

= The Beast Below =

" The Beast Below " is the second episode of the fifth series of the British science fiction television series Doctor Who . It was written by executive producer and head writer Steven Moffat and broadcast on BBC One and BBC HD on 10 April 2010 .

In the episode , the Doctor ? a time travelling alien played by Matt Smith ? and his new companion Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) arrive in the distant future aboard the Starship UK , a ship constructed to transport the population and major cultural artifacts of the United Kingdom away from Earth to escape the death of the sun . However , they discover that the government of the ship secretly tortures a Star Whale that guides the ship , the abandonment of which is believed will destroy the ship and kill everyone on board .

The episode , which featured the first time Amy was away from her home world , was designed to show how important she was to the Doctor and his need for a companion . As part of the second production block of the series , the episode 's production took place in Autumn 2009 . " The Beast Below " was seen by 8 @.@ 42 million viewers on BBC One and BBC HD , the fifth most @-@ watched programme in the week it was broadcast . It was met with a positive to mixed reception from critics ; many praised the chemistry between Smith and Gillan , but some thought that there were too many imaginative concepts that did not make a satisfying conclusion , or that the message of the episode was not as strong as it should have been .

= = Plot = =

= = = Synopsis = = =

In the distant future , the Doctor and Amy arrive on the Starship UK , a colony spaceship containing the population of the United Kingdom who have left the planet to escape deadly solar flares . They come across a crying girl , Mandy , whom all the other adults aboard consciously ignore . The Doctor , having discovered that the ship does not seem to be powered by normal engines , tells Amy to follow Mandy while he explores the engine room . There , he finds the engine controls to be a false front , and encounters a masked woman called Liz 10 , who also is aware of the ship 's oddness and of the Doctor 's identity .

Meanwhile , Amy confronts Mandy , who explains she had lost her friend to the " beast below " after he refused to follow Starship UK rules and ran afoul of the robot @-@ like Smilers that watch over the ship . Ignoring Mandy 's warnings , Amy enters a tent which covers a hole in the ship . There she finds a tentacle @-@ like creature reaching up from the pit and quickly backs out of the tent into the monk @-@ like Winders , who police the ship . Amy is taken to one of the many voting booths on the ship , where an automated video explains that each adult votes after being shown the truth of Starship UK . After the video , Amy is given the opportunity to either protest the truth or have the booth make her forget it . Amy chooses to forget , but not before recording a video to show herself after the memory wipe , urging her to get the Doctor off the ship before he learns its nature . The Doctor and Mandy arrive ; Mandy explains that the voting takes place every five years and everyone chooses to " forget " . The Doctor , however , triggers the " protest " sequence , sending him and Amy into the bowels of the ship .

Finding himself and Amy in the mouth of a giant creature , the Doctor uses his sonic screwdriver to make the creature throw them up ; with Liz 10 's help , they evade the Smilers waiting for them upon their escape . Liz 10 reveals herself to be Queen Elizabeth X and the Doctor begins to question her age , which she believes is around 50 , although her body clock was slowed to retain its youthful appearance . The Winders arrive and take Liz 10 , the Doctor , Amy and Mandy to the Tower of London , where it is revealed that all of Starship UK rides atop a giant Star Whale that provides the ship 's locomotion . The Star Whale , believed to be the last of its kind , arrived at Earth at the time of the solar flares ; it was captured and the ship was constructed around it . However , in order to direct the whale , the pain center of its brain has been exposed to receive frequent jolts of electricity

. The Winders show Liz 10 that she ordered this centuries ago , but every ten years she finds her way to the Tower and chooses to have her memory wiped to prevent herself from remembering . She implemented the voting programme to do the same to the population , out of fear that remembering the truth would lead to the populace demanding the whale be freed , destroying the ship and killing everyone aboard .

The Doctor is furious , realising to his despair that he has to choose between saving the humans or the Star Whale , and angrily chastises Amy for choosing to forget about the whale so he would not face such a choice , telling her he is taking her home after they are finished there . Liz 10 says there has to be another way , but the Doctor slams his fist on the control pad and angrily tells them not to talk to him , because " nobody human has anything to say to [him] " . He then decides to alter the controlling device programming to render the Star Whale brain @-@ dead , allowing it to continue through space but no longer feel the pain . As the Doctor works , Amy sees Mandy has found her friend alive , as the whale refuses to eat children . Amy , considering all she has seen and heard , takes control and uses Liz 10 's hand to strike the " abdicate " button that disables the controlling device and allows the Star Whale to break free . To everyone 's surprise , the Whale does not leave , and in fact the ship moves faster . Amy explains to the Doctor that she saw the similarities between him and the Star Whale , and deduced that the Whale came to Earth willingly at the time of crisis . The Doctor and Amy reconcile and return to the TARDIS . Amy is about to tell the Doctor of her impending wedding when she is interrupted by a call to the TARDIS from Winston Churchill , who is face @-@ to @-@ face with a Dalek .

= = = Continuity = = =

It is noted that the Earth was abandoned in the 29th century due to solar flares ; this was a central plot point of the classic serials The Ark in Space and The Sontaran Experiment . Liz 10 mentions the Doctor 's previous encounters with British monarchs , including Victoria (" Tooth and Claw ") , Elizabeth I (seen in " The Shakespeare Code " and referenced in The End of Time) and Elizabeth II (Silver Nemesis) . Liz 10 herself is seen again in " The Pandorica Opens " confronting an intruder in the Royal Collection in the 52nd century . The workman 's tent investigated by Amy is in front of a shop called " Magpie Electricals " ; a shop that first appears in " The Idiot 's Lantern " . The episode also continues the story arc of the crack pattern , where it appears at the end of the episode on the side of the Starship UK .

