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The Doctor's not the man he was. But what has he become? An old enemy -- Faction Paradox, a cult of time-travelling voodoo terrorists -- is finally making him one of its own. These rebels have a mission for him, one that will deliver him into the hands of his own people, who have decreed that he must die. Except now, it seems, the Time Lords have a mission for him too...A gargantuan structure, hewn from solid bone, has appeared in the skies over Gallifrey. Its origins and purpose are unknown, but its powers threaten to tear apart the web of time and the universe with it. Only the doctor can get inside... but soon he will learn that nothing is safe and nothing is sacred.

Shot by both sides, confronted by past sins and future crimes, the Doctor finds himself a prisoner of his own actions.

Doctor Who: The Ancestor Cell Details

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From Reader Review Doctor Who: The Ancestor Cell for online ebook

Akiva says

[After all those years, he's still Fitz. I know a lot of people ship him and the Doctor; through that lens, Kreiner's death is really moving. (hide spoiler)]

Jason says

I liked the part where it just barely made sense. No, really. I liked it.

AJ says

I really ought to re-read these 8th Doctor books in order.

Don Incognito says

SPOILERS AHEAD

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This novel, the climax of the Faction Paradox and future war story arc, is epic but enormously sadistic. It makes the original series Doctor Who episode "Resurrection of the Daleks" look gentle. This is actually my second reading, but I evidently didn't read it closely enough the first time.

Comments, or aspects that interested me most:

The current incarnation of Romana, now president of Gallifrey, has no redeeming qualities. She

is vain and arrogant (like the original played by Mary Tamm), but a cold, calculating politician. Her interaction with the Doctor in the story is actually fairly limited; but she feels no affection whatsoever toward him.

I believe many reviewers have noted this--the hero of the story is the TARDIS. Prefiguring the new series episode "The Doctor's Wife" but actually taking its theme further (while not presenting the TARDIS as a woman), the novel suggests the TARDIS intelligence loves the Doctor and would put itself to a great deal of suffering to save him.

The novel is poorly edited, with a few embarrassing typos; and the writing is just okay. For one thing, the book is full of not gratuitous pop-culture references (only a few, thankfully) but gratuitous restatements of famous lines from the original series.

Gallifrey faces not one but two enemies: Faction Paradox, and an unidentified "Enemy" the Time Lords have been preparing for with the handicap of knowing nothing about. The Enemy are revealed to be a race of extremely powerful alien organisms from outside the universe, believed to be the ancestors of all life therein.

Gallifrey's defeat is indirectly caused by what is essentially an accident. The Time Lords have a miniature universe in a bottle, which they had apparently stolen from someone else (in some previous novel) intending to use the miniature universe as an emergency bolthole from their unidentified Enemy. The bottle gets broken, and the energy released from it disturbs the Enemy (I have no idea why), who release an unstoppable energy wave that brutally destroys large numbers of people, crippling Gallifrey (already under siege by a fifth column of Faction Paradox-allied Gallifreyans) and allowing Faction Paradox to win the war.

Different authors have interpreted the Time Lords in different ways, but these authors' depiction of Gallifrey is implausible and inappropriate. In order to shoehorn their social criticism into a story it doesn't naturally belong in, the authors depict Gallifrey as having a highly pollutive industrial sector and rampant poverty and homelessness. That's absurd unless viewed as one of the time distortions caused by the Edifice: a society so advanced as to control time travel can't fulfill material needs and can't function without heavy industry?

This story very obviously influenced the Time War of the new series; some aspects of the Time War's conclusion are identical. The Doctor destroys Gallifrey in order to prevent Faction Paradox from taking over it and ruling time and space. But what happens in this book is much too violent to be shown on television in its original form, only a massively sanitized version. The Time War replaced the Faction with the Daleks, for essentially commercial reasons.

There has probably never been a materially nastier, more graphically horrifying Doctor Who novel than this. I actually found Lawrence Miles' *Alien Bodies* even more unpleasant, but in a creepy and ineffable way I never understood. (I never finished it, and made no serious attempt to read Miles' postmodern filth *Interference*.)

Whovian readers have wondered why the editors chose to reset the novel's continuity with this book, purging it of the elements introduced by Lawrence Miles. The likely reason is obvious enough to me. It's almost

certainly because Miles had made the series *too* postmodern; the editors' purge of the Miles elements was an attempt to pull it back in a somewhat more traditional direction while preserving the result they established in *The Ancestor Cell*: Gallifrey is gone, as it was in the modern television series until late 2013.

The novel may be disgusting, but I like doomsday stories, and got what I expected in this novel.

Ken says

This is the completion of a storylines that has been going on for a long long time. First is the Doctors subversion by the Paradox Faction, they killed him in the past and now he isn't supposed exist, but he does this apparently allows them control over him. The second is Compassion and Romana and the Time Lords want her in the future war between them and the Enemy. The Third is Fitz himself

Compassion, The Doctor and Fitz have finally been cornered. They materialize in a strange place and then The Doctor and Fitz are separated and arrive on Gallifrey. Fitz in the middle of a weird ceremony and the Doctor in the Panopticon. There is a large structure in the Gallifreyan sky. Strange things are occurring, changes nobody notices. The Paradox Faction is taking over. The Doctor has to take a drastic action to stop the take over.

