at the end . I kept watching Alan and going , ' I can ' t do this figuring out talk . ' But I learned from the master . " Smith enjoyed the challenge the role presented , stating : " He 's [Renwick] written this feisty little northern character , and I am really honoured because he 's such a great writer . I have always played chavs and slappers so I wasn 't used to being an intelligent young girl . "

Renwick has stated that the production of any further Jonathan Creek specials will depend on reception to " The Grinning Man " , as well as his own schedule . Davies is amenable to reprising the lead role in future , stating : " If David writes more , I 'm happy to do them . Unless they turned up and they were awful - but it hasn 't happened so far . And he wouldn 't send me an awful one anyway . But I don 't know if he will come up with another one . He always says that the writing is so difficult , I 'm not sure it gives him any pleasure . But I think the shooting gave him a lot of pleasure this time . He was directing for the first time and I think he really enjoyed it . So , we 'll see . "

= = Reception = =

" The Grinning Man " received a mixed response from critics , and was watched by 9 @. @ 91 million viewers , with a 36 % share of the total television audience . The episode beat ITV 's Marple in the same time @- @ slot , with Geraldine McEwan 's last episode as Agatha Christie 's famous sleuth receiving just 4 @. @ 48 million viewers and a 15 % audience share . The Sunday Times ' AA Gill was critical of the episode , suggesting that the series had been revived : " because of some dire piece of market research where they asked single , lonely , overweight , over @- @ 40 women who

keep cats and believe in ghosts who they fancied most on television , and Alan Davies must have beaten Huw Edwards by a woolly head . " Of the episode itself , he wrote : " It skids between procedural whodunit realism and cartoonish fantasy in a way that defies belief and interest . It is a dull confusion of unknotted loose ends that breaks its own rules , suspends common sense and dumps so much unexplained plot that all suspense drains away through the holes in the story . " The Herald 's Alasdair McKay was critical of Davies ' acting in the episode , writing that : " it really is difficult to tell the difference between the comedian and the accidental detective in David Renwick 's comedy drama . Davies doesn 't act , he tries to stay awake , occasionally pausing for a cryptic insight . " While The Scotsman 's Paul Whitelaw similarly noted that Davies appeared to be playing " a slightly grumpier version " of himself , he was " quite impressed " by Davies performance , having never seen him act before . Whitelaw found that " the episode itself left a lot to be desired " , writing that its central mystery was " solid " and its solution was " satisfyingly creepy " , but that " At two hours in length it was fatally overstretched [...] It was as though Renwick , who also directed , had been given 120 minutes to fill without having enough material to fill them ? the narrative equivalent of an interminable jam session based around some fundamentally decent riffs . " Steve Pratt , writing for The Northern Echo , was similarly critical of the episode 's length , deeming the Adam Klaus subplot " nonsense " which " could easily be removed without loss " . Pratt suggested that " This would also help reduce the overlong two @-@ hour running time , during which my attention wandered more often than it should have done . " The Observer 's Euan Ferguson shared a similar sentiment , writing that the episode :

... was long , at two hours , but writer / director David Renwick had helped us here in our tea @-@ making and loo @-@ going by including an almost entirely unwatchable sub @-@ plot involving a sleazy magician and a porn star ; as soon as it segued back to this , it was time for the viewer to leap to race for the kettle . What was going on with this bit ? Had Renwick written it with his feet , in the bath or something ? Then gone through it removing all traces of point or humour , then dropped it actually into the bath , then torn it up , then asked for it to be quickly rewritten by , say , an ant ?

Unlike McKay and Gill , however , Ferguson praised both Davies ' acting and the episode as a whole , deeming it " the best thing on television all week " . He opined that Davies : " plays Creek to easy perfection : mumbling , lugubrious , quietly brilliant " , and called the plot " involving , intriguing , [and] original " , stating that it " did the thing all good thrillers , books or films , do of getting you actively , cleverly involved in thinking you can see the answer before anyone else . You couldn 't . " The List 's Brian Donaldson was also positive about the episode , calling it " surprisingly splendid festive fare " , in which " The twists and resolutions were , to this watcher at least , as well hidden as Davies ' ears underneath that shaggy bonce . " The Times ' Tim Teeman deemed the episode " comfort television " , commenting on its " rambling pace " and writing that : " Our hero was brainy and cranky and the show itself awkward , funny and idiosyncratic (as you 'd expect from the creator , writer and director David Renwick) . " The Daily Telegraph ' Gerard O 'Donovan agreed that the episode felt " comfy and familiar " , but also found its run @-@ time overstretched , writing that it :

... might have made for terrifically good , refreshingly unsentimental fun had it not been for the fact that the episode was commissioned to run for two hours . That 's a good 30 minutes longer than the show 's ever been stretched before , and an hour beyond its natural span . Expanding to fit necessitated getting Creek and Joey to stall , stumble and scratch their bonces ineffectually at each other all the time while writer David Renwick desperately padded out the story with ever more unlikely twists and turns , zig @-@ zagging down incredible subplots involving the magician 's scheme to kidnap and murder his assistant , and the terrible betrayal that lay behind his mother 's acquisition of an oil painting by Hieronymus Bosch . In the end , by the time the secret of the original mystery was unlocked , the only room one really feared never being able to escape from was the one with the telly in it .

Of Smith 's performance as Joey , O 'Donovan opined that : " For most drama series the presence of a key new character would have a tangible impact . But not Jonathan Creek , where characterisation has never been done in anything but the broadest brush strokes . Both Caroline Quentin and Julia Sawalha have previously filled the generic role of Creek 's pushy , inquisitive partner pretty much interchangeably . Smith was no different . Ten minutes in and we 'd forgotten

she was anyone new . " In contrast , Mark Wright , reviewing the episode for The Stage , praised Smith 's performance as Joey , deeming her to be " a much more satisfying sidekick " than Julia Sawalha 's Carla Borrego . He enjoyed the on @-@ screen relationship between the two lead actors , writing that : " it ? s the interplay between Davies and Smith that makes this really special . " Scotland on Sunday 's Chitra Ramaswamy discussed the nostalgia invoked by the series ' return , alongside The Royle Family , Blackadder and Shooting Stars ? other major shows which returned for 2008 Christmas specials . Ramaswamy wrote : " all the comforting , well kent faces are back to soothe us through these dismal times . In a culture that is becoming more and more risk @-@ averse , it 's the oldies but goodies that we trust . " Sian Brewis for the Leicester Mercury also considered this nostalgia angle , but concluded that : " Jonathan Creek is the sort of auld acquaintance you ? re happy to see once a year ? any more than that , you feel , and his mannerisms would start to grate . " She deemed the episode : " Less a blast from the past as a shuffling " excuse me " . Conversely , Anne Pickles for the News and Star wrote that a one @-@ off special was not enough , and " what we really wanted was a brand new series " . Pickles said of the episode : " It ? s the gentle , facially expressive , deeply sceptical , somehow slightly daft performance of Davies as Creek that makes this sleuthing drama such a glory . But a one @-@ off ? Oh come on ... you can do better than that . "