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You're listening to Writing Worlds, a podcast about the art of worldbuilding, with Emily Inkpen and Chris Gregory. This week on Writing Worlds, Dal entering the Who-niverse with one of the best known voices on UK television. Nicholas Briggs is an actor known for being the voice of the Daleks, Cybermen and assorted other characters on Doctor Who. We're going to be talking about working within an extremely well-established fictional world and the information that those working on a production like Doctor Who need to know when they do so. Nick's also an audio drama writer and director, so we'll also be talking about his writing and the worlds that he has written. Nick, welcome to Writing Worlds. Hello! That's a very long introduction, wasn't it? Yeah, it was very good though and almost completely accurate. Oh good. We go for about 70 to 80 percent as a baseline. Yeah. It's all just stories in the end. Very much so, yes. Okay, so some of you may know that Nick has joined the cast of our audio drama The Decks Legacy for its third season. So we've had the pleasure of working and drinking and chatting with him quite a lot. Yes, and apparently you want me to tell the donkey story. No, no. Not the donkey, no. The legendary donkey story. It's nowhere near as bad as you think, Miss Smith. That's not speculative fiction, is it? No, that's real. It was historical fact. It was very historical. Everyone listening is really intrigued now. It's to do with my grandfather so it was historical. Join our Patreon at the \$50 a month tier and you'll get the donkey story. Anyway, it's started well. It's a huge pleasure to welcome you to the show Nick. Along the way today we will be playing our usual round of silly games, but hopefully informing, educating and entertaining, as someone once said, as we explore the Who universe. Can we start by asking, were you a fan of Doctor Who before you were cast in the show? Yes, absolutely. You know, if you speak to anyone who has known me at any point in my life, don't feel obliged to, but if you were to do that, the first thing they would tell you about me was that I was a Doctor Who fan. Oh, he liked Doctor Who, didn't he? He was always going on about it. So yeah, it's defined me. I don't remember a time when I wasn't a Doctor Who fan. I'm sure there must have been a time, even though I was born before Doctor Who started, I certainly wasn't old enough to be aware of it. My first memories are of the towards the end of the William Hartnell era for Doctor Who. I remember other things in my life. Well, it's mainly Doctor Who. I've navigated my life via Doctor Who actually. You know, when the BBC cancelled it in 1989, there's like a huge gap in my life until 1996 where I can't really, just stuff happened randomly. I don't really remember. Whereas the other stuff I can say, oh yeah, that was right because it was the Green Death episode six when that happened, you know. And that is, yeah, it was the Green Death episode six when I happened you know and and that is yeah it was the green death episode six when I know I'm not gonna tell you anyway I mean that raises some questions if that one does stick in your mind yeah nothing to do with donkeys though we will be asking that question over beer at some point I do like the idea of sort of you know charting your life by things that were going on. Oh, that was a, that was during the third doctor. Oh, completely. I mean, so many of my friends have exactly the same syndrome. Yeah, I think like my university years, it was David Tennant and Matt Smith. Oh, good lord. I don't feel old at all. But I mean, like, you know, I do sort of like get

that, OK, well, that was university era and, you know, and those two being there at that time. Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. So it's so much about nostalgia for me and the dopamine hit you get from nostalgia. Yes. Well, when you were cast, about the world of the show, it would be more than his health. Fair point. More than his average. More than his average, yes. Did you find that helped you to slot into your roles? Or did it help you to get the role? Well it did because I mean I'd already been playing the voice of the Daleks and the Cybermen for Big Finish productions And we started that's you know, Doctor Who audio drama as you probably know from the introduction But it's it's it's been years since the introduction. So you may have forgotten by now so Russell T. Davis used to listen to Big Finish So when he was looking for a solution to the problem of the Dalek voice he thought hold on there's that guy who does it on Big Finish I've listened to it I think it's great bless him and also I'd written a very sad article for Doctor Who magazine which I described all the technical gubbins that went into doing a Dalek voice and he thought well not only can this guy do it he's an actor he's also he knows how to do it, he's an actor, he's also, he knows how to do it technically because there's no BBC radiophonic workshop anymore, so we need someone who's going to turn up with some gizmos to plug in. So I was a total solution really. So the fact that I was obsessive about Doctor Who, just like Russell T Davies is, you know, that spoke to him and he just thought it solves so many problems. Yeah I guess it's sort of like a shortcut to solution isn't it when you can see that somebody's already got their stuff together and all you have to do is plug and play basically and then that's... Exactly I mean all they had to do was find out whether you know I might have been so enthusiastic about Doctor Who that I might have just been a pain in the neck on the set and I think I mostly avoided being a pain. I was overly concerned about many technical aspects which a lot of people on set weren't but I just got on and solved them myself because nobody else was interested you know. The transmitter that was making the Dalek lights flash was making my ring modulator run at far too high a rate. I realize this just sounds like something out of Star Trek the Next Generation now. So I solved it by various boring practical methods. But I won't bore you with those details. When you're watching Star Trek and they say all of this rubbish, you mean it actually means something? Well, I don't know, to the writer probably. But you can sort of... Luckily it's Geordi La Forge who says it most of the time in Star Trek the Next Generation. And so you can't see his eyes glazing over because he's wearing a he's wearing a hairband across his face. Also he has a lovely voice and honestly he could say anything and I just like yeah sounds plausible. Well we'll share a PDF of the circuit diagram for the ring modulator and the thing that makes the lights flash so that you two can solve the problem. Absolutely. It's a very boring solution, it's to do with how far away you're standing from the transmitter but anyway. Get on to something else because otherwise I will just go on and on about it. So it's fair to say that the Daleks are legendary right up there with the top draw of fictional baddies but they are a race with a world of their own aren't they? Yeah of course and that world every time there's a Dalek story something gets added to that. I'm not just talking about when I say worlds I'm not just talking about their planet you know it's just what they do what they're able to do what their goals are I mean mostly their goals are to conquer, enslave, be supreme and what have you. But you know, sometimes there are more little complexities. But yeah, it gets added to and also Doctor Who is famously inconsistent and Doctor Who fans spend all their

