

## ATTACK OF THE ALLIGATORS

### EPISODE SYNOPSIS #24

lee

Tropical birds screech uneasily as a river boat slides past a group of watchful alligators – alligators larger than normal according to one Mr Blackmore, who's itching to take a big white hunter potshot at them. Blackmore, and his moustachioed river pilot, Culp, are on their way to a secret rendezvous somewhere in the bayous, but an isolated southern backwoods is an unlikely place to put a mansion. However somebody *did* put a mansion there, and scientists McGill and Orchard have taken it over in order to experiment on a rapid growth hormone – Theramine – they've distilled from swamp plants and are hoping to use in food production. It's the murky green Theramine that Blackmore has come to look at, along with some sizeably modified rabbits.

On Tracy Island, Virgil and Alan are off in *Thunderbird Two* to fix an aerial mast on the far side of the island. Communications with *Thunderbird Five* are down – meaning International Rescue is out of operation – and it's hoped that repairs on the mast will solve the problem. Alan saves the day by replacing some corroded junction plates, and soon enough Jeff and John are once again looking blankly at each other over the airwaves.

Just in time, because back at the bayou a storm is building and tensions are running high in the spooky mansion. Seems the swarthy Culp knows exactly what's going on in the lab, and he plans to steal the Theramine for his own nefarious purposes. As the storm builds and the mansion lights flicker, Culp sneaks into the lab and transfers the drug into a phial – accidentally knocking some of the Theramine into the sink. He quickly washes it down the drain, but plumbing being what it is in a swamp, the drain leads straight into the river system where the already over-large alligators are lurking with sinister intent.

The storm clears and Blackmore, having drooled over the Theramine, is being shuttled back down the river by the duplicitous Culp. Unfortunately, this is where the trouble begins. The alligators, having swum merrily through the Theramine cloud that leaked out of the drain all night, have not only grown to incredible size, but have also developed a keen hankering for human flesh. A terrifying scene ensues as the boat comes under attack before the horrified gaze of the scientists and their housekeeper, who were still standing on the pier waving bye-bye when it happened. Guns are raised but it's all too late, the boat flipping



over and its occupants sinking into the murk. Blackmore is saved, but Culp sinks down to a watery grave.

In scenes that must surely have scared the pants off us as children, the alligators crawl out of the river and become intent on smashing the mansion down – it seems their sense of smell has improved along with their size, and they can scent the tasty morsels within. The terrified occupants quickly call for help by going straight to the top of the rescue service chain – International Rescue of course, who literally can't believe their ears. In a rare tactical move, Jeff despatches all four of his ground crew to assist, but it may be too late as the mansion is beginning to crumble.

In either a moment of sheer stupidity or absolute bravery, Scott enters the besieged mansion via the laboratory window, which means he gets to share the terror as opposed to saving the day. And terror it surely is, as the walls begin caving in and the shrieking of the alligators gets louder and louder. However Scott quickly wangles out of the housekeeper that a secret escape route leads from the mansion to the river, and just as they begin the search for it, the secret door slides open and Culp emerges. He's not dead after all, but, to make up for it, he's wet and he's armed, shooting Scott's gun out of his hand and threatening to let loose with more Theramine.

Meanwhile, Virgil, Gordon and Alan have arrived and drive the alligators away from the house by using TB2's jets. Alan and Gordon load the tranquilizer guns and manage to subdue two of the alligators, but the third one has headed back to the mansion for lunch. Alan gets the brilliant idea of using himself as bait, and despite Virgil and Gordon's admonitions to do no such thing, hikes off on his hoverbike. Smelling fresh young meat, the alligator takes the bait and trails off after Alan, who, unfortunately, is so busy watching the beast behind him that he fails to watch where he's going and ends up off the bike and on his butt with an alligator bearing down on him. But no fear, as sharp-shooting Gordon is on the case and takes the alligator out with one shot.

Back in the mansion, Culp has decided he wants TB2 to clear the way for his escape along the river, but Virgil and Gordon hatch a plan to use TB4 to prevent the villain's escape and retrieve the Theramine. They needn't have worried though, as a fourth enlarged alligator was lurking beneath the swamp, and this time it takes Culp down to his doom.

Arriving back at Base after a job well done, our heroes discover that Tin-Tin has returned from her shopping trip (hey, she has to do something with that fabulous salary, right?), and Tin-Tin confesses she's bought Alan an early gift for his birthday. But what to get the man who has everything, or who at least has enough money to have everything? Why, a pigmy alligator, of course!

## NEW STORIES ON TIC!

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### CATHRL'S STORY: GENESIS

"You can talk to him, if you like," the nurse was telling him. "It's a good idea, really. You don't have to be horrified."

He got his face back under control. "I'm sure it is. I was just thinking it's unusual for Gordon to be the quiet one."

### LMC'S STORY: DADDY'S CHRISTMAS WISH

"Are you... Santa?" she squeaked.

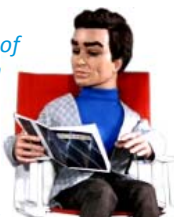
He rose to his feet, giving her a "Ho ho ho!" as his belly shook. His eyes twinkled as touched the side of his nose. "You've caught me!"

Melinda squealed with delight and gave a running jump. He caught her easily and they enveloped each other in a hug. "Oh, Santa, I knew I'd catch you this year. I just knew it."

### LEE'S STORY: DUTY CALL

I had met Jeff Tracy only once, over lunch at the Nassau Yacht Club one of those bright hot days when the sky burns blue and the glare from the water makes spots dance before your eyes. Tracy had brought his assistant, Miss Kyrano, with him -- at least that's how he had introduced her, and wearing an expression that dared me to doubt him.

Have you read a work of Thunderbirds fanfiction that you think should be included on the Tracy Island Chronicles? Contact our selection panel via email and let us know!



[ticmobilecontrol1@gmail.com](mailto:ticmobilecontrol1@gmail.com)

## TRACY ISLAND WRITERS FORUM



If you're interested in THUNDERBIRDS and all things Tracy Island, how about joining the TIWF Yahoo! Group? It's fast, easy and FREE! GO TO:

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Day seventeen, and I'm down to my last can of beans...

