



Doctor Who: Twice Upon a Time

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Discover the new *Doctor Who* classics.

Still reeling from his encounter with the Cybermen, the First Doctor stumbles through the bitter Antarctic wind, resisting the approaching regeneration with all his strength. But as he fights his way through the snowdrifts, he comes across the familiar shape of a blue police box, and a mysterious figure who introduces himself as the Doctor...

Thrown together at their most vulnerable moments, the two Doctors must discover why the snowflakes are suspended in the sky, why a First World War Captain has been lifted from his time stream moments before his death, and who is the mysterious Glass Woman who knows their true name. The Doctor is reunited with Bill, but is she all she seems? And can he hold out against the coming regeneration?

Doctor Who: Twice Upon a Time Details

Date : Published April 5th 2018 by BBC Books

ISBN : 9781785943300

Author : Paul Cornell

Format : Paperback 176 pages

Genre : Media Tie In, Doctor Who, Science Fiction, Fiction, Adventure

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From Reader Review Doctor Who: Twice Upon a Time for online ebook

Tony says

Another really enjoyable read. Cornell's approach was slightly different to RTDs in that he seems to have made an effort to make it a homage (as opposed to a pastiche) of an old-school Target novelisation. It feels like it might - with the odd difference here and there - have been written by Terrance Dicks on a good day, which is as big a compliment as I can give it really.

One small quibble is the repetitive joke about justifying name calling by name-dropping a celebrity and their meeting with the Doctor. I know that's a purely personal thing and it is so minor I almost feel guilty for mentioning it. But I've done it now.

So, ignore my quibble and give this a read.

Samuel Rooke says

A very faithful reproduction of the titular Christmas special, for better or worse. Paul Cornell novelising Steven Moffat's last televised work on Doctor Who feels like it should be a monumental occasion, but what's on the page is a very literal direct translation of the special into prose, with the odd grace note from Cornell's mind or the special's surprisingly mammoth script here and there. Opening a novel with "Once upon a time, 709 episode ago" – episodes! – makes it immediately clear Cornell was not looking to do anything transformative here, unlike Moffat's phenomenal work in creating something very new with his "novelisation" of the show's fiftieth anniversary.

What Cornell does change is some of the mental specifics around the Twelfth Doctor's regeneration (bringing the oncoming shake-up of the Thirteenth Doctor and her identity to a much more, in a very literal sense, conscious position) and what specifically became of Bill Potts. Cornell also does this to Nardole in what is probably the novel's peak of undermining "The Doctor Falls", quite the feat considering how much Moffat managed to do that with the special himself. Arguably he softens the edges of Moffat's bizarre take on the First Doctor but I think his efforts there are overstated and a case of fans extrapolating a much more dynamic shift they would like rather than the throwaway line they were given.

What Cornell does to the Twelfth Doctor is stranger though, and more impactful, recontextualising the Doctor's time with River on Darillium as such a monumental anchor of his identity that he'd prefer not to rejuvenate into someone who didn't experience that directly. That's a very Tenth Doctor take on the metaphysics of regeneration, and I'm surprised more fans didn't bristle at that, since they seemed to be reading the text closely enough to make a great deal out of the one line it has regarding the First Doctor's offbeat characterisation in the special. There are shades of Big Finish's regeneration story for the Sixth Doctor, "The Last Adventure", in what Cornell does with the Twelfth Doctor's mental state pre-regeneration, in a move of narrative smugness I felt robbed that wonky scene of some of the little power it had.

Steven Moffat got his start in Doctor Who by contributing to a Paul Cornell novel. It's a shame Cornell getting his "finish" (...) in Doctor Who through novelising Steven Moffat's work didn't amount to anything

particularly interesting, let alone revelatory. Two glass avatars, and a pair of sonic sunglasses.

Lori S. says

Read by Mark Gatiss, some of the narrative power of this story flattened a bit. However, I really enjoyed it and was glad the library had the audio up listen to right at the beginning of the year. Yay!