time trying to work out as though Doctor Who were created by one person and completely imagined as a whole right from the word go and of course it isn't you know Doctor Who was written by loads of different writers some of whom never wrote for Doctor Who again some of whom had no interest whatsoever in science fiction and we're just getting their next paycheck and they go yeah you know it's all a bit like that and they're trying to link all these things all these different writers came up with in different circumstances for a TV show that no one thought anyone would ever watch again after it was broadcast. So... That was after the first series, it was almost canned, wasn't it? I don't think it was gonna go beyond its first, I don't know what it is, like 13 weeks or something they had it planned for. But the Daleks changed all that, they were just so popular. I mean, they're the reason. That's why, one of the reasons I'm so proud to be involved with the Daleks is because they are the reason Doctor Who is still on today. And it doesn't matter how many times, you know, Ryl died in the wall, Doctor Who fans are a bit like, no, the Daleks again, couldn't we have something new? It's like with Big Finish, why do you do so many Dalek releases? Well, if you stop buying them, we'll stop making them. But there's always a spike. If you release a Dalek story, there's always a spike because it's quintessential Doctor Who. And I've on many an occasion said the absolutely heretical thing, which is that basically all Doctor Who monsters are failed attempts at being as good as the Daleks. Because the Daleks captured some magic. There have been some amazing Doctor Who monsters, particularly ones created by Stephen Moffat, like The Silence and the other ones. Weeping Angels. What was it? The little boy in the gas mask. What was that? Oh, God. Yeah, no, I can't remember the name of it but it was terrifying. Yeah, all that stuff. Not so great on audio though. We've done that, we've done that. It's even spookier, the silence, it really, I was just listening to a silence story actually and the whole thing of forgetting and then people suddenly saying, yeah, what do you mean? You know, and two seconds earlier they were going, oh my goodness, what's that? You know, and then you hear, and it stops and then, yeah, no, it works really well. Well, the Weeping Angels, that's the big one as well. We've done those on audio too. So those are... You've done those on audio? They are literally silent. That is the thing. How? Well, you see, you can do anything in audio drama because audio drama is possibly the most visual drama there is. Because it focuses on very much of what people can see, except that the audience can't see it with their eyes. But like reading a book, they immediately, you know, you conjure up images in your mind and that's why it's so personal audio drama. You know, you often listen to it on headphones so it's so close to you, it's like someone speaking right into your ear and at the same time engaging your imagination. I can see instantly why Daleks would be the instant audio drama thing. Well their voice is such a big thing isn't it? Exactly it's the noise they make and everything but it's the way they communicate it's like you know and also just like the sound of them in their little engine things like the little the noise of them approaching and everything as well. It's not just... Well, that's only a new series thing, you know, because in the old days, the only thing you heard of the Daleks was the prop wobbling along and quite often they tried to mute that because it was such a rattly old noise. Yeah. I mean, the rule of thumb is that after two years a Dalek prop starts to sound like you know I don't know whether you've ever been in an old boat yeah yeah no it sounds like it creaks they make terrible creaking noises like an old boat you know when an old boat starts to lean over into

the waves and it kind of goes oh terrible noises the new props are the same you know they really ideally need to make brand new Daleks every year but of course there's no money to do that and they look at the prop store and there are these shiny props that someone's polishing, no no no we'll use those they get them on set. Someone needs to get the WD-40 out. It doesn't work, the structures don't. I think the only way to do it would be to actually make them out of metal, that would be phenomenally expensive. And hot! Yeah, they're wooden and fiberglass. Yeah. They'd be heavy and hot and just, oh yeah, no, yeah. I think they'd be better if you made them out of aluminium or something. Yeah. But they'd probably get dented then, wouldn't they? That's the thing, yeah, they need to, you're going to need a new wing mate. One of my favourite things to do on set when they, there's usually someone from the props department whose job it is to go round and polish the Daleks domes. Because people are always moving them around, they're getting sticky fingerprints on them. And if you look at the old shows from the 60s, 70s, 80s. You can often see fingerprints on the Daleks. On the new series of course, you know, in HD and everything, and dust comes down and so they're constantly polishing them. And there was one woman, I think her name was Ellie, and it used to be her job to do it. And I never failed to make her laugh. Every time I saw her doing it, I got on the ring modulator and went... hehehehehehehehehehehe that every time I saw her doing it, I got on the ring modulator and went, hee-hee-hee, hee-hee-hee, hee-hee-hee, hee-hee-hee, like she was tickling me, you know, and she just was doing this job, and I'm like, oh, please don't. I'm trying to be very professional here. Oh, gosh, yes. While I polish my doll. Yeah. We were talking there about the fact that Doctor Who really, it's almost like there's a different world every story, isn't there, in Doctor Who? As opposed to, you know, a lot of shows that just exist in the same world, like our drama, The Dex Legacy, I guess. Yes, I mean, so how do they do that in a Doctor Who story? I think the key is, I hope I'm not anticipating your question, or in a way, I hope I'm not anticipating your question, or in a way I hope I am. How do you quickly create a world? What do you do? And it's like the same principle for all writing, just generally, you can't ever, when you're telling a story, any story, and I think it particularly applies to genre stuff, science fiction in particular, you can't ever tell the audience everything. Because when you look out of the window at life you can't see everything, you can't see what everything's made of or what everything smells of. What you do, you get an impression and a writer has to work out what the best impression to give the audience is. So everything, I think of everything in a script or a storyline as tips of icebergs. You have a storyline as tips of icebergs But you have to create your tips of icebergs. I'm doing a little tip of iceberg thing with my fingers You have to create your tip of an iceberg in such a way that the audience immediately perceives the possibility of the vast amount that's underneath the water that they can't see. One of the classic old Doctor Who writers, Robert Holmes, who wrote many brilliant Doctor Who stories, he was incredible at it. He would just throw in little seemingly incidental things, phrases, facts, in inverted commas, and it would just suggest something far more vast, which of course in old TV you had to do because you couldn't show the vast things. You couldn't afford to. Exactly. Not enough papier-mâché in the world. Exactly. But yeah, so that's what world building's about. What do I think about my local town? What is it I notice that gives me a feel of the place? And then you try and mimic that in science fiction terms. Like I think Gene Roddenberry with Star

