



Doctor Who: Evolution

John Peel

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‘Someone is tampering with the fabric of the human cell,’ the Doctor said darkly, ‘perverting its secrets to his own dark purposes.’

Sarah Jane wants to meet her fellow journalist Rudyard Kipling, and the Doctor sets the co-ordinates for England, Earth, in the Victorian Age. As usual, the TARDIS materializes in not quite the right place, and the time travellers find themselves pursued across Devon moorland by a huge feral hound.

Children have gone missing; at the local boarding school, the young Rudyard Kipling has set up search parties. Lights have been seen beneath the waters of the bay, and fishermen have been pulled from their boats and mutilated. Graves have been robbed of their corpses. Something is going on, and Arthur Conan Doyle, the ship’s doctor from a recently berthed arctic whaler, is determined to investigate.

The Doctor and Doyle join forces to uncover a macabre scheme to interfere with human evolution - and both Sarah Jane and Kipling face a terrifying transmogrification.

Doctor Who: Evolution Details

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From Reader Review Doctor Who: Evolution for online ebook

Cori says

Yep - another Doctor Who Missing Adventures book. Bet you are SHOCKED!

This time Sarah Jane Smith innocently requests that she would like to meet Rudyard Kipling and the Fourth Doctor agrees to take her. Unfortunately, the TARDIS lands 10 years too early while Kipling is still a young man and before his writing career. But the TARDIS always knows where the Doctor is needed. Shortly after they step out, Sarah Jane is knocked off her feet by a monstrous dog and the adventure begins.

In Devon, there are a whole bunch of mysterious happenings - children are going missing, there are strange lights in the water, and old fisherman dies when half of his face is bitten off and a new factory has sprung up on the edge of town. When young ship surgeon Doyle is brought into the mystery to perform an autopsy on the fisherman, he is drawn into the adventure. He is an aspiring writer on the hunt for new material and the Doctor provides just that - right down to the deerstalker cap and caped jacket that his most famous character ends up wearing...oh yeah - that young ship surgeon? That'd be a certain Arthur Conan Doyle.

I just loved the pace of this book. The way the famous characters were seamlessly woven into the tale and the way the adventure unfolded was just brilliant. For a little bit of pulp fiction, this one made me want to keep coming back. It also made me love Sarah Jane even more. I mean she is among my favourite companions anyway - to see her kicking ass at the turn of the century and helping to shape future events as she went - it was thrilling.

So - if you're a Whovian missing your fix - this is a good choice to fill the gap.

France-Andrée says

I enjoyed this. It was fun to meet Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling and see how the author of this DW book imagined them to be. I really liked the idea of mixing human and animal together that reminded me of The Island of Doctor Moreau. Good happy ending.

David Sarkies says

The Doctor plays at being Sherlock Holmes

24 January 2012

I cannot really remember where I first picked up this book - I believe that it was a second-hand book shop. It did catch my attention as it featured what one could consider to be the classic Doctor Who and his companion: Tom Baker and Sarah Jane Smith. It has been a while since I read this book, but the fact that I did come back to the Doctor Who books (not so much the novelisations, of which my brother has a quite a few, but rather these later non-novelisations. I would suggest that the novelisations were targeted at a much younger audience, and was to assist them in developing their reading skills) in that I read a couple, moved on to other books, and then at the suggestion of my friend Paul, returned to them and ending up reading quite a

lot more.

This story is set between the Brain of Morbius and the Seeds of Doom (which was one of those stories that I simply loved) and it has been suggested that the author actually captures the essence of this period in his novel, and though it has been a while since I have seen it, I am inclined to agree. Sarah-Jane decides that she wishes to meet her hero, the journalist Rudyard Kipling, however, as usual, the TARDIS overshoots its mark and drops the Doctor and Sarah-Jane into the middle of an English moor where they are pursued by hounds, and then meet up with Kipling at a boarding school where he is organising a search party to look for some missing friends.