I haven't seen another human for days. Gordon doesn't come anymore. Instead, my supplies float in tied to the bottom of a big old balloon thing. The rope they're using is a bit dodgy though -- the last box of beans broke away. I can see them sitting at the bottom of the grotto, and I'd probably only have to hold my breath for a minute to get them, but holding my breath isn't one of my strong points... just ask my mother. Not to mention that whole Empire State fiasco has kinda put me off diving in caves...

Yesterday while I was digging around for some oysters, I found a message scratched into the cave wall. 'Casey was here' it said, and it was signed with a frowny-face. It made me wonder how many other people the Tracys have lured down here using Tin-Tin as bait. As soon as I get outta here I'll be having words with that young lady!

So, here I am. Languishing. I'm down to my last candle, my feet are wrinkling, and I'm using the balloon thing as a blanket and to write this journal on. I made some ink out of pounded seaweed and spit, and I've sharpened a rock to use as a stylus. I'm sure I'll get a book deal when I get out -- I'll call it 'Mamba of Death,' or 'Flippers of Doom,' or 'Not Dead, Ned,' or something. I bet I'll make the New York Times bestseller list!

But you know what stings? The deadline for my meeting with Matt Zimmerman has been and gone, and I just know the Management (you know, those women in high heels on the 42nd floor) will have sent somebody else to interview him. Oh, the injustice! It should have been meeeee!!!!

## THIS ISSUE:

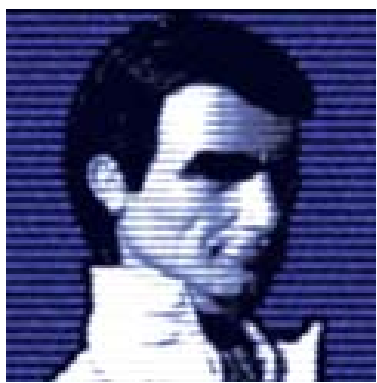
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# mr bondson opens his briefcase

Q&A WITH THUNDERBIRDS FANFIC AUTHOR **SKYWENCH**  
DECODED AND TRANSMITTED BY MCJ

**1. Hi, Skywench, can you tell us a little about the real you, including something about where you live?**

I'm a native New Yorker. I moved to Florida when I started high school and have also lived in Texas, California and Arizona. Recently I even spent a couple of years residing in Canada, but decided I preferred sunny skies and palm trees to minus 40 degrees and snow drifts. I'm now back in Florida, which is really where I grew up, and some of my old friends are still here. I live in a nice town called Jupiter, famous for its historic red lighthouse on the intercoastal waterway. My brother, who lives nearby, had a motorsports show on television and I used to write the episode synopses for it.

Besides writing, I also like to go biking around town and I am hoping to get back into ballroom dancing (I took it while in college) sometime soon. I achieved a Purple Belt in Tae Kwon Do a while back and was going to go all the way to Black Belt until a knee injury put me on the bench. I've been a Star Trek fan for most of my life and have been to some major cons. My love of science fiction, though, was actually kick started when I was about six years old. That's when I discovered a little British television import on channel WPIX 11 in New York, featuring marionettes and cool rocket ships. The rest, of course, is history.

**2. You have a very interesting pen name: "Skywench." How did that come about?**

No mystery there. That name was actually coined by a friend of my brother's when I got my first job as a flight attendant working for Pan Am. I have flown for three other carriers since then, including United, so I guess the name just stuck.

**3. How long have you been writing TB fiction and how did you get started?**

I wrote my first fic in 2001 and I have to credit our very own Jaimi-Sam (Samantha Winchester) for getting me started. I read "Secrets and Lies" and was hooked. My Siamese cat is even named after the main original character...Tally. I had no idea there was such a big market out there for fan fic, or so many authors writing it. It was amazing!

**4. Do you write for any other fandoms?**

I have attempted stories for a few, including Star Trek and Quantum Leap, but the only one I really followed through with was Boston Legal. I belonged to their Yahoo group for a short time and entered a fic challenge, which I won! I am currently considering doing a fic based on my latest obsession...Doctor Who.

**5. Who is your favourite TB character and why?**

Oh, hands down, it's Scott, the inspiration, of course, for my user name on Yahoo

("scottsladytb1"). He sucked me in with those flyboy good looks of his and those piercing blue eyes. I always admired him for being such a great brother and dutiful son. He totally shared in the responsibility of each and every mission, no matter how things turned out.

**6. You've written quite a number of successful stories over the years. Which one would you recommend to our readers as your favourite?**

If I had to choose a favorite, it would have to be my first published fic..."Cave-In." It was actually more of collaboration. I was still working as a flight attendant at the time and recruited some of my passengers to help with the more technical aspects of the story. There were three engineers onboard who were versed in the laws of physics. Also, the cave I used is one that actually exists on the island of Kauai in Hawaii. I had seen it before on one of my favorite layovers. This, combined with an excellent beta (waves in Sam's general direction), all helped to make it a very enjoyable story to write.

**7. Did you ever have a character that you found really difficult to write? How did you overcome that?**

Well, there were two, Gordon and Brains. Because of a fic challenge, I was required to write both of them together and the result was "Into The Depths." I'll let the readers judge how well, or IF I overcame my mental block. ;-)

**8. Do you have a special regime or routine when it comes to writing fiction?**

Not really, but I DO have to be able to focus completely on the story itself. Focusing on only one thing for an extended period of time has never been one of my greatest fortés, which is probably why I haven't been more prolific. But, when I'm able to do that, the characters just tend to show up for the party.

**9. If you had 20 words of advice to offer new authors what would those words be?**

Write what's in your heart, temper it with RL experience and don't worry about pleasing the masses. WRITE THE CHARACTERS.

**10. Any suggestions for the Tracy Island Writers Forum into the future?**

Just to keep on striving for quality in the fandom. TIWF is already the best source of that and I don't think our canon facts and files are matched by anyone else out there. I am proud of this group's ability to agree to disagree on some of the minor details. The people in it are of the highest caliber. What more could you ask for?

Thank you very much for having me, Mr. Bondson!



**All Mr Bondson's featured authors – and more – can be found in Thunderbird Two's Hangar at the Tracy Island Chronicles!**  
<http://www.tracyislandchronicles.com/tb2/tb2.html>



## EACH ISSUE JOHN ANSWERS QUERIES FROM HIS READERS

Dear John,

I joined the WASPs to see the world. Now that I've seen it, how do I get out?