Trek said that, you know, no one needs to explain how a phaser works. It needs to look like a gun and fire a red beam and so and then everyone gets a message. So you have to find the equivalent of that for every level of your imaginary technology or so and then everyone gets a message. So in a video game where as the character moves through the world is generating around them all the time. And in the old days you used to see it kind of generating. It starts as pixels and then would become more distinct. I mean is that how you see world building? It just spreads out from where the character that you're currently listening to? Or is it more than that? Yes, actually, yes, absolutely. I think that one of the things that you need to do is definitely know that there's the rest of the world there. You need to know where your character is going and why for the character. And then once you've got your character sorted out, you know what your character would notice and what would be important to them when they arrive and how they would react to whatever's going on in that place. And then all of the stuff that they would notice comes to the fore but you can also knit in details that they're not as interested in and then that adds the layers. So for me as long as I've got my characters sorted out when I go into a new environment with them, I can be imagining, like you say, the whole iceberg. But it's only the tip that the character is interested in and that's the bit that you talk about. But yeah, I mean it is a sort of generating as you go and I always kind of joke that, you know, some people when they talk to me about or when they listen to the Dex Legacy or whatever, they say that it's an incredibly intricate, hard-built world and I'm like, no, no, no, I've just spent 750,000 words in it and that means that I know a lot. It doesn't mean that I know it all or that, you know, there's not more to discover as we do every single episode, you know, we're doing like, you know, naming games and things and actually there's more stuff. It's going to come into the books. All the stuff that we work out in this episode. Well I do hope so because I've got a particularly good name game challenge for you today. Oh good. And for you Nick as well. But I think that's, I mean in a way when you're creating this ongoing fiction that is in a particular world, it's becoming more and more difficult for you because you've created rules that you have to try and remember and be consistent to. Whereas if you're just doing it for a one-off Doctor Who story, you can do a lot more cheating. I think you can still do cheating in your scenario and you're a terribly noble person if you don't, which is that you can say, oh I need this to happen, oh but I should have said before,, I tell you what, by the miracle of this being a Word document, I can go back and add the in where it needed to be added in. And that's the beautiful thing about writing. There's just so much cheating that you totally get away with because it's part of the process. You know, you don't have to say, oh, no, I didn't say that. I can't. I forgot to mention that everyone's blue and it would really work if everyone was blue but I can't because I mentioned they were yellow before you go well I can just go back and change the orange to blue or whatever. Retro fix that yeah exactly. And then everyone thinks that you thought of it in the first place, marvellous. See for me I find it quite easy because like it's all in my head so I own it right. The idea of going into the Doctor Who world where so many people have contributed and so many layers have been built over time that I had nothing to do with. That kind of terrifies me as a concept because you can never know all of it. And then like for me, I'd be thinking, but what if I'm writing something here that directly contradicts this whole corner that I've never been able to explore because it's a lot of years of material. Does that

never terrify? Not me because like in common with lots of Doctor Who fans, we think we know it all. But that's why I don't know the new series as well, you know, post 2005 onwards, the one that I've been involved in. And I think it's because I'm involved in it, involved in making it, whereas the previous stuff from 1963 onwards, you know, I have read about it because before I could see it all again on, you know, home video or whatever, I was reading about it and testing my memory. Oh, I do remember that Patrick Charlton story and you know all that kind of stuff. Basically I've done the equivalent of a 26 year University course on Doctor Who yeah being obsessed with it So I don't have any worries about getting it wrong But if I do on certain intricate levels, I talk to other writers who I know Their specialized area is that area of Doctor Who and I say how are we with that companion did they do this this and this or there's also a person who writes a series of books called about time where he chronicles everything that's happened in all the Doctor Who fiction so I will often or from time to time I don't want to overdo it, from time to time email Lawrence Miles and just check about what has and hasn't been said. Because I mean, I could never read the whole of one of those books in one go. I dare you to order one because it's just, there's just masses of information. And sometimes of course the way he processes the information wouldn't be the way I processed it. So I will sometimes read a bit of it and think, I wouldn't have said that's true that the Daleks did that in the year 4000 or whatever. But I generally... That's a difference of political point of view, isn't it? Exactly. But the other thing is that I try not to tie things down because I think it's the, in the spirit of Doctor Who, not to tie things down too much. The main thing, and this is a slightly different point, one of the main things I try to do at Big Finish is discourage writers from tying knots at the end, tying things off. I say leave it open, leave it open because we might want to come back to that. And also the TV series might contradict it as well, which we've had in recent years, where the TV series went to places we never expected them to go and they ended up just contradicting things we'd said because they're the primary source of continuity. Of course. I mean and then fans spend ages trying to explain ways around it but that doesn't worry me because actually it's all stories in the end. Yeah, absolutely. I mean talking about how you keep it all together I mean is there a world Bible for Doctor Who? We've talked about world Bibles before and sort of... Well no, apart from the book I've just mentioned, the series of books, there isn't. I mean and there are various publications, official, authorised publications that come out from time to time that attempt to do it all but they're very much one person's interpretation and I think it's a fruitless task really. Mind you, fruitless tasks are sometimes fun to do, but no, there isn't. I mean, there are some branding guides we have from BBC Studios about what they feel we could and couldn't do and, you know, the people who assess our stories for the BBC are adhering to that, about what they think, oh we don't think that's quite right. But generally, you know, because we've had such a successful track record over 25 years of Doctor Who, we've got to a level where the BBC trusts us. Yeah, and that's, you know, and quite in most circumstances we probably know more about it than they do. Probably. I have to say, like, when you're writing for it, I know Black Library, for instance, the Warhammer universe, when you're writing for it, I know Black Library for instance, the Warhammer universe, when somebody writes a novel for Black Library, they get ring binders worth of stuff, like this is the lore, these are the races, this is what's happened in the past, this is

