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7
SEVEN

DOCTOR WHO

ROLEPLAYING GAME



GAMEMASTER'S COMPANION



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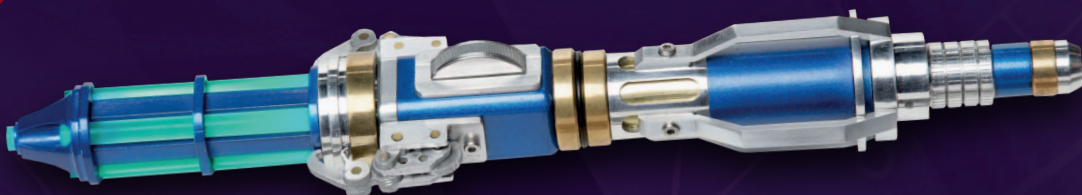
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INTRODUCTION

'HELLO.

**ANYWAY, WHY DON'T WE STOP AND HAVE A NICE LITTLE CHAT
WHERE I TELL YOU ALL MY PLANS AND YOU CAN
WORK OUT A WAY TO STOP ME,
I DON'T THINK.'**

All of time and space, everywhere and *everywhen*. From stopping a Cybermen invasion in the heart of London to venturing inside a Dalek and (almost) everything in between, the Doctor's been there and done that. But when it comes to writing and running your own adventures, where do you even begin? This is where the **Gamemaster's Companion** comes in.

The **Gamemaster's Companion** is an invaluable resource to help you run the **Doctor Who Roleplaying Game**, offering advice on telling stories in the style of the Doctor's adventures. It's a veritable toolbox of tips, tricks and techniques that you can use in your own games, picking and choosing which ones you want to try out. You'll be using flashbacks, starting games *in media res* and ending your next session with a killer cliffhanger before you know it!

The first part of the **Gamemaster's Companion** is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One offers advice on starting a new game, from setting concept to creating characters and putting the group together. **Chapter Two** is about planning an adventure, from plot to pacing, finishing off with the mother of all random adventure generators. **Chapter Three** is all about the bad guys, offering advice on how to create a truly memorable villain and some special rules for making them truly threatening. It also takes a look at that staple of *Doctor Who* adventures, the monsters, particularly focused on how to make your own. **Chapter Four** provides a toolkit for bringing the setting to life, helping you to create a vivid location for your adventure to unfold in. **Chapter Five** delves into the nitty-gritty of how you go about running an adventure, from describing things to bringing things back on track when they go somewhat... awry. This chapter also zooms out to look at the bigger picture, helping you link all of your adventures into a campaign. Finally, it is loaded with what we're terming 'stock footage' – that is to say, ready-made characters and locations that you can dip into when you're in tight spot.

The second part of the book contains three complete adventures, each of which showcases some of the techniques and tips explained earlier in the book, letting you put all you've learned so far into practice.

Death Comes to Toytown starts the game in the middle of the action in a fantastical location; the characters have been transformed into toys, trapped in a toy shop filled with otherworldly foes. Who's done it and what do they want with the characters' real bodies?

The Grip of the Kraken sees the TARDIS becalmed in space about a powerless starship, drifting towards a mysterious asteroid belt and into the maw of a new monster – the Kraken.

The Bellagio Imbrolio is a sandbox-style adventure, pitching the characters into the political intrigue of 18th-century Venice with a cast of NPCs all pulling the story towards a different agenda. Who will the characters choose to help and what will the outcome be?

Finally, a note of caution. If you're a player; while there's nothing inherently spoiler-y about this sourcebook's contents, reading it will be something akin to working out how the magician performs all his tricks. So while we won't come out and say "players, stop reading now!", reading it might take away some of the mystery of your game. Alternatively, it might just inspire you to run your own game!





STARTING OUT



STARTING OUT



“So, all of time and space, everything that ever happened or ever will. Where do you want to start?”

Starting a new game of the **Doctor Who Roleplaying Game**? Let’s work out the best set-up for you and your friends.

⚙️ HOW TO SET UP A NEW GAME

Here’s the thing: the game set-up you choose needs support from the whole group. You need a thumbs up from everyone, even if it isn’t their first choice. As Gamemaster, making sure of this is your job; this is a game where the Gamemaster calls a lot of the shots, and the players will expect the same here.

So this is how you do it:

- You tell them your best idea.
- Then you talk about it.

First up, think about game ideas that you get excited about. After all, you’ll be putting more work into this than any of the players. Choose a concept that really catches your imagination. Think about how to describe it to your players. You want the players to see why your idea will make for a really exciting game that they’ll love to play. Adding a bit of detail can help: instead of “I think the game should be about

some people who stumble into a rogue TARDIS”, try “I think the game should be about some people from different periods of Earth’s history who stumble into a mysterious TARDIS and are yanked out of their own times. They keep getting dragged into exciting adventures throughout time and space, all while trying to figure out the secrets of the TARDIS”.