The story was a bit to complicated and relied on actions that happened in books written years earlier. Of course this ties up most of the plot threads that have been building up over most of the previous books. The problem for me is that I have been reading the books off and on since they came out so quite a few plots were lost on me. Biggest problem is that this book was crushed under the weight of its own canon. Hopefully this cleans the slate for the next book

Simon Curtis says

I'll be honest, it baffled me a little. Another to revisit.

Angela says

Finally clears up the whole Compassion story line and the Time War. This is a must read, but should be read after reading others in the series. It particularly references *Interference*. It is a page turner, and having Faction Paradox as the bad guys really works. It is difficult to review this without giving away major plot points. Just be careful if you have a fear of spiders. A really good read.

Basicallyrun says

Oh, I had such a hard time deciding what rating to give this. On the one hand, the ideas behind it are really, really awesome (the Discontinuity Guide calls it a mess, but I disagree) and the last third or so just flew by. But. The first two thirds did seem to drag a bit as all the various players were introduced, and some of the writing felt horribly clunky to me, and oh my god, what the hell has happened to Romana? If she's had a lot of character development as President that I've missed, I can just about accept Romana the War Queen, but otherwise, dear god no.

But the good bits were **really** good. I may have said this before, but Angelhides does horror incredibly well (obviously I don't know exactly which bits are by Cole and which by Angelhides, but going on past form...) And one of them really seems to **get** Fitz as he seems in my head - wise-cracking and, yes, a coward, but not so utterly useless as he thinks. Also, I have no idea how to read the Fitz/Eight relationship as anything other than epic romance. 'You left me, I left you, but **we'll make it work**, Doctor'. (Slightly paraphrased.)

IDK. I feel bad giving this such a low rating, because the last third was excellent. But I'm not sure it was good enough to make up for some of the other bits.

Corey Dutson says

Now THIS is how you write a Doctor Who book. Goddamned Epic, that's what this is.

E.J. Jackson says

I enjoyed this story very much - written in 2000, five years before the re-boot of the Television show, its an Eighth Doctor(Paul McGann)adventure, and very dark it is, too! If you haven't heard any of the Big Finish Audio adventures you might wonder who Fitz Kreiner is - briefly he is the longest-serving of the Eighth Doctor's companions and has appeared in many audio adventures and books...

The story (without going into spoiler mode) is quite convoluted and has a few twists and turns along the way - and a few surprises. It also features Romana, and mostly takes place on Gallifrey or its environs.

I can thoroughly recommend it!

Daniel Kukwa says

There's a relentlessness to this novel that I find unsettling. Considering that Stephen Cole's Big Finish story "The Apocalypse Element" covers similiar ground with much more alacrity, I would recommend the audio adventure over this novel if you're looking for the ultimate invasion-of-Gallifrey story.

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nwhyte.livejournal.com/2018088.html>[return][return]This is the first of the books setting up the Faction Paradox timeline which I have enjoyed. The Doctor and Fitz return to Gallifrey in Compassion-as-Tardis, and find themselves implicated in a power struggle between President Romana and one of her predecessors, resurrected by the Faction Paradox. It contains the seeds of numerous ideas which we have seen in later stories, particularly the Gallifrey audios (though they of course feature Romanas I and II, whereas here it's clearly another Romana), and ends with the original Tardis regenerating itself and the Doctor stuck on Earth with amnesia - both picked up more recently in Big Finish continuity. Most importantly it rounds off a significant story arc, going back to the start of the BBC Eighth Doctor series in some ways, and does so very satisfactorily. Sometimes Who stories playing with Gallifreyan drama and temporal paradoxes get too clever for their own good, but this is just about right. Very satisfying.

Nenya says

Faction Paradox rides again! I'd been looking forward to more of them and to the wrapup of the arc about Compassion and Gallifrey's obsession with their upcoming war, but I didn't realize it was going to be in the same book. I liked a lot of this, though I found much of the explanation for what exactly Faction Paradox were doing headache-inducing and nonsensical. I suppose that's part of the point. Less fun for me though.

Not exaaactly a zombie book, but, well, Faction's whole look with the bones and exposed skulls and ancient bodies held together by leather armor and servo-rotors...definitely hits a similar squick with me. Really liked the finality of the ending, though (of course they might still be back, but it was a good solid NOPE BYE for now).

I'm never too thrilled when Romana gets made evil, but she seemed to sort of be on our side again by the end? IDK. Love love LOVED that we get the real TARDIS again, though I won't say how. Can't WAIT to see her in action again, though I know I'll have to wait a couple more books because SPOILERS.

Oh, and Three in any form, ghost or not, can crash any Eight book any time ever. /continues shipping her tiny Doctorship

Em says

Mind-boggling in the extreme. The writer does a good job of keeping a steady pace and making the Time Lords seem super brilliant.

Going to take a moment to brag that I figured out the whole Grandfather Paradox thing back in Doctor Who: Unnatural History. That was a fun puzzle to solve.

The imagery was fantastic, but be warned, it does get a bit graphic and gory. Scary spiders. Eeek.

This one is very important continuity-wise, as it finishes up several story arcs.

If you love the Doctor, you've got to read it.