canon and everything. And it's a lot of material. And obviously you're dealing with superfans, pretty much the same deal I guess but there's no ring binders there's no like... No I mean but if you're writing for the Black Library a way of not having to read those ring binders would be to have read all the books. Yes I guess so. If you'd read all the books and with Doctor Who fans with almost everyone who's writing for Big Finish they've seen it all several times, multiple times. I mean, I can't put a number on the number of times I've watched certain, like Planet of the Daleks, John Pertwee 1973 story, I don't know how many times I've watched that. It's beyond counting. And Death to the Daleks, and Revenge of the Cybermen, and Doctor Who and the Silurians. I mean, oh, just all of them. I've just watched them so many times. It's so reassuring. And I watch them again and again now. I'll probably watch one tonight or at least a few episodes of it. Yeah. You know, most weeks, there's not a day goes by without me watching at least one episode of Doctor Who. It's a serious illness. It's like a chronic condition. Yeah, it is completely chronic. Yes. Yeah. You manage Hooniverse. condition. It is completely chronic, yes. Most of it's instinctive, so there are very clear areas that I come across now and again where I have to ask, but mostly, and it's the same for most of our writers I would say. And the interesting thing for me is when you encounter someone who's begun to get a real feel for Doctor Who, like the actor who plays the third Doctor for us, an actor called Tim Trelaw, and so he's doing a voice like John Pertwee's. And he's been playing John Pertwee's Doctor for us for over ten years now, which is longer than John Pertwee did it on the television. And you know, he inevitably got to the point where he thought, I kind of know this now, and he'd re-watched the whole John Pertwee series twice. He started off by not watching it at all, just watching the couple of DVDs we sent him because he's not a Doctor Who fan. But after he'd watched them all twice and you know sent me revelatory emails like, God he's like a bit like James Bond isn't he? It's like all the things that Doctor Who fans have been saying about John Pertwee's Doctor for years. He's just coming to these conclusions himself. And so he inevitably said, oh, I'd like to write one. Thinking that he'd really absorbed Doctor Who. So I said, we need to just get a few story ideas and talk about them. But of course, like all enthusiastic people, he just wrote a script. He wrote me six whole episodes and sent them to me. And I said okay. So I read them and I said now Tim, given that you've been playing this part for 10 years and that you have watched all the John Pertwee episodes twice now, I said I can absolutely see why you think this is like Doctor Who. It isn't, but it's close enough for me to work with you and I thought this could be really terrible. So I rewrote his first episode and sent it to him and said look that's what I'm thinking and he said oh my god you've made it just like Doctor Who! He was slightly missing the point. Yeah, that's such an interesting reaction. Oh my god, you know, because it's like well surely you were trying to watch it. You were trying to brag to him. Exactly. He was trying to, but missing it because it's in my bones, Doctor. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, and for example, you know, in what is laughably called my writing career, at one point I wrote some episodes for a soap opera on Channel 5 called Family Affairs, which was just like absolutely crucifying having to write scenes about the price of milk and things. And, you know, I just thought, where are the spaceships? And then because of that, I'd got a connection with someone who was a script editor on The Bill. And I went in and had a couple of meetings. And he's a very charming chap. And he also was very successful at

writing TV himself. He said the main thing in these relationships with writers, with a script editor, is that you find someone who you think is a nice person and who you can have good communication with. In spite of it all, and in spite of the fact that I enjoyed watching the bill, I realised that I had no interest in writing a half-hour police procedural episode. I just thought, I'm just not interested enough, and I'm obviously not starving enough to do it. And I did say to him at the time, he said, oh, I've spoken to the people who worked with you at Family Affairs. And I said, oh, good. What did they say? And he said, no, no, no, they were really nice. I said, are you sure? He said that they said you got very busy and were unable to continue because you were getting so much other work. But of course that was a lie I made up because I couldn't bear writing it anymore. I just made up jobs I didn't have. I'm doing something over here. It's terrible isn't it? I mean perhaps that would be my punishment you know in the afterlife. I'll have to write episodes of soap operas for the rest of my existence. This next part of the episode will give you and Emily Inkpen some leeway because we are going to play... A little bit of deviation. A little bit of deviation. A little bit of deviation space. Yeah, but we will be scoring you and there is a leaderboard for the series and we will be... I'm not very competitive so I don't mind. Oh, okay. Alright, well we'll put you in bottom place then. Yeah, that just releases all the tension. That's good. Anything that, like, put a target on your back, unless, you know, like, we use this and then we just put you at the top. I mean, we probably will because we like you quite a lot and we've drunk beer together. That'll do. That's the main reason for coming first, isn't it? We're not biased. In fact, let's not even bother playing the game. I win. Thank you. We should play the game. Now, this is the name game. One of the challenges that writers in speculative fiction have, because they can't use names like Basingstoke and Reading and Albuquerque, is that they have to come up with the names themselves. And so this game is all about coming up with names. So I am going to give you scenarios and places, broadly from your worlds, and I'm going to need you to come up with names for these entities. So Nick, I'm going need you to come up Does this mean I win without playing? That's what your agent told us to say. I wrote those words. Daleks, as we've discussed, have a home planet. Yes. But they do travel around in space, of course. And we assume that they will have conquered and colonized many other planets. Of course. So I want you to imagine a very nice blue-green planet with a pleasant climate, firmly within a Goldilocks zone, that becomes colonized by Daleks. Now, the Daleks don't want to refer to it by its original name, so they decide to change the name of the planet. I want you to come up with a name for this unfortunately conquered world, and as your side order of fries for this one, I would like you to give us the name of the city on this planet that they decide will be their capital. Right. So I'm going to let you think about that for a little while. And while you're thinking of that, Emily. Yes. This week we are visiting another part of your fictional world, SP714. A place in which we have both spent a good deal of time. Quite a bit, yes. Metaphorically, and sometimes it's felt like actually. Actually physically, yes. Actually, actually. And I want you to give us some new names for this place off the cuff, with virtually no preparation. Absolutely no preparation. I'd like you to imagine a political alliance between two of the nations on your planet. This is a trade alliance allowing the nations of Vosnau and Vasnek to exchange goods tariff-free between them. Tariffs are a hot topic right now. A sort of anti-Brexit arrangement. I see, yeah okay. So what I'm looking for will be the