As well as Kipling, they also meet up with a young Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (and while the Doctor's outfit, as seen on the cover of the book, could be argued as being the inspiration for Sherlock Holmes, my experience of Holmes is that he actually never wore that tweed cap) and with these two famous figures of the past, go out on an adventure to discover the mystery of the moors. Personally, while I have not yet read the book, it does sound a bit like the Hounds of the Baskervilles, namely the opening scene with the English Moors and the wild dogs. This is not necessarily a bad thing though because many writers will borrow from classic stories as an inspiration for their current works, and I feel that doing such a thing makes for a better story than simply following a cookie cutter format.

As can be expected from Doctor Who, the mystery turns out to be a crashed spaceship (though I question how a spaceship could crash in London's West End without drawing the attention of the entire city, but that is besides the point) where a mad scientist is attempting to manipulate human evolution and create a horde of monsters (as you do). This does not seem to be a typical Doyle plot (and I suggest that because Doyle is a main character) as the Sherlock Holmes books tended to involve reason and logic, and while there are mysteries, they tend to always have sound scientific reasoning behind them. Sherlock Holmes does not deal with the supernatural, but rather the unusual and the odd (such as jilted lovers and lost hats). That still does not mean that what was done in this book was necessarily bad, one of the aspects of Doctor Who is meeting up with these people of the past, though I do not remember too much of that in many of the television series.

Zanriel says

Flawed characterizations of both The Fourth Doctor and Sarah Jane weakened what was otherwise an enjoyable story about a mad scientist and greedy industrialist creating terrifying animal/human hybrids.

The Doctor showed very little of his typical joviality in this story. At least on a couple occasions he even issued dark, violent threats. Talking about "beating the truth" out of one person and threatening to feed someone else to the fishes in bloody cubes.

Sarah's character was also depicted in an uncharacteristically brash way, issuing threats, bullying, and being overall more surly and scrappy than usual.

All that aside, it was an entertaining story, and there were a few twists and endearing touches. It had good pacing, a good ending, and colorful characters. I feel like if this had been anything other than a Doctor Who novel, it would probably deserve at least four stars. As it stands, and I hate to do it since the fourth Doctor is my favorite incarnation of my favorite hero, I can only give this one three stars.

Read it if you're a completionist, but only after you've developed a healthy appreciation for Tom Baker's

portrayal from other sources.

Phillip says

This was a well-written and fun Fourth Doctor adventure (featuring companion Sarah Jane). It had all the "monster" elements to a classic Doctor Who story, along with some brushes with history (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling). I really don't have much to criticize and recommend this as a great read. I suppose the Doyle and Kipling stuff might be seen as a bit "much" of historical figures, but the story is great, and I easily see the Doctor, grinning, and saying all of his lines in the book.

Ianto Williams says

Wow, don't think this book could have been better if it had tried, PERFECT! Loved it, especially Arthur Conan Doyle, very clever!

Andrew Beasley says

Just read this on holiday by the pool.

Always have a Doctor Who book as part of my holiday reading...the 4th Doctor and Sarah Jane, like going away with old friends.

An enjoyable yomp with the Doctor doing his Sherlock Holmes impression ably assisted by the young Conan Doyle.

Steven Clark says

Ah, yes, Dr. Who. I watched the show way back in the Tim Baker era, and read one of the novels then, whose title I forgot but was enjoyable. I'd just read an unsatisfying novel, and immediately go to one that's good, and Evolution, which I rescued from a used book bin, is a delight. I love the story and Peel's writing. It's clear, fun, fast moving, and I'm into the world and characters, all of whom are well-written. None of the prose is wasted, and two or three sentences sets the scene. The Doctor and Sarah Jane make a good team, and I enjoy how they are equally matched. It's mostly her POV, and she's always on target. The science and its plot elements are strong, as is the atmosphere. As a reviewer noted, there's a lot of good dialogue, and this is a Dr. Who I like better than the TV series...no aliens or goopy monsters and aliens, but a period story. The insertion of Kipling and Alice Bridewell is splendid, and I found the children very touching and poignant. It had a nice, crisp, ending.