Warning! Don’t fall so in love with your idea that you can’t bear to change it! No game concept entirely survives contact with player creativity!

You don’t need to stop at one idea, but you don’t want to share more than three or four at once. Beyond that you’ll be presenting the players with so many options that it will be hard to make a good decision.

Now the second step: talking it through. Get the players together (or send out group emails, whatever works) and tell them you want their help deciding the concept for the game. Describe your idea to them, but – and this is important – present it as a starting point, not something set in stone.

Invite suggestions, counter ideas, modifications, whatever they come up with. Talk it out. Many times, the group will be happy to go with your suggestion, but even then see if you can get at least one suggestion from each player for a change or addition to the

concept. The more the game reflects the interests of everyone, the more likely it is to deliver an amazing experience in play.

THE CORRECT WAY TO START

There is no correct way to start. No, that's wrong: there are lots of correct ways to start. You can do it like this:

- Step One: Decide on a concept.
- Step Two: Choose characters to fit.
- Step Three: Work out your starting point.

Or like this:

- Step One: Decide on some characters.
- Step Two: Develop a concept to fit.
- Step Three: Discuss issues like canon.

Or this:

- Step One: Have a big rambling discussion about all the different aspects of a new concept until something starts feeling right.
- Step Two: Play!
- Step Three: Discuss how it went and make changes to improve things.

Or maybe this:

- Step One: Decide something.
- Step Two: Decide something else.
- Step Three: Change the first something for a better idea.

In other words, don't hesitate to do things in whatever order feels right. Test the waters, try a few options – the method that works best for your group might not be obvious until you try it.

OVERALL CONCEPT

What is your game idea about? Who are the characters and what are they doing? This is the big-picture concept, and it gives you some important information.

TIME LORD PLUS HUMANS EXPLORING TIME AND SPACE

Everyone knows how this one works: a Time Lord with a TARDIS takes a few human companions on the adventure of a lifetime. It reliably delivers fun times and gives you a stable set-up for continuing adventures. This is the classic concept, and most

groups will give it a try the first time they play – but, of course, there are other ways to play.

Potential Pitfalls: Even though this is the classic approach, it has its problems. First, it requires committed players. Say you have a large group but because of work or family commitments, you never know who will make it to any particular game session. The classic set-up won't be a great fit, because there's only so many times you can make excuses as to why one of the team sits out the adventure in the TARDIS before it starts to feel fake.

There are also some balance concerns with this model. The Time Lord and the human companions are mechanically balanced by Story Points, but despite this it can be easy for a dominant player to use their Time Lord character to grab a lot of time in the spotlight, or to direct the course of the whole game, at the expense of other players. Some groups prefer a more equal arrangement: is yours one of them?

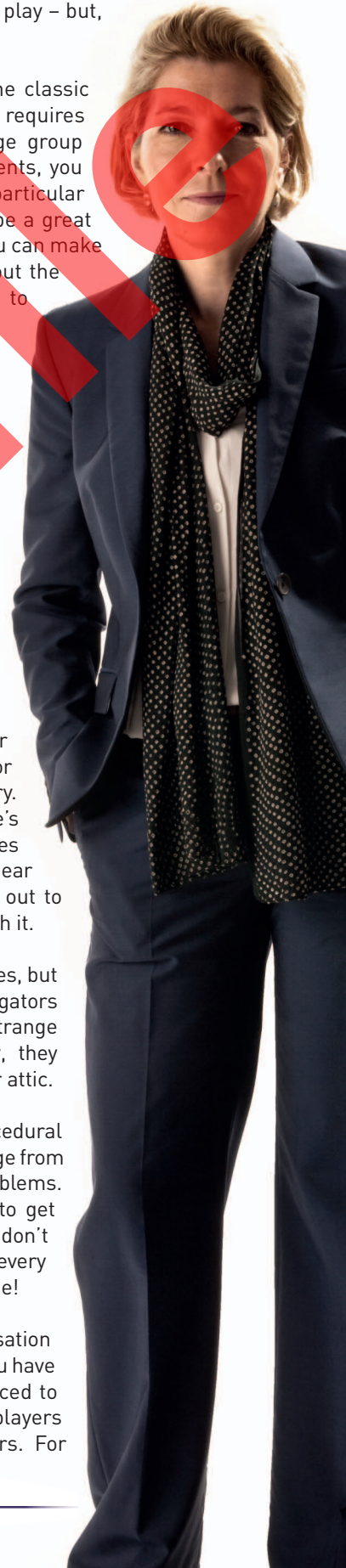
EARTH TEAM INVESTIGATING STRANGE EVENTS

This is also a fairly easy model to get your head around. UNIT has been doing this for decades, and Torchwood for over a century. There's a group with a headquarters. There's someone more-or-less in charge who likes to get out in the thick of things. They hear about the latest unusual event and head out to inspect it and, if there's trouble, to deal with it.