name of this alliance and it can't be VOGZIT or VASZIT or something like that and as your side order I would like the name of the Vosnorian Minister of Trade who negotiated this deal and heads the Vossenorian trade delegation. So the Vossenorian what? Something of trade? Minister of Trade. Sorry she wasn't listening. A low-level government position. I think it's pretty high level actually. Well it's not cabinet level though is it? Yeah so this person is going to head up this trade delegation. So Nick, this planet, this blue-green planet with a pleasant environment, what name are the Dalits going to give to this beautiful place? Okay well I had two ideas and I can't quite decide on them but let me just take you through my thinking. I was thinking for the obviously the planet sounds like it's Earth. I couldn't possibly answer that. And Skaro is the home planet of the Daleks. My first random thought came into my mind, I just made up the word that's incorporated something of Skaro, to call it Skardoz. But they could have called it Skirth as well. Which is like Skaro and Earth. Yes, pretty obvious, isn't it? So maybe Skardoz. Skardoz does sound a bit like Zardoz, which is like Scarrow and Earth. So maybe Scardoz. Scardoz does sound a bit like Zardoz, which was that awful film with Sean Connery in. I quite like it. It sounds familiar. So it gave me a scare. And also I think that the Daleks would want to, for the city, the Daleks would want something that was not pleasing to human ears and that would remind them of the situation they're in the whole time. something that was not pleasing to human ears and that would remind them of the situation they're in the whole time. So I think they call the city surrender. Ooh, I like that. Sorry, I just got distracted from my task there. That's good. So that's what I'd go with, certainly as I was writing the first draft of the storyline. Yes, and which of the names of the planet are you gonna plump for? Because you've given us Scarf. Skirth. Not Scarf. It's the Doctor Scarf. Let's go for Skardoz for no apparent reason. Skardoz. Yeah. Excellent. And we're spelling that S-K-A-R-D-O-Z. Skardoz. That is fantastic. Surrender is the name of the city. Yeah, well we'll get you to say that in a Dalit voice later. That would make, I mean any inhabitants of that city would feel truly... Yeah, they'd be reminded of it the whole time, what they'd had to do. It's just awful isn't it? Yeah. That's what I do and that's how that's normally how quickly I come up with these things and I also I think to myself when I come up with them I just think well you know if I fall out of love with it later or the script editor says you do realize that's the name of XYZ. I mean the next thing I do is was be googling and then you'll discover that five computer games are called Scardos, you know, that kind of thing. There's so much more of that now and you always have to make sure, if only to avoid legal action. And if it is the name of something else, whether it's trademarked or copyrighted. I mean you do have to be careful using find and replace in a text. Yes. I mean, the famous example of someone, an author who decided to change the name of a character from Jack to Nigel. Yeah. And he just sort of did a replace all. No, no. At one point, they were, the flag hanging over one of the buildings was the Union Nigel. Nigel. There you go. They had to change a tire in the car and they used a Nigel to raise the car. And someone Nigel'd off at some point I believe. So yeah, do be careful. Do be careful listeners. If you have that eventuality. Right. Oh look, look, she's putting her pen away. She's putting her ink pen away. See what I did there. That one was actually quite hard. Was it? Yeah, because firstly, what you guys were nattering about was quite funny and I was constantly being distracted. No apologies. Secondly, okay, so you got me to think about this trade alliance between Vosnau