Adam Stone says

I thought that this was a decent novelisation of the 2017 christmas special which stands up as a good example of the novelisation form which Cornell has taken to like a duck to water. I would heartily recommend this as it had stuff in it that didn't appear in the episode but also adds little extra bits to the narrative that add a little bit extra to the whole thing.

Liam Farrell says

I really did enjoy this! I picked this up because I really like the episode of this from the tv show and I thought that this was a really great novelisation of the episode. It added a lot to the story, delving deeper into the characters and telling us more about them. There was also a lot of different references to episodes and characters from the Doctor Who show that were so fun to geek out about! This book just reminded me why books are always better than the movie-they are more detailed. And this book was definitely a lot more detailed. Plus I just really love this story. I love all the characters, I love the plot, I love the way it is told and some chapters were just so heartwarming and so great to read, they really did put a smile on my face. The reason I ended giving this book a 3 star rating instead of 4 was just because this a very slow, atmospheric story. And slow atmospheric books are always quite hard for me to read because I get bored and just want more to happen. It's different with movies and tv shows because there have it playing in front of me. So a few times each chapter, I just wanted to be happening. The more slower books I read, the better I will get so I do think I will reread this one in the future. Overall, I really enjoyed this book and would definitely recommend it. It has made me want to pick up more novelisations of episodes from the show!

Chris Wing says

This is the second of the four new series novelisations released earlier this month and I umm'd and ah'd over whether to give this 3 or 4 stars. Of course, I opted for the latter and here's why...

After the roller-coaster that was the novelisation of the 50th Anniversary special, this one comes across as the standard sort of Doctor Who novelisation of old. This is not really a bad thing, especially if you prefer them that way (and if you do, you'll hate Day of the Doctor).

It is a competent and solid yarn, straight forward and reliable in accordance to keeping to it's source material, but whilst that sounds like the sort of thing you'd put in a reference for an old employee who you don't have anything notable to mention, it really is a good thing.

Okay, so I didn't get the excitement that I got from 'Day...', but I wasn't really expecting it. It's the shortest of the releases (I think), and wanted to read it to really get wind of the 12th Doctor's first appearance in print (or is that the second...?).

Also, after erasing the interview on the topic of the novelisations in the latest Doctor Who Magazine, I wanted to see how the First Doctor read. Paul Cornell, in said interview, states he was channelling Hartnell as he wrote, and I tried to do the same in the reading of it.

It was a partial success, but really, David Bradley's voice shone through more often than not as I remembered hearing the same lines from the episode itself. In the end, I gave up trying to shoehorn Hartnell in there and went with whatever came to mind. The First Doctor, in my mind's eye, therefore flickered between the two actors (and that wasn't quite as weird as you'd probably think!). My boy has asked if we can read The Five Doctors for his next bedtime story book; I wonder if the same will happen with Hartnell and Hurndall (the answer is probably yes)...

There are a few bits here and there that added to the story and those were references to other adventures with the earlier/later/in-between Doctors. These were all rather charming, and even an intriguing reference to the First Doctor having met Susan's family. I can only imagine he means that he met them after he dropped her off at the end of The Five Doctors, as I can't think of any occasion where event appears or is referenced in any First Doctor media I've read or listen to in the intervening years!

We also get images of the second, third and sixth Doctors on adventures that seem too amusing and cruel not to ever see in print! Maybe one day...

The only real niggle that I have, really, was that a number of moments that made me laugh on screen, didn't quite work on the printed page. Stands to reason, really, but it was a little shame that I didn't get the same enjoyment out of them as I did previously. However, in the show, I felt that the (12th) Doctor's final monologue was a little bit forced and felt out of place, chatting away to himself saying a big vocal goodbye speech to literally no-one, but the book points out (probably the point I missed on the show, an excuse to watch it again) how he is delivering this as a pep talk to the next guy about to step into his shoes. That worked for me.

So, it's these little touches which tips this book into the 4-star arena, in what otherwise would have been a well-written, but formulaic (although tried and tested) novelisation.

Fun stuff; I'd like to see more made.