Disillusioned

Dear Disillusioned,

Life's too short to waste squeezing yourself in and out of a rubber suit. I tried it once and lost almost every hair on my body.

Try convincing the commanding officer that you met a woman with green hair who can breathe underwater and that she wanted a job on your submarine -- that dishonourable discharge should be just around the corner.

John

Dear John,  
My brother keeps wearing my clothes. I didn't used to mind until my grandmother said he looks better in my white sweater than I do, and now the family is running a secret vote on who looks best in what. Not so secret when the score cards are hidden inside the latest issue of Kine. Short of putting a deadbolt on my closet door, what can I do?

Miffed

Dear Miffed,

I have a brother who believes monogramming to be the ultimate fashion statement. He also thinks he's older than me, but the family are planning on medicating him for that.

However, if you can't stomach a few afternoons embroidering your initials onto your sweaters, I suggest a trip wire and a few gas grenades inside the closet door. By the time your brother regains consciousness, you can have him dressed in a cocktail frock and a pair of fishnets, and propped him up decorously on the front lawn.

John

### DO YOU KNOW A THUNDERBIRDS CHARACTER WITH A PROBLEM?

Somebody who maybe isn't getting along well with their father, their girlfriend, or their local third-world dictator? If so, why not write a *Dear John* letter on their behalf? John will provide a personal response to problems in each issue of the **NTBS NEWSFLASH!**

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### last month's winning caption by PP



The mini-Masterchef contest wasn't working out quite the way Brains had envisaged...



# PENNYSPY'S THUNDERBIRDS EPISODE GUIDE

## 18: 30 MINUTES AFTER NOON

It all begins on a dark stretch of American highway near Spoke City. Laidback jazz plays on the radio of a red convertible as a young man hums along, and then he switches stations to something rather more twee which makes me think of 1950s housewives dusting with big grins on their shiny faces. There are a lot of shots of the convertible's headlights on the dark road ahead. Next we're shown a dodgy looking, black-haired man lurking on the edge of the road. He's wearing a dark grey trenchcoat, so we already know he's bad news and possibly eeeevil (sic) along with it. Actually, he looks like he could be Ned Cook's evil twin. The driver pulls over and greets the trenchcoat man (hereafter known as 'Trenchcoat' since he's never really named or identified) with a rather flirtatious, "Hi there." Trenchcoat asks if the driver is going where he's going, and the driver says "sure, hop in". As he sits down, Trenchcoat waffles about needing to get a doctor for his sick wife, and claims that his car battery had died. *Sure* it did. And that's your natural hair colour, too. The convertible drives on.

Trenchcoat reckons he was lucky to find the driver and asks if he's married. The driver says he is, it's actually his third wedding anniversary – there's even what Trenchcoat jokingly calls a "flower display" in the back seat. Aww, this driver is so screwed. It now occurs to the Driver to ask why Trenchcoat didn't just ring up the doctor, and Trenchcoat takes this as the cue to get the Driver to stop the car, claiming that the doctor lives just behind some trees. This is a big fat lie. As they pull in, Trenchcoat claims to have something for the driver and snaps a chunky metal bracelet around the driver's wrist! The driver is at first amused, and starts to fob off the unwanted gift, when he spots a big square box on the top of the 'gift' and demands, "What is this?"

Trenchcoat has pulled out a gun, and sneers, "Listen to me, Prescott," to the driver. Prescott demands to know how Trenchcoat knows his name, but Trenchcoat doesn't want to natter for long. He tells him to shut up and to listen carefully, because he doesn't have time to repeat himself. Uh oh.

Trenchcoat 'checks' that Prescott is the man who works at the Hudson Building room 1972 (and what if they had the wrong Prescott, or Prescott had just borrowed the car? They'd feel pretty silly then...) – Trenchcoat then tells Prescott that the key to the 'bracelet' is in the top draw of a cabinet in Prescott's office. Prescott is still struggling to remove his gift, but Trenchcoat tells him not to bother as it's made of solid "hydrochromatised steel" and that nothing will break it under 20,000 degrees of heat! Oh, and the box also contains an explosive charge set to go off soon. Prescott looks impressively pale as Trenchcoat sneers, "Are we in business?" Prescott weakly asks what they want him to do. The stranger tells him it's "simple", that Prescott just needs to take off the bracelet in the room and leave it in the draw where he finds the key. Easy. A frightened Prescott calls him "crazy" but his tormentor seems indifferent, and throws in a "friendly tip" that Prescott shouldn't try throwing the bracelet out the window, as he'll "want to

get...further away than that!" He's also got just twenty-one minutes to achieve this before the bomb goes off at 8pm, and the Hudson Building is 30 miles away!

Whether it's a big con or not, Prescott is convinced enough to hit the gas, leaving Trenchcoat standing on the kerb. There are lots of CRASH ZOOMS on the clock as time speeds away – just twenty minutes left! Prescott sweats more as the cops notice his frantic speed and give chase. An Irish-accented cop reports the chase to a disinterested sounding controller. The cop asks for some barriers, too, as the speeding Prescott is "gonna take off!" Prescott's clock continues to tick away, and he bursts through the police barrier, making his wife's flowers tumble off the back seat onto the floor (rather symbolic, really). Serious chords ramp up the tension as we see the Hudson Building entrance, and the music usually reserved for International Rescue's last ditch effort cuts in.

A shifty looking chap is watching out the window of his apartment, enjoying a cigarette. He sees Prescott arrive at the Hudson Building (this little scene handily gets around having to show us much of Prescott's frantic journey into the building). The man's wife calls out – in the background the awesome 'March of the Oysters' plays on their telly – and she asks him who it is. The man recognises the car as Prescott's. At this point we aren't entirely sure how the man knows the Hudson Building employees by sight. The man tells her who it is, but she can't hear him over the noise of the TV. He comments that it looks like something's up and that Prescott must have his own key as the poor man enters the building. Just then the police turn up, sirens wailing. The man asks his wife, Gladys, what time it is.