and Vasnek. Now they're very northern countries and they've got like this little bit of ocean between them. Okay, got like this little bit of ocean between them. And so Vosnor is north, I mean we'd be talking about like the last bit of landmass that becomes the polar cap and then Vosnor is just below it and sort of separated by this bit. And I thought, okay, well if there's an alliance, I was going to use the name of that ocean, that little strait, as the sort of name to bring them together because it's the middle bit, right? Okay, so geographically speaking, use the name of the ocean, you know. But I've never named that bit before. Oh, hmm. You could call it the Bay of America. I mean I could, to be honest. I mean I could bury the excuse in the seed data and just say the settlers were rubbish and not very original but I mean I'm gonna try okay so so I've decided to call this the Treven Strait. Treven? Yep T-R-E-V-E-N. Not Trevor. I was gonna say. Well no this is the thing. There's a bit of Trevor in there. Yeah so maybe I need to like I need to evolve that because then I sort of said, okay, Trek-Varys, straight. Oh, say that again. Trek-Varys. Trek-Varys. But I don't necessarily like that because... Can you say it in a Vasnek accent? Trek-Varys. I love that we know the accents as well. This is just... Trek-Varys. Supreme well-building. Varys. Trekveris. It's a very similar. Yes, so it would be Trekveris. So it could be Trekveris. Okay I'm gonna go back to that. I second-guessed myself. Okay so it's gonna be called Trekveris. It's the Trekveris Trade Alliance. The Bosnorian Minister of Trade is called Srin Mastranaska. Mastranaska. How on earth do you play that backwards? Yeah, exactly. Yeah. What's this? I'm not playing this game. Mostly because the other Vassalorian character that we have in Dex Legacy is Srivastava. And so we like a lot of syllables in these things and I always find that these sorts of names if you practice saying them they become very fun to say. So Mostrinasca is quite fun to say actually if you if you work it out then it's then it becomes very fun to say Mostrinasca. So Srin Mostrinasca is Vosnorian Minister of Trade. The trade delegate, yeah. I mean can I say Nick and Emily, we've done that at speed, we've not looked anything up and you've come up with some fantastic names. Some caulkers, eh? Caulkers, absolute caulkers. Solid gold, solid gold. We don't announce our leaderboards live because I have to go and think about it. Okay. And I can't remember what the others were. And also we could get quite violent, couldn't we Emily? Yeah, I mean yeah, absolutely. We could kick off. The good thing is to avoid names like there's so much stuff and I'm always down on this like a ton of bricks, big Finnish things where people do too much nominative determinism, you know, where some races who once retreated are called the runaway-ons, you know, or something, you know, you just think, yeah, can you just go back and get a better imagination? I mean, no one's actually suggested that, but we've got pretty close to that thing. I mean, Terry Nation used to do something, you know, people who lived in a desert are called the Eridians. It's pretty ridiculous when you... the thing is that when they evolved there was an ocean on their planet, right, this was in a story called The Trace, The Chase, sorry I can't even say the name, and then the ocean evaporated and then these underwater people were left living on the planet but they'd always been called Iridians. So why would they be called Iridians if they lived under the ocean and they've got fins on their heads and everything they're clearly fishy people so it's just you know. They should be hydrians. Or not even that. Not even that. Better idea. Let's not. We're not called the Soylons are we because we live on the earth. Of all your years of watching and being part of Doctor Who, is there a favourite world? Is there a story that has a

world that is your absolute favourite? That's a really interesting question. I've never thought of it that way before. I can certainly talk about favourite stories, but a favourite world? Yeah, I think my favourite world is the 1970s in Doctor Who. LAUGHTER So many of the stories. The third Doctor, so many of the stories were set in England, weren't they? In the 1970s. Dinosaurs flying around. Well actually, some people think they were set in the 1980s, we never quite know. And I think Doctor Who, because of its budget, always worked in the base under siege type of thing, so the world is very small and you hardly see anything out of it. One of the really popular Tom Baker stories is Robots of Death and that's set on a sand mine on an alien planet and you barely learn anything about that alien planet because it's people you just have hints of their sort of their social norms. Filmed in a quarry in Cheshire. No they were just on a set. Yeah. Really? Yeah because they never went outside. The only external shots are model shots of quite good model shots but really you can't get the image of a of a Hoover in a quarry out of your mind but really it was a rather, it was a pretty good model for the time on a model set with all these sort of sandy mountains and what have you. So yeah I mean that's a good one actually, Robots of Death, the world it creates there. And you know, we've spun it off in Big Finish years and years later. The planet was called Kaldor, and we've done a series called The Robots, and it's all about the politics and everything of Kaldor and the way the robots relate to the human beings. And you know, so it proved very popular, starring Nicola Walker. In this particular episode, our Would You Rather game gets a bit heavy and we do refer to suicidal ideation. It's all in context, but we understand if you would rather skip this episode as a result. The moment we've all been looking forward to. It's Would You Rather, the game of untimely, unpleasant and often undeserved demises. Oh. Yes, indeed. In our fictional worlds, Emily, we sometimes, okay, often, sacrifice characters to demonstrate the brutality of our locations and the nasty baddies within them. It can get squishy, gloopy and nightmarish at times, can't it? It definitely can, but it's also fun. So, dark fun, but, you know, secretly enjoying seeing a villain getting a timely comeuppance is, you know, it's always satisfying to see that play out. And also sometimes just an annoying character, you know, like sometimes you've got a character who means well, but is really annoying annoying. And then seeing them finally leave. Yes. So in this game, if you've not heard this show before, each of the guests, Nicholas and Emily, are going to come up with a demise that is in some way related to their world. One we've done in one of our scripts. Yeah, something that's actually happened. Yeah, yeah, sure. Or something, you know, a monster that could kill you that maybe didn't in the in the show but could. And we're going to put them against each other and then decide which of these ends would we rather endure. So Emily, you're going to go first this week. What unpleasant, painful, untimely, nasty demise have you got for us? Well, I'm going to take this back to episode one of The Deck's Legacy and episode one of Wasteland, the bomb. In episode one, enormous experimental missile is detonated on the island of Roan, and it destroys everything. Um, it wipes out all life across the surface of the landmass, goes a little bit further out into the ocean in places and upsets some indigenous species. Yes. Yeah everything on Roan is reduced to greenish blue dust and it happens very rapidly. They sort of watch it from satellite and this cloud just spreads across the entire country. But your experience as an individual being turned to blue dust is not going to be a prolonged unpleasant... No, no, it would be basically what you would