Very good pleasure reading. Book me a ticket on the TARDIS.

Christian Petrie says

Once again a Missing Adventure surprises me on a second read. When this first came out, I thought it was okay. Nothing too exciting. This time around I was impressed with it.

First off this book goes by fast. The writing is not too heavy and the character descriptions are not too detailed. At the same time you can imagine the setting. Due to other British shows covering the time period it is easy to imagine the manor and the land around it. The village and the village tavern.

The other aspect of the writing is the characters. The secondary characters are fleshed out to bring life to them. Both the Doctor and Sarah descriptions and actions capture the feel of their time together.

The other aspect of this novel is it also feels like a Sherlock Holmes story. This is due to how the Doctor interacts with Arthur Conan Doyle. Here Peel writes their relationship to Holmes and Watson. Thus laying the influence of The Doctor with the Sherlock Holmes stories.

In the end this book feels that it could have been an adventure on TV during Season 13. It was great fun to read and was very satisfying. Another book Doctor Who fans should track down and read.

[Minor Spoiler] One other item is there is a hint of Torchwood in this story. Granted this was written 12 years before Tooth and Claw, however due to that episode you can't get the feeling that one of the characters could be working for Torchwood in the early days.

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nhw.livejournal.com/765775.html>[return][return]A glorious Victorian romp featuring the young Arthur Conan Doyle (just after I discovered my own obscure family connection with him) and an even younger Rudyard Kipling, combined with affectionate references to those classic Fourth Doctor stories, "Horror of Fang Rock" and "The Talons of Weng-Chiang".

Andrew says

Thoughts:

+ Dialogue in this book is fantastic. Some really funny and smart lines:

Kipling: "What are you a Doctor of?"

The Doctor: "This and that. That and this. Mostly that."

The Doctor: He peered at Ross. "Ah, you must be the mad scientist, I assume"".

The Doctor: 'When have I ever let you down?'

Sarah: 'Too many times.'

The Doctor: 'That was in the past. And we've definitely passed through those times.'

+ Also of note is Peel's characterisation of the Doctor and Sarah Jane, which he gets to a tee. The brilliant chemistry between them two during Baker's early years is captured extremely well in this book, and the

humour between them as well.

+ I think the ideas of this book are brilliant. The images of shark-like seals, mer-children, and monstrous hounds make for some great visual imagery for your head, giving it a really unique feel. Also, the plot of animal-hybridisation using an alien substance is particularly interesting and disturbing.

+ The additions of Kipling and Conan Doyle are a nice touch. Not really needed, and the story would have worked fine even if they weren't there, but it's good that Peel manages to ground the story to some sense of reality.

- Have to say though, although most of the characters involved are expertly written, some of the characterisation is a tad weak. The villains particular suffer abit from this. Percival Ross falls into the "mad scientists will create a new world for his creations" cliché, and Breckenridge falls into "oh-so polite magnificent bastard" type villain. Although these are small and hardly dent the overall quality of the book, they are slightly disappointing.

+ Period setting is used well, and the book does actually use it to good use. Talk of the progress of industrial technology, as well as using on the tropes of Gothic horror (hound on the moors, which is implied to be the inspiration to Doyle's Hound of the Baskervilles).

Overall, this book is a "good yarn" as my dad used to say, but nothing more than that. It's hardly the most intellectual, challenging or ground-breaking Doctor Who book ever written, but it works on its own as a neat little, exciting romp.

Matthew Kresal says

Conventional wisdom amongst Doctor Who fandom is that John Peel's non-novelization Doctor Who novels were nothing but continuity fests of middling quality. That is certainly true of his sole Virgin New Adventure Timewyrm Genesys and his Dalak novels for the BBC's Eighth Doctor Adventures. Yet, either to prove it wrong or be the exception to the rule is Peel's 1994 Virgin Missing Adventure Evolution. Setting Evolution between The Brain Of Morbius and The Seeds Of Doom, Peel crafts a story that is utterly believable as a tale from the thirteenth season of original Doctor Who.