Time is very much on Prescott's mind, as he has actually made it there with ten minutes to spare. His timing lead is spoiled by the world's slowest elevator (or lift), slowly descending as he waits, drenched in sweat. It seems he'd be better off climbing the forty-seven flights of stairs! He mutters the obligatory "come on" to hurry the lift along. He looks at the lethal bracelet again. Finally, the elevator hits the ground floor and Prescott enters the last stage of his journey.

Meanwhile, the chap who watched him arrive, (apparently he's called Sam and is the Hudson Building's janitor), is chatting to the cops on a special wall phone while he scratches his stomach. He "figures" they wanted Prescott for "something" and Gladys shouts again to ask what the cops have said.

Prescott ascends all too slowly in the lift, while the cops wait outside, sure that Prescott's car is the one they were chasing. The Irish cop, Flanagan, notes that the lights are on on the 47<sup>th</sup> floor, presumably the location of Prescott's office. As Prescott's frantically rifling through drawers, time continues to tick away. Rather surprisingly, and very sportingly, the bad guys have actually provided him with a key! He gets hold of it with three minutes to spare and rips off the clunky metal. The cops are still stuck outside but they hope to learn what Prescott's up to once the janitor, Sam, arrives with the key.

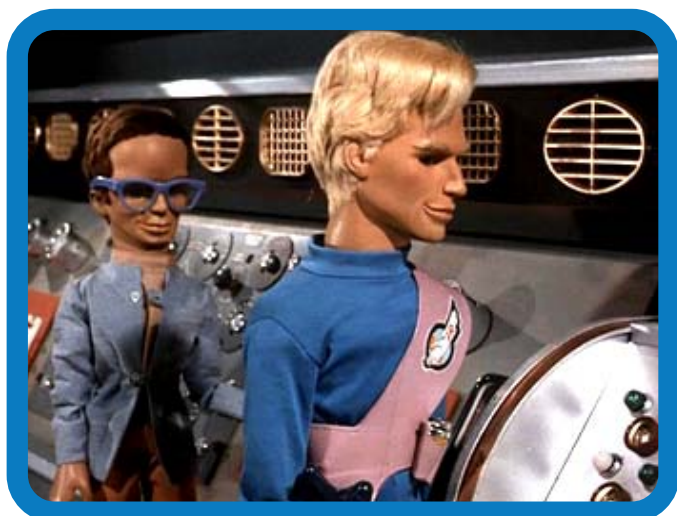
While they wait, Prescott stuffs the bracelet back into the drawer and makes a dash back to the lift. Maybe he should have taken the stairs, as it's not going down any faster than before, and it's already time for the bracelet to explode. With a mighty BOOOOM the whole floor explodes and Prescott's elevator crashes to the bottom floor!

Fire crews zoom out with their sirens blaring as the fire spreads, and Flanagan is talking on the phone to a chap in the police station (actually the police commissioner, Garfield). Garfield demands a full rundown once the situation is under control, as the Hudson Building is apparently "government owned" and they "can't afford slip-ups". The building is already on fire, mind you. Apparently the situation is worsening and the "automatic extinguishers" within the building are not working. I have to wonder if the builders of the Thompson Tower ("City of Fire") might have struck again. Garfield is shocked and asks for more about "the guy who started all this". Flanagan reckons that Prescott was caught in the explosion, and as the fire's spreading and the lift's out of action, they can't get near him or the scene of the explosion. Garfield wishes he knew "what the heck this was all about".

There's a disaster happening, so naturally the next thing we see is *Thunderbird Five*. Brains is there, fiddling with some buttons while John calls base with news about the Hudson Building. Down on Tracy Island, Jeff asks if there's any more news, and John tells him that newscasts are not hopeful and that the fire crews can't get Prescott out. Alan and Tin-Tin are hanging around, apparently back in near-snuggle mode, watching John's report. John tells them all about Brains' theory about the cause of the explosion, which is that it must have been triggered by an incendiary device to have caused this much fire so quickly. Very suspicious. Brains abruptly shushes John as another news report comes up. The fire has destroyed the top five floors of the building, and the janitor, Sam Saltzman and his wife, said they were watching TV when Prescott arrived. Police Commissioner Garfield (last seen ordering Flanagan around) says they will have "several charges" to make against poor Prescott, although it does rather depend on the hapless schmuck still being alive and if they can even get him out of the flaming lift.

Alan is still up close with a smiling Tin-Tin, where they seem to be poring over a photo album. The reporter signs off by saying there was little hope that the auxiliary fire fighting equipment would do much good, and Jeff reckons that if that's not "a call to action," he doesn't know what is. Well, short of an *actual* call to action, yes, once again Jeff Tracy invites IR before the authorities realise they need help. He sends Alan to fetch Scott and Virgil and get them down there "right away" – yay!

Jeff then orders Brains to "put Virgil straight" about which Pod to use, and Jeff is keen for them to try out the new fire rescue equipment. He then tells Tin-Tin to monitor all the broadcasts about the Hudson fire and to keep Scott and Virgil informed. Then he gets to say "Thunderbirds are go!" at the top of his voice. He clearly loves doing that.





*Thunderbirds One* and *Two* blast off after absolutely no launch sequences, and Jeff and Tin-Tin (she now has a nifty little headset) hear Brains say he's told Virgil which equipment to pick up, and that he advised him to bring extra "Dicetylene". Probably wishing that *they* had some Dicetylene too, the fire fighters battle the flames but it seems to be having little effect. Flanagan is watching events unfold and claims he holds out little hope for Prescott, stuck at the bottom of an elevator shaft which is probably flooded even with their efforts at pumping it out. Commissioner Garfield has arrived now and hears that the safety doors have also jammed shut, so they really can't reach Prescott at all.

Help is on the way! Scott chats to Tin-Tin from *Thunderbird One* – incidentally, a lovely shiny blue dress for Tin-Tin here! – and she tells him that the fire department really can't do much while Prescott is in harm's way, and that they are also sure that the building's Auto Fire Extinguishers were cut off from the water supply, making things much worse. Scott ponders that there's "more to this than meets the eye". Hmmm. Jeff butts in, asking for Scott's ETA – Scott replies he'll arrive in 9.5 minutes. The fire blazes away and Garfield is told that they've radioed Prescott, and also IR is on the radio with Flanagan. Garfield excitedly demands to speak to them.