experience as a citizen of Rhone in this moment is that you would see a bright flash in the distance and you would maybe hear a sort of like sucking whirling sound as things start to change and then there would just be a sort of greenish blue light that would just come at you. Okay. And it wouldn't hurt far too quick for that. You'd just see it and it would hit you. I'm not sure this is brutal enough for this game really. Well I mean I guess it's... There's something wrong with you Chris. Yeah I know, I know. You should have listened to the other episodes. Normally very, very painful but I think there is something quite devastating about something quiet and indiscriminate in its destruction. You go from something to absolutely nothing. And there's no warning. Yeah. You're just on your way somewhere and then this thing hits and you know nobody could prepare for that. Rapid dehydration. Well yeah and yeah just absolutely no yeah no warning at all, just instant. And some people would see that as excellent, and some people would find that chilling, I think. And would rather have a sense of fighting for their life. Yes, I see. Then, yeah, there's no escaping that. So, Dust, Blue Dust. And Nick, what have you got? My one is very simple, but I feel immodestly I did it very effectively. I had two characters who were very important and they managed to escape from somewhere in a little space. Escape pod, probably, I think it was. It was in Dalek Empire, anyway, the first series of Dalek Empire I did, which was a trailblazing series that didn't have the Doctor in. And people really liked it because it was dangerous because you didn't know who was going to die next. In fact it was going so well Jason Hegg-Ellery my boss said to me can you stop killing people off because it's selling really well and we want you to do a second series and you know by the looks of it there's going to be no one left alive. Anyway so these two did come a cropper because I suddenly thought, yeah, they're in the middle of nowhere in space and they've got no hope of getting anywhere. And they realize after the joy of escaping that they're just going to run out of air and they sort of have a conversation about it. And then I cut away from them and I never go back to them. I think the last line they say is something like, and we know what's going to happen, don't we? And I wanted the audience to keep thinking, we'll go back to them in a minute, and that character will suddenly get through the airlock and say, don't worry, here's an oxygen mask, but no, we just never heard from them again. And people say, what happened to them? I don't know. I don't know, and only the audience knows, the characters don't. Because I like that tinge of reality. There are so many tragic deaths in real life where people never find out what happened. And I think that's a horrible, horrible thing to think of, isn't it? So that was my version of horrible. The other one was a glorious but violent death. We had a character called Lucy Miller, who was the doctor's companion, the eighth doctor played by Paul McGann. We had Sheridan Smith playing Lucy Miller. And Sheridan is such a brilliant and raw actress, raw emotions. If there are any real emotions, particularly powerful emotions in a story with her you would go, as the director and sometimes writer, you would go through those emotions with her. And there were several really moving scenes with Sheridan throughout the time we had with her. And you know, we would both be... I remember once she just finished a scene and she was in absolute you know she'd fallen apart in tears and I didn't know what to say to her but I was crying too so I just went into the studio and walked into her booth and kind of like and she saw me crying and she was crying we both were just held on to each other for 10 minutes while we got over the emotions. We thought, it's only Doctor Who, what's the matter with

us? So when it came to the, we knew we had to write her out. She didn't wanna go, but we wrote her out because Sheridan was becoming so successful. It was becoming more and more difficult to get her. You know, so the recording, she really wanted to do it. There was no resistance at all, but there was just no time. So you know, there was one day for example, when you know, she was filming during the day and she was doing the theatre in the evening. And she had like a 45 minute gap where they could get her to us for 45 minutes between those two things. So there's the journey to it. So they literally biked her over to us. So she came out on like a package on the back because that's the only way to get a lot across London quickly. And she came in, she went into the booth and I played every other character for her and she did the whole thing. And I've been playing her part during the day and Paul McGann infamously said to me, while I was sort of being Sheridan Smith, it's like she's in the room, Nick. Which he was clearly taking the Mickey out of me. But anyway, when it came to her death, our script editor, Alan Barnes, who's the most amazing storyteller and writer and script editor, obviously, he said to me, when Lucy dies, Lucy's never going to go, oh, I think I'll just go, or I'm in love with this man or you know a woman or whatever. He said it's gonna be, it's gonna be messy and it will be destructive because that is the only way she'd leave the doctor's side and she gets into a position where the only way she can defeat the Darlings is to pilot a flying saucer straight down into a shaft where they're about to launch something and blow it up and she knows she's gonna die and she does it on purpose and she screams Lucy bleeding Miller as she dies. Nice. And I'm quite emotional talking about it because those two stories I mean the clue is in the title. It was a two-part story the first episode was called Lucy Miller, and the second episode was called To the Death. And people always say, oh my God, I was so upset. And I say, the clue was in the title. I was so shocked that she died at the end. Once again, I mean, I did kill off several other people as well in there, characters, not actors. Yeah, no. characters, not actors. But by the look on their faces I might as well have killed them. I'm speaking to us from HMP. So they're not big sci-fi explode every molecule in your body kind of deaths. I think they're just... Impact within the story. Yeah. The context of the story, which I think is good for us as world builders. Yeah, yeah. So, Emily, I'm going to come to you first. So let's just summarize your options. First of all, you are going to be disintegrated. Literally every atom of your body ripped apart and becomes blue dust. But it's instant. it's absolutely instant. Then we're gonna go to the Lucy bleeding Miller demise where you are gonna fly some sort of... It's a Dalek ship. A Dalek ship. You're gonna fly into the hatch to stop the thing being launched and so you're sacrificing yourself. While screaming my name. While screaming Emily bleeding ink pen. I would just add, could I just add that beforehand she does have a conversation with the doctor but the trouble is the sound her end is turned off on the on the radio so she can't hear what he's saying but he can hear Clearly very moving. So that one. Yes. Or just drifting in the vastness of space and probably running out of oxygen. Well, okay. I am gonna, I'm probably going to surprise you here because... By actually exploding. Well, no, I mean the exploding one. I think everyone loves the idea of going out in a blaze of glory right? Except thinking about this, I know I don't have any courage, faith in what I'm doing. Most of the time I want to huddle, I want to confer and if I was doing that I would be pretty sure that somebody off camera was going why is she doing that we could just do this instead you know and and would have come up with a