Alain Lewis says

An appropriate ending for the twelfth Doctor as he decides if he's to live or die. He does this though alongside the first Doctor, who faces a similar choice. As ever with the Target Books it's a nice little hug of a book. A little rollercoaster of enjoyment. You normally know what will happen but you don't always know exactly how.

Ken says

With the Thirteenth Doctor's arrival the weekend, I just had a real urge to read Twelve's swan song beforehand.

I've always liked this original televised episode. Capaldi and Moffat were originally intending to leave at the end of Series 10, so the fact that they managed to add in an extra episode for the Christmas Special by having The Doctor refusing to regenerate is such a simple but effective way for him to have one more adventure.

This is a pretty straightforward novelisations of the story, any multi-Doctor story is always fun and this made for a pleasant read.

I really liked how Cornell was able to make it so simply clear in which incarnation of the Doctor he was talking about.

There's lots of nice nuggets in here aswell, various references to the other Doctors was very welcomed.

The regeneration scene was perfect, teasing the reader that the next incarnation would be a male again as The Doctor is stuck-in-a-rut Timelord made me smile.

I'm a big fan of Capaldi's Doctor, but the show has always been about change. I'm excited to see what Jodie brings to the role and hopefully her first adventure will also get the Target novelisation treatment!

Krist?ne V?tola says

Who counts as human? Amatonormativity in the "Doctor Who: Twice Upon A Time" Novelization

<https://mikaylasrambles.wordpress.com...>

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Daniel Kukwa says

It doesn't quite reach the giddy heights of the recent Moffat and Davies novelizations, but Paul Cornell is taking a different approach. This is a loving tribute to the style of Target novelization supremo Terrance Dicks -- a beautiful pastiche of his style at his height. Clear, spare prose that contains a surprising multitude of layers, this is a book that really takes me back to my childhood.

Hobart says

★ ★ ★ 1/2 (rounded up)

This originally appeared at The Irresponsible Reader.

He sent a wide-beam sonic pulse at exactly the right frequency all the way down that path between him and the tower, and was rewarded with a very satisfying series of detonations. The First Doctor skipped about at every fireball that burst into the sky. Finally, the smoke and flame died down. 'There you go, all done.'

'There could have been one right underneath us!'

'Yeah, but it's not the kind of mistake you have to live with.' That was the other thing about his centuries of additional experience, he was a little more willing to roll the dice. Or perhaps it

was just at this point he didn't give a damn. What the hell, his clothes were already ruined, might as well mess up the bodywork too. It wasn't like he was planning to trade the old thing in.

Okay...if you want to read me ramble on a bit about the place of these Target novelizations of Doctor Who episodes to me as a young'un, you can see my post about **Doctor Who: Christmas Invasion** by Jenny T. Colgan, one of the other new releases in this old and cherished line. Which means we can just cut to the chase about this one, right?

Cornell was tasked with bringing the Twelfth Doctor's last Christmas Special to the page -- which includes the challenge of dealing with his regeneration in to the Thirteenth Doctor, which is no small feat. But we'll get to that in a bit. First, he's got to deal with the challenge of having two Doctors meet up -- and the extra fun of telling a story where two characters share the same name (and are sort of the same person, but not really), while not confusing the reader.

Cornell did a great job balancing the two Doctors, both going through some doubts about regenerating; while dealing with the question of Bill's identity and the soldier from World War I. One thing I appreciated more in the book than in the original episode was the Doctor's consternation when he realized that there wasn't actually a bad guy to fight for a change. Not sure what else to say, really.

Now, the regeneration? Wow. He nailed that one, and got me absolutely misty-eyed in the process. I could hear Capaldi very clearly as I read these pages -- the narrative added just the right amount of extra depth without taking away any of the original script/performance. It wasn't my favorite part of the episode, but it was my favorite part of the book -- he hit all the notes perfectly. The aside about the pears -- great, I loved that so much. And then -- a nice little bit with Thirteen, which has got to be so hard because we don't know anything about her, so even those few seconds of screen-time with her have to be tougher than usual to capture. These few paragraphs, incidentally, made Cornell "the first person to have written for all the Doctors" -- which is just cool.