In reading Peel's other Who novels, it was clear he really wanted to write for the fourth Doctor and here he gets his chance. Peel perfectly captures the fourth Doctor and Sarah Jane Smith (both of whom make their novel debuts here). It is clear that Peel studied them both from the fourth Doctor's speech at the bottom of page 149 to Sarah's reactions to a group of teenage boys who reoccur throughout the novel for example. The dialogue and mannerisms throughout is spot on as well, giving the novel a strong air of authenticity as a season thirteen tale. In fact, Peel does something here that he never did again: he captured the right TARDIS crew for the right story.

The supporting character's hold up well for the most part as well. A young Arthur Conan Doyle is a major supporting character in the story and, whether by accident or design, comes across a Harry Sullivan type to the point that some of the dialogue sounds as though actor Ian Marter could be saying the very line in some alternate universe TV version of the story. Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing is for the reader to judge but I judge it to be a good thing as it is A) great fun and B) helps to add to the authentic atmosphere of

the novel. Helping to set the atmosphere of a Robert Holmes script are the various Victorian supporting characters from Colonel Ross, his “manservant” Abercrombie, Sir Edward Fulbright and the various children who appear in the story. That isn’t to say they’re perfect as both the villains and a group of teenagers (who become reoccurring characters) come across as being rather one dimensional, which is a shame. The various supporting characters overall are good ones and help the novel rather than hinder as in the case of some of Peel’s other Who novels.

The novel’s plot seems perfectly suited to season thirteen and the Robert Holmes scripted stories of that season. Indeed the plot usage of strange creatures in and around Dartmoor also brings up the famous Sherlock Holmes story *The Hound Of The Baskervilles*, a piece of literature from the era Doctor Who was drawing inspiration from on TV. Indeed, both that era and the novel invoke strong memories of both *Pyramids Of Mars* from the previous season and *The Talons of Weng-Chiang* as well. While some aspects of the novel, such as its water set pieces and its finale, are hard to imagine being done on the show’s 1976-77 budget, there is a strong feeling of authenticity to the novel’s plot as being one that could easily have been from the era in question.

Being a John Peel novel, one would expect continuity and there indeed is some. Peel gets a bit of continuity in costume wise as the Doctor gets the costume he wears later in *The Talons of Weng-Chiang* and Sarah wears her costume from *Pyramids Of Mars* as well but these are throwaway references. Perhaps a bigger piece of continuity comes towards the end of the novel with a piece of backstory being tied into the crash of a spacecraft in London’s West End. Peel also manages to slip scenes in involving the TARDIS swimming pool as well as references to the recent (for the Doctor and Sarah Jane) events of *The Brain Of Morbius*. Compared to some of Peel’s other novels, these are largely throwaway and perhaps most shockingly Peel works them into the plot of the novel rather than tacking them on. It’s as good as you’re likely to see Peel in the continuity department.

As part of the Virgin Missing Adventures range, *Evolution* does what it says on the box. From its excellent characterization of the fourth Doctor and Sarah Jane Smith, its Robert Holmes inspired supporting cast and its overall plot it has a feeling as if it could have been ripped from the era it is set in. In regards to John Peel’s oft-ridiculed use of continuity, you’re unlikely to find him use it better than he does here. While there isn’t anything groundbreaking to say about it, if you are after a pastiche of one of TV Doctor Who’s best eras then you can do no wrong by reading *Evolution*. In fact, it may well be Peel’s best non-novelization Who novel.