different alternative and so she as a character was very very clear on what she had to do but I know that if I was in her shoes I would not be clear on what I was supposed to do and I would do it but in the back of my mind the whole time I would be thinking there's probably a better way to do and I would do it but in the back of my mind the whole time I would be thinking there's probably a better way to do this. This is right. Yeah, am I really doing this? As you're heading down a shaft into the centre of the earth. Exactly. And you want to be able to do that with conviction, you don't want to do that thinking to yourself. Maybe I've got options. Yeah, maybe there's another way out of this but... What would options B again? Exactly, yeah. So, I mean, I don't like the idea of just being switched off, you know, like the Rhone bomb. That for me... I don't think you're meant to like any of the ideas. No. But I mean, I don't... There have been a couple that Emily has sort of gone for in very, very, oh, definitely that sort of thing. Definitely that, yeah, yeah, yeah. Normally ones where I get to strike a pose. But no, I think the idea of just disintegrating, just being switched off out of consciousness is not nice. And there's something very unsatisfying about that. I think if you were drifting in space, these people have just gained their freedom. They're together, and there's something nice about companionship at the end. They're able to discuss things and reflect. and there's something nice about communicating with the person with you, you could maybe have a bit of a reminisce, could maybe have a hug. I'm getting emotional now. And you're in the stars, you've got a way, you've, you know, given whoever was holding you captive a bit of a, you know, you know, given them the finger and that's quite satisfying. You know, like, they're flipping the verb. Oh, I see. I'm not going to say what I thought you were. Yeah, I get what you thought I said there. I'm just thinking the two actors concerned and that would be highly inappropriate. Anyway. But you know, like there's something. I just have a note from their lawyers and I can't use that bit. Maybe we edit that little bit out. Oh, that's my favourite bit. The whole show so far. It's not being edited out. Yeah, so I think there's something quite nice about, you know, like, drifting in space, in the vastness of space, with somebody who you've just been through a lot with, getting to go out on your own terms. So I think that was option B, wasn't it? with somebody who you've just been through a lot with, getting to go out on your own terms. And yeah. So I think that was option B, wasn't it? Option B, yeah, I'm going with option B. What about you? I mean, so you're faced with the same choices. What are you gonna go for? Well, it's an interesting thing about, you know, you're asking us to consider methods of suicide. I mean, not to be too heavy here but recently I'm no longer in therapy but when I was in therapy right at the beginning I don't know whether anyone listening or you have done therapy but right at the beginning the therapist said to me I have to tell you I just need to say to you that if there are two circumstances in which what you say to me is not confidential and that's if I think that you're in danger of harming someone else or yourself in which case I will inform the president. I will phone the Daily Mirror immediately because it'll be a bit of a laugh. No, but there was so there was one day when I said to my therapist, you know this morning I was just sitting on the loo TMI and I just thought I wish I could just get up from this room and as I pass through the door just no longer exist. I just felt a bit and she and she looks at me and she said I'm not going to tell anyone else about that because I don't think you're, what's it, ideating? Is that the word? Ideating, yeah. Yeah, ideating suicide. You're just thinking of

non-existence. And she said, and that's, you're not actually thinking of methods of physically ending your life. You're just imagining a world without you. And I said, well well that's precisely it because sometimes I'm up to here with me you know and everything I do and I just goodness me is this really worth anyway but the star never got to know that they know so it's weird to think about you know methods of not I don't like the idea of suffocating because I think despite the falling asleep aspect that you rather romantically talk about, I think there is a moment when you're probably gasping for breath, which is quite unpleasant. And having been in a couple of situations where I was deprived of oxygen, it was a smoke canister put inside a costume, someone thought it was funny. To breathe in and not, and to find there is nothing to breathe in is absolutely horrific. I can feel it now and it happened well over 25 years ago. So I rather think Lucy Miller's out with a bang. Especially if you thought you were saving the earth. I do it to save someone. This is a bit heavy as well. I do it if someone threatens my wife and child and said you know one of the three of you has to die without question I would step forward not because I'm brave but because I think they're worth more than me and they couldn't do without each other you know that kind of self-sacrifice I would hope I'd be brave enough I probably what would happen is that I'd scream and run away and get shot in the back of the head I was running away but there you go we're only human aren't we? Well yes until you play this game yes. You can use that as a catchphrase every week you just have to go you're only human aren't we? With some ukulele music. So you've both reasoned beautifully there. Thank you. And Emily, off in the vastness of space. Goodbye. Having a hug. I like the idea of having a hug. Trying to steal the breath from their mouth. I mean you are talking about death it's all pretty desperate. Yeah yeah. This has been a lot more philosophical than previous versions of this game. And now the donkey. No I'm joking. So all that remains is to say thank you so much for being with us. Emily thank you again as always for being with us. Both of you keep building worlds. Nick, are you allowed to say exterminate? Exterminate. Exterminate. Exterminate. Thank you for listening to Writing Worlds. Please subscribe by searching Writing Worlds wherever you listen to podcasts or follow the link in our profile. If you'd like to find out more about our guests or our presenters, Emily Inkpen and Chris Gregory, please check out the links in our show notes. If you'd like to listen to other Alternative Stories podcasts, including our drama series The Decks Legacy, Wasteland, Burnout or Specific Radio Theatre, you'll find all the links you need in our show notes. Writing Worlds is presented by Chris Gregory and Emily Inkpan and it's an Alternative Stories production.

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