In **Twice Upon a Time** Cornell has captured the letter and the spirit of the original episode, added some nice new bits and pieces for the fans and generally told a great story in a way that made you feel you hadn't watched it already. This is what these books should shoot for, and Cornell (no surprise to anyone who's read any of his previous fiction) hit his target.

Melinda Beatty says

This was a beautiful novelization of a beautiful episode--well done to Paul Cornell for filling in all the gaps in the storyline!

Tim Trewartha says

When I first heard that BBC Books were resurrecting the Target imprint to publish novelisations of episodes of the "new" series of Doctor Who, I went ape. I grew up reading Doctor Who novels and have terrific memories of that series, so this news just about made my year. They were also the first series of books I started collecting (along with Choose Your Own Adventures). So after I calmed down, I grabbed my credit

card and got on the internet. I am pleased to report the 4 books arrived this week and for no real reason I decided to read 'Twice Upon a Time'.

Novelised by Who veteran Paul Cornell from a script by Steven Moffett, 'Twice Upon a Time' was the farewell adventure for the 12th Doctor (Peter Capaldi). I have to admit I found the episode disappointing, and that carries over to the novel. None of this is Cornell's fault, who does a good job writing a fairly straight forward novelization of the episode. It kind of reminded me of one of Terrance Dick's better Doctor Who novels, there's some expansion of the story, and we get to get inside the heads of both Doctors (the episode also sees a return of the original Doctor), both facing similar fears as they grapple with their forthcoming regenerations.

So this is a very easy read, I knocked it over in a day. A note on the cover, which is delightfully retro, harking back to the first few target releases published in the 70s. I hope they publish more. No, scratch that. I hope, eventually, they publish ALL "new" series episodes.

Michael Cook says

While *Twice Upon a Time* is a far more straightforward adaptation of its episode when compared to Moffat's adaptation of *Day of the Doctor*, it is no less enjoyable. Paul Cornell has always had a gift for strong prose, and that strong prose is very much on display in his adaptation of *Twice Upon a Time*. In a way, it feels like he, out of all the authors, is trying the hardest to replicate the classic style of the original Target novelizations. Honestly, though, it really works for this story, mainly because of the fact that it heavily features the First Doctor, who Paul Cornell writes beautifully for. The episode was heavily criticized for its depiction of the First Doctor (essentially, simplifying him into a bit of a caricature of who he actually was, playing up the more sexist aspects of his character and downplaying some of the softer aspects), and while Paul Cornell doesn't really shy away from what Moffat wrote in the script, he does contextualize it some as a result of the regeneration the First Doctor is fighting off for the entirety of the story. In general, Paul Cornell writes the First Doctor really beautifully, adding some lovely insights into his thoughts during the episode - in particular, there's a touching reference during the scene where Bill first appears where the First Doctor briefly thinks that the person the Testimony is offering the Doctor in return for the Captain is Susan, his granddaughter, and when it turns out to be Bill, he's briefly heartbroken. It's such a short moment, but so utterly powerful.

As for the actual meat of the story, it's mostly as you remember it playing out on screen. It's been reported that upwards of thirty minutes of footage was cut from the episode, and while some of it does reappear in the novelization, most of it remains lost to the sands of time. What is added in Cornell's adaptation really does help flesh out the story somewhat. While I really liked *Twice Upon a Time* as an epilogue for Peter Capaldi's run as the Doctor, I know a lot of people thought it was a rather anti-climactic way for a Doctor to bow out, given that there ended up being no real threat and the episode was far more an introspective look at Capaldi's run as a whole than a truly gripping adventure, and while the book doesn't fix that, I think that the very nature of the medium of novels ends up being a better medium for this story. Novels are often more introspective, and so this super introspective story ends up working really well on the page; possibly even better than it worked on TV.