In *Thunderbird Two*, Virgil radios base and asks how Scott's doing. Jeff tells him that Scott's "practically there" and is talking to the commissioner now. He is. From *One's* cockpit, Scott tells Garfield that if the fire crews can keep the flames under control, IR will "undertake" to get the man up from the elevator shaft. Garfield warns him that the fire's spread to the "basement floors" via the lift shaft. Scott learns a little more about the layout and that the safety doors are jammed. Garfield's men are trying to open these doors but Scott advises him to get the men out of there "right away" and that IR will also want part of the area "cleared for landing". Garfield happily agrees – apparently there's a big space at the back of the Hudson Building they can use. Scott thanks him and then wants a guarantee of secrecy during the whole operation. Garfield enthuses, "You got it, buddy!" *Thunderbird One* lands impressively at the scene and Garfield calls her a "sight for sore eyes".

Back on Tracy Island, the news reporter is waxing poetic about *Thunderbird One's* arrival as Jeff and Tin-Tin listen in. Jeff is naturally more concerned about the "man at the bottom of the shaft" than about the "eyes and hearts of the people of Spoke City". To be fair, it seems impossible that Prescott could survive being beneath such a vicious blaze.

However, he is immediately shown to be alive and more or less well, battered and waist deep in frothy water, surrounded by big bits of twisted metal at the base of the elevator cage. Outside, the fire fighting continues. Garfield has gone from being IR's biggest fan to the more typical 'grumpy person in authority' as he waits for IR to leap into action. It's been a whole thirty minutes since they arrived. They really haven't been sitting around, though. Scott is next to the lift shaft, talking to Jeff on what could pass as a 1980s cell phone. He's also forgotten to put on his asbestos suit, as he tells Jeff that the Dicetylene Cage has been fixed up. Jeff wishes them luck and Scott sends Virgil and Alan (who sensibly *are* in their fire suits) down into the elevator shaft. Alan immediately notes that the heat is increasing, so Virgil sets the Dicetylene sprinklers going. Alan is chuffed by how effective the "stuff" is, but Virgil is concerned that the tank they have might be too small. They keep descending. Scott checks on Virgil's progress and his brother reiterates his concerns about the supply lasting, but they're almost there.

Prescott has no idea what they're up to so he gets worried when a loud thud sounds above him. Virgil radios him to ask what state the elevator is in. Prescott reckons the cage is more or less intact, so Virgil operates their cage's grabs to pull Prescott's more battered elevator cage out. Virgil then tells Scott he thinks they've got him and that they're coming back. As the cage shakes, Prescott exclaims "what goes on?" while Alan and Virgil watch in dismay as the supply of Dicetylene abruptly dries up. So, presumably Prescott now burns to death? Alan nervously asks Virgil if they'll make it, and Virgil growls, "We're just *got* to!" They continue to rise and Scott waits anxiously. Then it's all over very quickly. Scott greets a stunned Prescott with "You're gonna be all right now" as the lift cage emerges with the poor guy now safe and sound.

It seems to be the morning after the fire, and after a quick shot of the scorched tarmac and a rather watery Hudson Building, Garfield discusses Prescott's bizarre story with Flanagan. Garfield is sceptical and baffled by why a man like Prescott would go out on his wedding anniversary and commit "enough offences to give him twenty years inside". Flanagan agrees that Prescott had a spotless record before that night, and Garfield decides that he believes Prescott's story. After all, the fire had destroyed files on many of the "most vicious gangs operating today" including the sinister-sounding "Erdman Gang". Oh, and there was the small matter of the 'Automatic Fire Extinguishers' being put out of action. Garfield muses, "It adds up, you know". I'd like to point out that Scott only really needed the second clue to figure out that much.

Another cop enters with Prescott's bracelet retrieved from whatever was left of his office. Garfield exclaims, "That's it!" and immediately sends for the FBI, determined to get to the bottom of this "even if it means employing a little deception." He looks triumphantly to the camera.

This "deception" is rather detrimental to IR's reputation (not to mention what it's doing to poor Prescott's marriage). In the Spoke City Tribune, the headline screams that Prescott perished in the blaze and that the "Mystery Explosion Remains Unsolved". The date on the paper also appears to read December 24, 2067, although it's very hard to tell without Hi-Def! (There is also a glorified calendar calling itself an "Auto Date Fixer" on the wall in the office, which reads July 13, 2005 – it just says 05 as the year, but they surely don't mean 1905! – so it's anybody's guess what date this is really supposed to be!). Tin-Tin is wearing yesterday's dress, and is rather shocked by the headline of the newspaper. She had thought Alan had saved the man, and Alan protests that they "did, too!" and asks his father why they would publish this. Jeff thinks that the authorities have "some kind of scheme lined up" – and I can't help thinking that telling IR a little about it would help avoid any embarrassing press release snafus. Scott sweetly wishes there was something they could do to help Prescott, as he "was a nice guy". Alan is dying to get involved, but Jeff reckons these things are best left to the FBI and Interpol. He figures that they're trying to draw "whoever's responsible" into trying the same trick again. Given how much IR know here, it seems likely that Prescott blabbed the whole story to Scott once they pulled him out. But that's the end of IR's part in the mystery, for now.

Now we're in London, looking through some trees at Big Ben. In a secret room, two hats are talking. This scene proves that the Anderson team watched far too much Bond while they made this show. Possibly they'd also run out of puppet heads. Either way, this is a very cheap technique as each hat gets its own 'voice'. An upper class British voice offers an American

more tea; the American replies "Er, no..." Nonplussed, the Brit assures the American voice that 'Southern' is the best man for the job. The American says he'll need to be "tough" to handle the Erdman Gang. So, this is a meeting investigating the Hudson Building fire. Southern himself arrives and adds his hat to the rack. In pure Bond style, we see his hands are given a pen which is also a radio gadget, and then he's sent off to investigate the Erdman Gang.

More hand acting ensues as an evil Russian voice (oh yes, this is the 60s!) reassures the recipient of another bracelet that the 'Leader' will issue instructions once they reach Kilkenny Castle in Scotland.

