

= Night Terrors (Doctor Who) =

" Night Terrors " is the ninth episode of the sixth series of the British science fiction television series Doctor Who , and was first broadcast on BBC One and BBC America on 3 September 2011 . It was written by Mark Gatiss and directed by Richard Clark .

In the episode , alien time traveller the Doctor (Matt Smith) and his companions Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) and Rory (Arthur Darvill) decide to make a " house call " to an eight @-@ year @-@ old boy named George (Jamie Oram) who is terrified of almost everything , and especially dreads the cupboard in his bedroom . While the Doctor discusses this with George 's father Alex (Daniel Mays) , Amy and Rory become trapped in a doll house with terrifying life @-@ size peg dolls .

" Night Terrors " was inspired by Gatiss 's fear of dolls , and the ones in the episode were designed to be scary and crude @-@ looking . The episode was moved from the first half of the series to the second , which necessitated changes to make it fit into the series ' story arc . It was the first to be filmed , with production taking place in September 2010 at a council estate in Redcliffe , Bristol and at Dyrham Park , where the doll 's house interior scenes were filmed . The episode was watched by 7 @. @ 07 million viewers in the UK and received generally positive to mixed reviews from critics , though some were critical of how it fitted into the overarching story as it came after a heavy story @-@ arc episode .

= = Plot = =

= = = Synopsis = = =

The Doctor decides to make a " house call " after his psychic paper receives a message from George , a frightened 8 @-@ year @-@ old child , asking his help in getting rid of the monsters in his bedroom . On arrival at a council estate on present @-@ day Earth , the Doctor , Amy , and Rory split up to try to locate the child . The Doctor , taking the guise of a social services worker , finds the right flat , and meets George 's father , Alex , while his mother Claire is working a night shift . Through Alex 's photo album , the Doctor learns that George has been frightened all his life , fearing many of the sounds and people around the flat and is helped to cope by various habits , including metaphorically placing his fears in his wardrobe .

Meanwhile , Amy and Rory , while taking the lift down , suddenly find themselves in what appears to be an eighteenth @-@ century house , but shortly discover most of the furnishings are wooden props . Other residents of the estate appear in the house , but are caught by life @-@ sized peg dolls that laugh and sing like children , and transform the residents into more dolls . Amy and Rory witness one transformation and try to flee , but Amy is caught and becomes a doll herself , joining the others in chasing Rory .

The Doctor , suspecting that the wardrobe contains the evil George fears , opens it to find its contents are simply clothes and toys , including a doll house . The Doctor suddenly recalls from Alex 's photo album that Claire did not appear pregnant in the weeks leading up to George 's supposed birth , causing Alex to remember the fact that Claire was unable to have children . The Doctor asserts that George is a Tenza child , an empathic alien who took on the form of Alex and Claire 's desired child through a perception filter , and has the ability to literally lock away his fears in the wardrobe . George begins to panic from this revelation and the Doctor and Alex are pulled into the wardrobe , joining Rory in the dollhouse . As the dolls descend on the three , the Doctor calls out to George to face his fears ; George is able to open the wardrobe and appears in the dollhouse , but the dolls turn to advance on him . The Doctor realises that George is still frightened that Alex and Claire plan to send him away , having mistakenly interpreted a conversation they had earlier that night ; Alex rushes through the dolls to embrace George as his son . They all soon find themselves back at the estate , restored to normal . Claire returns the next morning to find George no longer scared while Alex and the Doctor make him breakfast . After being thanked , the Doctor rejoins his companions to set off for their next adventure .

At the end , a nursery rhyme foreshadowing the Doctor 's death is heard , and a screen in the TARDIS displays details of the Doctor 's death : the date and time he is to die , and the location of his death .

== Continuity ==

The Doctor refers to " Snow White and the Seven Keys to Doomsday " , " The Three Little Sontarans " and " The Emperor Dalek 's New Clothes " as being among his childhood nursery stories , referencing the 1974 stage play Seven Keys to Doomsday and the Sontarans and the Emperor Dalek , two of the series ' recurring monsters . He also repeats his predilection for tea and Jammie Dodgers from another Gatiss @-@ written episode , " Victory of the Daleks " .

== Production ==

Episode writer Mark Gatiss told Radio Times that he had always been scared of dolls , and was surprised that Doctor Who had never used them before . He was especially interested in peg dolls , which he said were " the stuff of proper nightmares " . Gatiss had previously worked with guest actor Daniel Mays in the BBC serial Funland and purposely inserted the line " Maybe later " into the script as it had been " a bit of a catchphrase " for the two on Funland . However , Mays did not notice the reference . The episode was originally given the title of " What Are Little Boys Made Of ? "

To achieve a greater variety of stories in the first half of series 6 " Night Terrors " was moved to the second block of episodes , having been filmed as episode four and showing up in promos for the first half of the season . This necessitated minor changes to the episode , including the removal of a recurring sequence featuring the appearance of Madame Kovarian . The original last scene was dropped , and a new one was written so it would make sense at that point in the series . This scene consisted of nursery rhyme ; lead writer Steven Moffat wanted to foreshadow the Doctor 's death and asked Gatiss to write a nursery rhyme , which he described as " rather wonderful " . Variations of the rhyme are heard in " Closing Time " and the series finale " The Wedding of River Song " .