Jacqueline O. says

Doctor Who Evolution is part of the **Doctor Who The Missing Adventures** published by Virgin Publishing, it features the Fourth Doctor as played by Tom Baker and Sarah Jane Smith as played by Elisabeth Sladen. And it’s a very fun read. The only reason it took me so long to read the book is my e-book didn’t have flowable type (at least in the first e-reader I tried) - since the print was incredibly small, and attempting to enlarge it meant I had to scan horizontally across the typeface - I found it to be physically exhausting and irritating. I finally tried reading the book in Adobe Reader and then I could get the print to a reasonable size without having to scan back and forth on each line. Some of the lines double-printed, though, with the type over-lapping, so I had to go back to other e-reader and squint to read the type then go back -- that was exhausting. Publishers CHECK YOUR COPY! And don’t assume everyone can read micro-sized 6-point type! OK, rant over.

The story itself was a fun romp. Sarah is exploring the TARDIS, checking out the wardrobe, then the

swimming pool, but she eventually gets bored. She goes to the Doctor who asks her if there's someone she wants to meet - and Sarah says, yes, Rudyard Kipling.

The TARDIS then arrives in Victorian Devon - where a horrific giant hound is haunting the moor, and a fisherman's been killed by some extra-ordinary creature, and Sarah meets Kipling - but he's a schoolboy. She and the Doctor also meet Arthur Conan Doyle, not yet "Sir", who's just finished a tour as a doctor on a whaling ship - that's also pulled into the port in Devon. Yes, this story is as fun as you might expect. The Doctor and Sarah are quickly caught into events because several local schoolboys and street children have disappeared, and Kipling and a couple of his friends are trying to find them.

The plot involves a scientist who's lived in his older brother's shadow his entire life and has a terrible inferiority complex who's determined to prove he's smarter than his brother - and a deluded industrialist, who thinks he's on the side of progress - but actually he's promoting slavery and lack of self-will and self-determination. The arguments of the scientist and industrialist to defend what they are doing are fascinating. Totally wrong and awful - but fascinating none the less.

I really enjoyed this book. The first half, as the Doctor and Sarah meet all the locals in the small village - the lord at the manor, his daughter, her fiancé, Conan Doyle, the local doctor (Dr. Martinson), Kipling and his friends, a local boy from the village, the local fishermen, the whaling boat captain, etc and find out about the mysterious hound on the moor is just plain fun. The second part, as it becomes clearer and clearer just what is going on is also pretty cool. It should be horrifying but it's not really, it was just very, very neat. And I loved the end!

Highly recommended, especially to classic era *Doctor Who* fans!

Deranged Pegasus says

I absolutely loved reading this. This is the first Doctor Who book I have been able to read and it was so much fun to read. The voice of the Doctor came through so well and I enjoyed how the book showed how much of life is intertwined through the way that the Doctor and Sarah encountered both Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling. The way the author fluidly inserted the Doctor's adventure into a 'true' timeline was masterful and I look forward to reading more of his books.

David Layton says

"Evolution" by long-time fan John Peel has the elements that Peel does well, namely recreating the mood and atmosphere of a particular TV season. In this case, we get Doctor 4 and Sarah, perhaps the best Doctor/companion couple in the regular series. The mood exactly imitates the Gothic period Who, from "Pyramids Of Mars" to "Image Of The Fendahl." The Doctor tries to fulfill a promise to Sarah by taking her to visit her favorite writer, Rudyard Kipling (a bit too conservative for Sarah's tastes, perhaps? - just my opinion), but gets it a little wrong and arrives in England while Kipling is still a teenager. There is great fun as "Gigger" (Kipling's nickname because of his famous gig-lens glasses) develops a teen-crush on Sarah. There is plenty of dark mood, as well. Most of the action happens at night. Grave robbing, gruesome deaths, and mysterious man-monsters add that Gothic feel. Among other prominent historically real characters, Arthur Conan Doyle features quite prominently, here a young ship's doctor. Peel cannot resist trying to use events in the novel to suggest the "inspirations" for later stories by these real figures. So, of course, there is a moor haunted by a huge, ravenous hound, just as an example. All in all, the story is servicable. In trying to get the mood and style right, Peel limits himself to some degree. It is the problem of imitation.