The castle is definitely haunted. The camera pans past sinister portraits and flickering candles, and a creaky door as well. I think the Anderson crew had been going to too many Hammer Horror/James Bond double bills at this point. We see three men sitting around a wooden table, playing cards. Two of them are definitely no-good crooks, complaining in weaselly voices about how cold this "dump" is as they're stuck there awaiting their orders. A man who can *only* be Agent Southern himself – and shall now often be dubbed Worst Spy Ever – agrees in his *poshest* voice that they have been there for thirty-six hours without hearing a "peep". There's a nice shot from above their heads as the three men sit under a creepy castle chandelier. The 'Leader' picks that moment to speak on the radio.

The two weaselly-crooks, resting on a pair of bagpipes, listen intently as the Leader outlines his twisted plan's final details. Like Trenchcoat, he will also only "go through it once". He tells them they will leave the castle at 0900 hours – which Southern repeats to his secret pen radio. The Leader orders them to drive to the Nuclear Plutonium Store which is marked on their route maps, and explains that it contains all the isotopes for all of Britain's nuclear power stations. As he describes what will happen, the footage of it appears in fuzzy-round-the-edges vision. The Leader explains that each gate is guarded by a dangerous robot, and it's pointed out that there aren't any people at this facility. Southern's pen is framed in front of the shot as he listens. We learn that the alarm systems have already been rendered ineffective so all they have to do is zap the robot guards with a neutraliser and get into the building through the steel doors. The Leader warns that they must be in the main storeroom with the plutonium vault by 0930. Then they will set the fuses and drive south to rendezvous with his helijet. The crooks are gleeful "that's when we get paid," and the Leader confirms that this *will* happen, *if* they are successful.

Southern muses that they're "going to meet you at last" and the Leader repeats, *only* if "it has all gone well will you have earned that honour". As Southern repeats the information, presumably for the benefit of the pen radio, the dark haired crook, Dempsey, snaps at him to quit asking questions and "playing around with that pen!" Southern snaps back, covering his actions by saying how important it is to get the timing right. The Leader says that Southern is right – and he called the 'secret agent' Southern by that name. Worst. Spy. Ever. The Leader then gleefully tells them that three hours after they set the fuses, the nuclear storage bunker will explode – and in the special future-vision, we do see it EXPLODE very convincingly.

There's a lovely switch here as the flames of the facility merge into the fire in front of the three men. Southern is still curious about the fuses and wants to know where they are and what time they must be set for. The Russian Leader cackles that he was "waiting for one of you to ask me that" and the other two look rather annoyed. The Leader tells them that the fuses are







set “at this moment” and they are locked onto their wrists! The crooks are appalled but the Leader says it’s a “precautionary measure”. The key that will unlock the bracelets is apparently also the key for the vault mechanism. Which makes me wonder – if this evil gang has so much great access already, why the hell do they need these chumps to go in there under duress and do the work for them later on? Especially if they actually honour their agreement? Then again, this was the 1960s. I’ll just have to let it go.

Southern has another question – where is the key kept? Apparently it’s in the box near the vault door, and the Leader signs off with the cheerful reminder that if they fail they will “all be blown to kingdom come”. The guy knows how to motivate. Southern tells a grumpy Dempsey to come on, “it’s time” and Dempsey grumbles, “don’t rush me”. The other guy, Kenyon, is quite impressed by the “smart” idea of attaching the bomb to their wrists. Southern agrees and then urges them to “get moving!”

Now, at the nuclear storage facility, the three men pull up outside as planned in a red convertible with white stripes. As the robot guard patrols inside the first gate, Dempsey announces that they’re “bang on schedule” and tells Southern to “fix that robot”. They zap it and it clangs to the ground. The “dangerous” robots here look like Brains’ robot Braman’s bigger, meaner brothers (see “Sun Probe”), and they’re about as useful, and three times as slow. The crooks and Southern then blast open the gates and the evil plan continues to run like clockwork. As the second gate opens they zap the next “dangerous” robot with ease and there’s just one more door after that, then they’re at the plutonium vault. Southern takes a while to get the second-to-last (slightly more “dangerous”) one, but down it goes. At 0920 they enter the vault area and Dempsey is dying to get the fuse off his wrist. Kenyon hustles for Southern to “make with the ray” but Southern worries that he can’t see the final robot. Kenyon is clearly more concerned about the explosives on his wrist than a ponderously slow mechanical threat, and snaps “who cares?” as the crooks urge Southern to get hold of the key, starting to freak out that if the charges blow too soon they’ll be “dead men”.

Southern obliges, blasting the lock, but once he has the key he pulls a gun on the crooks and orders them to stay where they are, announcing a “change of plan”. The other two look shocked and tell him to “quit clowning” and to “unlock these bracelets” and at this, Southern goes a bit evil. He wants them to do something for him, first. As they freak more about the shrinking time he snaps “shut up and listen” and orders them to go and meet the leader, then to bring him back to him. Do your own dirty work, you lazy agent! Dempsey snarls “I didn’t like you from the start,” which is fair enough. Southern channels Roger Moore rather than Sean Connery, and he seems more like ‘The Saint’ than James Bond, which Roger Moore was playing at around this time on the TV. Southern does a supercilious sneer that the “first rule of security (is) don’t trust anyone”. He should listen to himself more, as the fourth robot has finally woken up and is lumbering its way towards his back.

Southern remains oblivious as the two crooks play for time, asking why Southern is ruining a good thing. He sneers, “You wouldn’t understand even if I told you,” and at that point the robot starts trying to hug him to death. His gun clatters to the ground and it sounds like the robot’s grip is extremely painful. Maybe this one finally looked up the word “dangerous!” Kenyon tells Dempsey to get the key and chortles that “things worked out for us after all!” Dempsey removes his bracelet and tosses

Kenyon the key. They also take off Southern’s bracelet, just in case perhaps, and then place the charges “as arranged”. Kenyon gloats to the World’s Worst Agent that the place will “go up” in three hours, “and so will you!”

Dempsey is paranoid that Southern could have a partner who could rescue him, but Kenyon’s already got a plan – that they’ll jam all the electronic doors so that no one can reach the WWA in time! With their plan all set and the clock ticking, they rush off and leave Southern stuck in the robot’s embrace, with the evil looking bracelets stacked up next to the plutonium vault. Southern swears that they “won’t get away with this!” but Kenyon sneers, “No one can stop us, least of all you!” And the screen fades to black.