= = Production = =

Executive producer and head writer Steven Moffat wrote the episode as an introduction for Amy into the role of the Doctor 's companion . The episode showcases her first adventure away from her home world and her first time in space . The climax of the episode , where the Doctor decides the best thing he can do is kill the Star Whale as painlessly as possible but Amy comes up with an alternative solution that is more humane , was designed to stand out in the Doctor 's memory as a failure of a huge scale . It also reinforced the Doctor 's need for a companion and showed how important Amy would be to him .

" The Beast Below " was in the second production block of the series . The read @-@ through for the episode took place 20 August 2009 . Scenes set in Liz 10 's Buckingham Palace were filmed at Margam Country Park , Port Talbot on a night shoot on 22 September 2009 . The interior of the orangery was used as the Palace . The room in the Tower of London where the climax takes place was filmed at Neath Abbey . The industrial streets of Starship UK were filmed in a disused factory in Mamhilad , with the art department designing it in accordance to Moffat 's specific description in the script . Gillan put in some of her own wonder at the set into Amy 's actions when she admires the street for the first time .

The set for the whale 's tongue was challenging for both the art department and the actors . With guidance from the stunt co @-@ ordinator , Smith and Gillan were required to slide down a short slide before dropping six feet . Gillan stated that this was the " most bizarre " moment of filming for

her . For the opening scene in which the Doctor holds Amy 's ankle while she is suspended in space , Gillan was hoisted on wires above the TARDIS prop in front of a greenscreen while a wind machine created the effects of being in space .

Both Sophie Okonedo and Terence Hardiman , who played Liz 10 and government head Hawthorne respectively , have had experience in Doctor Who related roles . Okonedo previously portrayed Alison Cheney , a companion of the alternate Ninth Doctor known as the Shalka Doctor in the online flash @-@ animated serial Scream of the Shalka . Hardiman later voiced King Sitric in the Big Finish audio play The Book of Kells .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" The Beast Below " was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One on 10 April 2010 . Unofficial overnight viewing figures stated that 6 @.@ 4 million viewers watched on BBC One with an additional 330 @,@ 000 watching a simulcast on BBC HD . This meant that the show was the most watched show of the day . When time @-@ shifted figures were added , the viewing figures on BBC One were 7 @.@ 93 million while BBC HD 's ratings rose to 494 @,@ 000 , making the final consolidated figures for the episode 8 @.@ 42 million . It was the fifth most @-@ watched programme on BBC One for the week ending 11 April 2010 and the 11th for the week across all UK channels . The episode received an Appreciation Index of 86 , considered " excellent " .

" The Beast Below " was released in Region 2 on DVD and Blu @-@ ray with the episodes " The Eleventh Hour " and " Victory of the Daleks " and special features on 7 June 2010 . It was then re @-@ released as part of the complete series five DVD on 8 November 2010 .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The episode received positive to mixed reviews by television critics . Andrew Billen , writing in The Times , awarded the episode five stars , praising Matt Smith 's " mercurial " Doctor , Sophie Okonedo 's acting , and the concept of the episode . However , he worried that Moffat " may not be as interested in the Time Lord as the rest of his fans " , referring to a scene in which the Doctor dismisses the death of his people as a " bad day " . Keith Watson in Metro praised the developing relationship between the Doctor and Amy . Sam Wollaston in The Guardian noted the parallels between the future UK and modern Britain , and also confessed to " being in love with Amy Pond " .

SFX Magazine 's Russell Lewin gave " The Beast Below " four out of five stars , calling it " immensely satisfying " . He particularly praised the two lead performances and Amy 's characterisation as companion , as well as the writing and dialogue . Dan Martin , also of The Guardian , praised the story for testing the characters ' relationships rather than being just a visit to the Starship UK to make it better , though he commented that the " anti @-@ vivisection message " seemed to be lost along the way . He praised the way the Doctor was portrayed in terms of his more inhumane instincts in contrast to the Tenth Doctor and rated the episode as " four out of five " . Radio Times reviewer Patrick Mulkern said that the episode " neither moved [him] to wave a Save the Starwhale banner nor reach for the nearest harpoon " and made him feel " out of the loop " as it seemed more directed at children than adults . However , he praised the acting of Smith , Gillan , and Sophie Okonedo , as well as the creation of the Smilers .

IGN 's Matt Wales had a more mixed opinion about the episode , rating it a " good " 7 out of 10 . He considered it imaginative with " more brilliant ideas ... than most other shows can muster in an entire season " , but he thought the episode " never quite brought its cacophony of ideas together to form a satisfying whole " , and the conclusion " failed to resonate effectively against the hodgepodge of insane ideas and action " . Because of the large amount of ideas , Wales also pointed out that the characterisation was " scant " , especially on Liz 10 and the Smilers . However , he praised Smith 's and Gillan 's chemistry and Moffat 's " crackling dialogue " . In February 2013 , Moffat cited " The Beast Below " as his least @-@ favourite among the episodes he wrote , describing it as " a bit of a mess " .

== Reviews ==

" The Beast Below " reviews at The Doctor Who Ratings Guide