The episode was the first to be filmed , in September 2010 . It was mainly filmed on a council estate in Bath , Somerset , while the scenes in the dollhouse were filmed in Dyrham Park . The Bristol estate was chosen because of its " crisp architecture " . The country house of Dyrham Park was chosen because of its staircase and checked flooring . The antiques were stripped out of the building and replaced with " child @-@ like " furniture that was placed to look as though it had been played with . Several designs of the dolls were made , trying to achieve the desired balance of a normal doll and a scarier , more " crude " -looking one . The actors portraying the dolls were choreographed to move with stiff legs but swing their arms . In the scene in which Alex and the Doctor are in the kitchen they open and close the fridge as they are talking ; this was not in the script , but improvised by Smith and Mays on set . Mays was invited to guest @-@ star in the episode , and was drawn to the story because of the family element ; he has a young son like George . The scene in which Purcell sinks into the carpet was filmed with actor Andrew Tiernan on a hydraulic platform that lowered him into green @-@ coloured liquid .

== Broadcast and reception ==

" Night Terrors " was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One on 3 September 2011 . The episode achieved an overnight figure of 5 @.@ 5 million viewers , making it the fourth most @-@ watched programme for the day . Final consolidated figures showed it picked up 1 @.@ 6 million timeshifted viewers , bringing the total up to 7 @.@ 07 million viewers . It received an Appreciation Index of 86 , considered " excellent " .

== Critical reception ==

Reception to the episode has been generally positive to mixed . Dan Martin of the Guardian

commented that the episode was an improvement on Gatiss 's previous three episodes ? " The Unquiet Dead " , " The Idiot 's Lantern " and " Victory of the Daleks " . He complimented it overall as " a classy , creepy episode of retro Doctor Who " in comparison to " Let 's Kill Hitler " , though he saw its plot as over @-@ similar to " The Empty Child " and other episodes written by Steven Moffat . Martin later rated it the tenth best episode of the series , though the finale was not included in the list . Gavin Fuller of The Daily Telegraph praised the dolls for " stealing the show " , as well as the concept of the doll 's house .

IGN 's Matt Risley rated the episode 8 out of 10 , praising Gatiss 's script which " moved the drama and horror straight into the miniaturised heart of a rickety creepy dolls house , with a set of villains that ? while never as memorable or scary as their look may suggest ? used sound design to its most effective " . He said that the main story " soared " , though the sidelined Amy and Rory left " little impact " in relation to the Doctor , George , and Alex . Russell Lewin of SFX gave " Night Terrors " three and a half out of five stars , saying that it had " many great things going for it but perhaps hasn 't quite got that little extra something that would have turned it into a classic " and that nothing seemed especially unexpected . However , he praised the shots of the doll house and apartment buildings , the sound , dolls , the acting of Matt Smith and Daniel Mays , and the idea of George being alien who created the reality .

Blair Marnell of Crave Online noted that " Night Terrors " was reminiscent of the second series episode " Fear Her " , but said that this episode " fared a little bit better because it didn 't rely on Jamie Oram 's George to be anything more than a scared little boy " . She also praised Matt Smith 's performance and Arthur Darvill 's Rory , who was " quickly becoming one of the funniest companions of the new Doctor Who " , though she commented that Amy 's transformation into a doll was " kind of glossed over within the story itself " and " there was never any doubt that it would be reversed " . Overall , the episode was given a 7 out of 10 rating . Sam McPherson , writing for Zap2it , called " Night Terrors " the " worst episode of series 6 so far " that was an " incoherent mess of an episode that was utterly unenjoyable " and gave it an overall grade of a C + . He criticised the idea to follow up a story arc @-@ heavy episode with a standalone one , as he felt it " served as a speed bump for the forward momentum started in " A Good Man Goes to War " and continued through " Let 's Kill Hitler " . He thought that its " biggest flaw " was that George was sidelined in favour of Alex , which missed an opportunity to make it a story " about little boys overcoming fear and fighting off the monsters in their closets " . However , he did praise dialogue delivered by Smith and Darvill .

Because the episode was originally planned to be in the first half of the series , many of the reviewers mentioned that it was strange that Amy and Rory did not comment upon what had happened previously , such as what had happened to their child . McPherson noted the " tacked @-@ on " nursery rhyme foreshadowing the Doctor 's death was included , though he thought it was " unintelligible " and did not count .