Don't go into this adaptation of *Twice Upon a Time* expecting anything radically different from the televised episode. Don't expect it to be the fabled director's cut featuring all the deleted scenes. Go into it expecting to read essentially the same thing you saw on TV, but with some added insights from the characters (and expect

to find out just what happened to Bill, Heather, and Nardole after *The Doctor Falls*; spoiler alert: Bill and Heather had a damn cute life together) and you'll have a very enjoyable time. Paul Cornell proves with *Twice Upon a Time* why he's such a beloved author in the *Doctor Who* universe. He has such a gift for perfectly capturing the voices of characters and embellishing the events in which he's telling that he makes every *Doctor Who* story he writes really come off the page. It's a much different beast to the adaptation of *The Day of the Doctor*, but no less enjoyable.

Matthew Kresal says

Back in the 1970s and into the 1980s, the only way fans of *Doctor Who* often could encounter an older story was by reading it. The Target novelizations, slim books often running little more than 150 pages, was the cornerstone of the show's merchandise. These days, of course, that isn't the case with a multitude of watching options to choose from including DVDs and streaming platforms. That hasn't stopped such demand for new Target style novelizations of twenty-first-century episodes which BBC Books debuted a set of earlier this year. Among them was the most recently aired episode, the 2017 Christmas Special *Twice Upon A Time*, written by a stalwart making one last comeback: Paul Cornell.

Cornell (whose *Doctor Who* credits include episodes such as *Father's Day* and *Human Nature/Family Of Blood* alongside original creations such as *Saucer Country*) was a natural choice to novelize this final outing of the Twelfth Doctor. *Twice Upon A Time* is, after all, perhaps more of a character piece disguised as a sci-fi runaround. Cornell, in both his *Who* prose and TV scripts, had shown himself a particular practitioner of more character-centric storytelling and he excels at bringing that sensibility to the novelizing the Christmas special.

Where Cornell and the novelization shines is in its characters. Elements of that are down, of course, to the original Steven Moffat script for it but it's what Cornell does with it that counts here. The novelization builds on what was onscreen last December, finding moments during and around dialogue. Some of which are quite cheeky fan references such as what was on the VHS tape that Mark Gatiss' First World War Captain holds up in the TARDIS and some laugh out loud moments regarding the backstory of a few of the UK celebrities that the Peter Capaldi Doctor calls his earlier self. On the topic of the First Doctor, Cornell also finds some explanation for the characterization some found over the top for that Doctor including teasing his future self and being exasperated by events. There's even room for the fates of the Twelfth Doctor's companions. All of which helps make this fun reading for a fan, especially someone who enjoyed the special.

Something else which makes the novelization intriguing is the material deleted from the TV version it reinstates. There are no great big dramatic twists or eliminated scenes as such and, yet, the book is full of extended sequences. There's how the Captain ended up in his predicament for example as well as an expanded sequence on Villengard with the two Doctors dealing with a swarm of creatures. Indeed, what Cornell most restores are character moments and pieces of dialogue between the two versions of the same Time Lord which further highlight the scenes of these two old men seeming to rage against the dying of the light and wondering if they should continue. These are perhaps the biggest highlights of the book though none of them make earth-shattering changes to the special as aired.

What Cornell highlights most of all is one theme from Moffat's script: Hope. It runs throughout from the Captain's escape from death and Bill trying to make her Doctor believe she's returned. It's also in the interactions between the two Doctors, sometimes touching moments of trying to convince one another to carry on despite the battles they've fought. That despite everything, there's always the chance to do

something better and that the inevitable change the future brings isn't to be feared but embraced. It's an important message from Cornell as he walks away from writing for the series that has left such a mark on his life and career.

It is that perhaps which helps make the novelization of Twice Upon A Time such a delightful read. Watching the special is one thing but reading Cornell's expansion of it, from its extended sequences to new flashes of characterization, allows one a different experience of the same story. It is also a chance to see a Who writer bid farewell to the program not with sadness but with hope and excitement for what lies ahead. One that also includes, perhaps, a memory of days spent reading the original Target books?