UNIT and Torchwood are organised agencies, but this set-up also works for amateur investigators who like to stick their noses into the strange things they hear about. If they're lucky, they might even have an alien computer in their attic.

This is a great model for a flexible procedural game. The exact group of players can change from week to week and it won't cause any problems. The drive to investigate means it's easy to get the group off on a new adventure. And you don't need to come up with a new alien planet every time, because the setting will stay the same!

Potential Pitfalls: When you have an organisation you have a chain of command, and when you have a chain of command you have players forced to take orders. Even worse, you often have players forced to take orders from other players. For





some groups this won't be a problem, but in others, this will be a huge minus to their experience. If you decide on a small agency where people are expected to take the initiative, and you this problem mostly goes away.

If the group aren't in a formal organisation, but are just curious amateurs, then the main problem is that of protecting themselves. If any given set of villains can portray the group as criminals, then that might be the end of their careers and the game right then and there – they won't have UNIT or Torchwood advising police not to press charges.

ACCIDENTAL WANDERERS

Just because they're travelling through space and time doesn't mean they know how to steer. Perhaps their travel is entirely accidental. Your game can be about a group of people who stumble into a situation they don't understand. Perhaps they crawled through a wardrobe and ended up in a strange new world, with no clear idea of how to get home, and the controls to the wardrobe are extremely confusing...

This can be a handy one for a Gamemaster, because it means the players entrust you with deciding where they go from week to week. You decide if it's Roman Britain now, ancient Mesopotamia next, then the year 3 million. They go along for the ride.

Potential Pitfalls: While hopping from random place to random place can be fun for a while, many groups will want some control over their destiny before too

long. When that happens, you'll either change the concept into something new, or start winding up the game. This can actually be a really good thing, as players might find it very satisfying to go from helpless victims of circumstance to travellers in control of their own fates, but it's worth knowing what you're getting yourself into. This set-up also shares the problem of player commitment. If you have an irregular player or two, then it will be quite hard to keep continuity from one game session to the next.

HIGH CONCEPT

"You know what would be an awesome idea? If we play..."

- "...Sontarans who were infected with human emotions by the Doctor, and now we're chasing him through time and space to make him put us back like we were before!"
- "...the bridge crew of one of those time-travelling shape-changing robots, only instead of enforcing justice we're tracking down the Key to Time!"
- "...a band of thieves plotting the biggest heists in all of time and space, and we decide on the Daleks as our first target!"
- "...members of a cross-time flower delivery service, and we're constantly competing with a rival cross-time flower delivery service!"
- "...people whose lives got messed up by aliens but they blame the Doctor and want to put him on trial, so they investigate everything mysterious in case he's involved!"

- "...ordinary people who wake up in a world where all of time is mashed together and who try to work out what went wrong so they can put things right!"

When someone says "You know what would be an awesome idea?" you're dealing with a high concept. These ideas are unique and distinctive. The concept by itself should be enough to get everyone interested. A high-concept game can be one of the most memorable experiences you'll have at a tabletop: you know your game will be unlike every other game out there, and you have an amazing opportunity to get wildly creative together! These ideas are always a bit odd, though, so it is extra important to make sure everyone likes the idea and wants to play.

Potential Pitfalls: Unsurprisingly there are lots of things that can go wrong with this sort of game. High concepts are never sure things. Sometimes an idea that you're all excited by and committed to can still fall over when you sit down to play it.

When you're talking about high concepts, two big things to consider are longevity (will the adventures keep coming, or will they dry up pretty quickly?) and equity (will all the players share in the fun, or will some characters get more attention than others?).

WHAT SORT OF CHARACTERS DO WE PLAY?

In most other roleplaying games, the starting concept is clear enough that everyone pretty much lands on the same page: you're all fantasy heroes who like looting dungeons for treasure, or you're all 1920s occult investigators, or whatever. This game is not like that. A new **Doctor Who Roleplaying Game**

can start anywhere in time or space, with any sort of characters. In fact, there are so many choices, it can be a challenge to even get started! Here are some good options to start you off...

THE TARDIS CREW

You take on the roles of your favourite TARDIS crew. Be the Doctor, Clara and Danny! Or be the Doctor, Amy and Rory! Or be the Doctor, Martha and Jack! Or be the Doctor, Rose and Mickey! Those character sheets appear in the various books for a reason, after all.

Some groups will be happy to use a non-standard crew: the Doctor, Donna and Amy, for example. You can come up with a clever explanation, or just shrug your shoulders and go for it, whatever feels right to you.

A good option if the players...

- Love the iconic characters.
- Have the right number of people.
- Want to start playing right away.
- Won't argue over who gets to play who.

Avoid this option if the players...

- Enjoy arguing about the merits of the characters (you'll never get anything done!).
- Want to use their own creativity.
- Don't all know the characters.
- Can get a bit worried about canon (see pg. 10).