Next, we’re still at the nuclear bunker as the crooks shoot up the controls. Southern, with his ‘real’ hands, struggles to retrieve the radio pen from inside his jacket. He calls HQ using his codename of ‘Agent Tiger Four’ which just convinces me that they’re letting him do this because he’s some government minister’s son who’s always wanted to play at being a ‘secret agent’. A rather irritable ‘Two-One’ answers, saying grumpily that the channel is only to be used for emergencies (and again, I have visions of Southern being unable to leave his gadgets alone and harassing his poor boss). Southern retorts that this is an emergency and explains that basically the mission has been screwed up and that fuses are set and the nuclear store will explode at “1230 hours”. Two-One says that they’ll go up and release him, but Southern protests that there’s “no time” as the doors are jammed. He urges them to evacuate the area – presumably the nearest thousand miles or so. Two-One exclaims that they have “less than three hours” but Southern says “listen to one” (a line I always found funny) and he says that if the fuses go off it’ll “cause the biggest explosion the world has ever seen.” They must try to evacuate. For some reason Two-One still wants to try and save him, but Southern is adamant that they do not come after him.

The crooks have only just left the building and are finishing off their sabotage of all the doors. Next for them is a “long, fast drive” to get their payment from “The Leader,” and evacuation from a nasty nuclear accident is a helpful plus.

Two-One tells Southern that someone at HQ has come up with a plan that *might* save him, even though Southern protests that no one could possibly reach him in time. Um, except perhaps International Rescue! Southern immediately wonders if IR will also stop the rendezvous with the Leader. Two-One is less sure they’ll do that as “they’re strictly a rescue organisation, not a police force,” but Southern reckons it’s “worth a try”.

*Thunderbird Five* picks up Two-One’s call. Southern’s boss announces himself as “Sir William Frazer of the British Secret Service” – does *no one* bother with a secret identity anymore? He also tells John he’s called, “Code name Two-One”. Oh for crying out loud....

John tells ‘Two-One’ to go ahead, and clearly didn’t expect to hear that a British agent is “sitting on top of a nuclear explosion that’ll destroy half of England” (well, most of Scotland anyway). John’s response is an understandable “Wowee, that’s serious!” Alan, Tin-Tin and Gordon are out fishing on a boat near tropical Tracy Island. The trio are so chilled out that Tin-Tin has donned a turtle-neck sweater and parka jacket while she fishes in the clear blue water. Gordon muses that there’s “nothing like fishing to relax the mind” and Alan teases him, saying, “Or the body, if you’re any example!” Maybe he’s sore that Gordon’s there as chaperone? Just then, Tin-Tin gets “a bite!” and Gordon advises her to “play it for a while” and to “give it more line”. There’s no more time, though, as Jeff radios urgently for them to return. Alan goes to start the engines, and Gordon advises her to bring in the catch. She’s trying, but she “thinks it’s a big one this time”.

Her suggestive words are echoed by Jeff a second or two later. Brains is there and recommends that Scott and Virgil get going as they have just two and a half hours left. Virgil sounds a little awed by the extreme emergency, “Boy, are we gonna be tight on time!” Which prompts a clipped, “Yeah, let’s go!” response from Scott. Virgil’s still thoughtful, musing that he’ll take Pod 5 with the laser-cutting equipment. Good call. As the brothers dash to their machines, Brains asks Jeff what they should do about the rendezvous. Jeff acts all above-board, reminding the scientist that it really *isn’t* their job to catch crooks, “no matter how dangerous they are”. Brains is aware of a loophole, however, pointing out that their “agent in Britain” could help. Who could that possibly be? And why does it suddenly feel like they’ve only just met her? Jeff agrees that this mission “should



be right up her street”, (or estate, perhaps?) I hope Jeff realises that he’s about to sign the crooks’ death warrants, as moral integrity is not Lady P’s strong point.

The Lady herself is taking tea in the drawing room, in a scene that looks redubbed from ‘Trapped in the Sky.’ Jeff contacts her via her wacky teapot-radio (it was the 60s!) and tells her “This is a hot one!” He asks if she’s free to stop “enemy agents” fleeing the country, and gives her a reference point, adding that she’ll need to hurry. She calls for Parker, and tells him to get the Rolls-Royce as they will be “heading North”, and to “hurry”.

Scott’s hurrying so much there’s no launch sequence yet again. *Thunderbird One* blasts off, immediately followed by *Two*. Action stations, guys, and time is short.

FAB 1 zooms along the motorway. Parkers asks her Ladyship if she thinks they’ll make it, and she replies that it will be “touch and go” and that they can’t afford any hold-ups – thereby ensuring they will have several later on, to ramp up the tension. I think she must have paid off all the British transport police cops to get away with that speed.

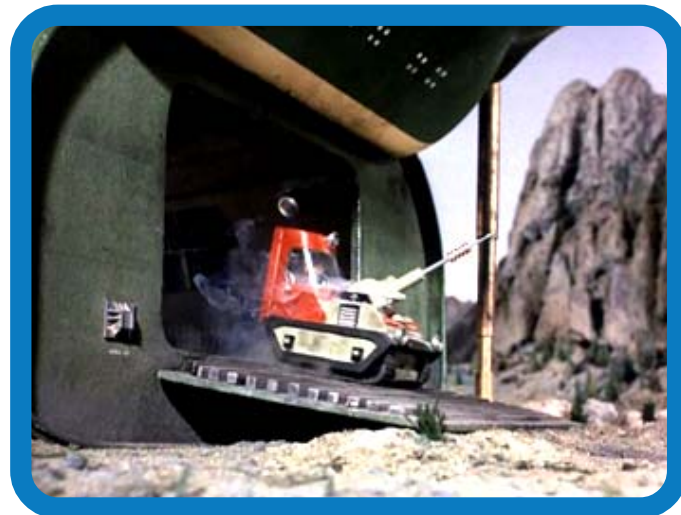
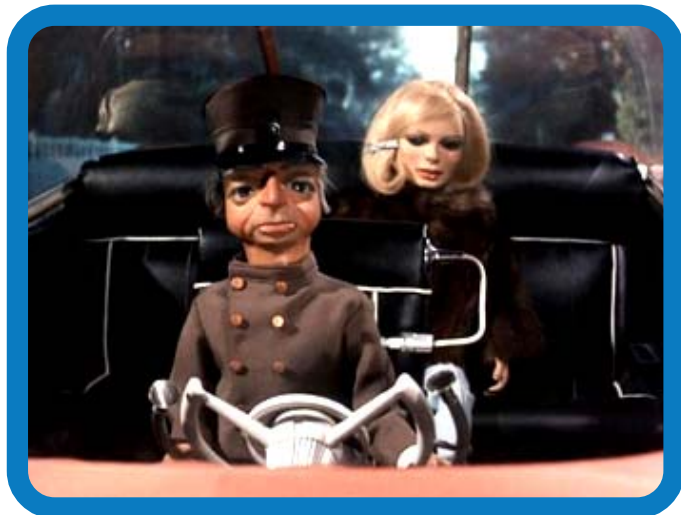
In TB1, Scott calls Virgil asking for an ETA. Virgil reckons he’ll be there by 1210, which Scott figures gives them barely twenty minutes to get into the plutonium store and finish the rescue! FAB 1 is now trapped behind a big, slow lorry loaded with nitrogen. Concerned by the shrinking time, Penelope urges Parker to “give him a toot,” and they finally zip past it in a garish pink blur.

Scott has now arrived and brings *One* down to land. He sharply tells Virgil to “hurry it along” and says he’ll take a look around and try to contact Southern. After he’s finished landing, he gets though to the trapped agent and tells him to “sit tight,” as *Thunderbird Two* will be there in five minutes and that they’ll “soon” have him out. Southern repeats his martyr act, begging Scott to get himself to safety, but Scott replies with a confident drawl of “...We’ve come a long way to get you out and that’s exactly what we’re gonna do.” When Southern repeats his ‘get out of here’ plea, Scott tells him, “International Rescue doesn’t give up *that* easy”. Awesome.

Right then, Virgil calls – he’s coming in to land at last. The Pod lifts up and excited music plays over the reveal of this episode’s very teeny pod vehicle. It’s a little tank like the one IR used to get the jet packs up to the men in ‘Edge of Impact.’ Virgil trundles it over to the nuclear storage building. Scott is leaning against the nearby wall and tells Virgil they will have to “work fast” as “those doors are jammed tight!” and Virgil wonders about blasting in instead. Scott dismisses the idea as too dangerous, given the bracelet fuses and all the nuclear material within. He makes a good point. Looks like they’ll be laser-cutting their way in as planned. Virgil tells him to stand back, and off they go. Scott warns Virgil that there’s just fourteen minutes left, and two more doors to go after this one! Virgil sets the huge ‘auto-timer’ (think glorified stopwatch) for the countdown. There’s another nifty camera angle as Scott watches the laser nozzle go into action whilst standing some distance behind it. While the Tracys work, FAB 1 busts through a diversion sign somewhere in the (very scared) British countryside. The Angel of Death is getting closer!

The first door is nearly fully lasered open. Virg says “OK” and blasts at it with some kind of force wave. The door blasts apart and the way is clear. There’s a close-up on the lethal countdown, and Scott rides on the side of the cabin as the laser cannon trundles on and they start on the next door. Virgil even gets to





## CHECK FOR:

> **Reused stock footage of a launch:** Unusually, although *Thunderbirds One* and *Two* are sent out twice, there's no footage at all of Scott and Virgil's full launch sequences. On the other hand, the scene reintroducing Lady Penelope is suspiciously familiar.

> **Hitting on Tin-Tin:** Alan is clearly back in favour, but it's nice to see Tin-Tin giving Scott some information over the radio as Jeff dished out different duties.

> **Tin-Tin and Alan snuggle:** The first time we see them together in the lounge it's clear they're a couple once more. They seemed to be going over some family photos, or maybe a yearbook?

> **Tin-Tin snuggles someone else...:** Apparently not, it's Alan all the way this time!

> **Each bro's appearance:** Alan gets to go on a rescue with his big brothers, at least the first one, but Gordon is left at home on the boat. After being deprived of a fire suit at the Hudson Building, Scott gets to really put his life on the line by removing the bracelet fuses with seconds to spare. Virgil first risks being flambéed at the Hudson building, and then gets to drive the laser tank later on. Space-bound John gets a whole two and half lines!

> **IR's fantastic-but-unreliable equipment!:** Next time, Virgie, pack MORE Dicetylene! Brains needs to enlarge that tank, and I'm sure Virg brought that up at the debrief.

> **'I'm SURE all the photo evidence got destroyed':** Turns out that evil gangs run by psychotic Russians are more interested in blowing up British plutonium stores than snapping pics of IR's equipment. The news crews at the Hudson Building were very respectful, too.

> **Alan-teasing:** Nope, he's back with Tin-Tin and all seems right between them. He actually gets to tease Gordon instead, just a tiny bit, on the boat.

> **Rescuing one of their own:** No, not even Penelope needed rescuing this time. The British Secret Service may want to rethink its hiring policy, however.

> **Vehicles used:** So we have *One* and *Two*, twice, and *Five* of course. The Laser-equipment truck, FAB 1, the Dicetylene Cage, and the Helijet (which actually gets referred to as a helijet. After rewatching so many episodes, it's funny how that stands out.) A shout out, too, for the ponderously slow guard-bots, which seem about the most inefficient way of guarding anything at all.

> **Surprisingly dextrous puppet hands:** There's a LOT of Real Hand Acting for this one, all the way through. Points go to Sam Saltzman for much tummy-scratching as he chats to the cops about Prescott, and to Southern as he tries to grab for his radio pen within his jacket - although that quickly became Real Hands, too.

> **Brains actually at a rescue:** He gets nowhere near either of them, although he was up in TB5 for the first one. He still gets involved, providing handy information over the radio to Scott and Virgil.

> **CRASH ZOOM' drinking game:** Mainly there seemed to be lots of CRASH ZOOMS on clock faces as crucial seconds leaked away!

> **'Biggest Jerk of the episode' award:** Well, the biggie goes to the entire Erdman Gang and their eeeevil Leader. If the Leader wasn't murdered they'd probably be trying their twisted bracelet trick again at some point. Second place goes to Southern for being so incompetent - and so vastly patronising. Thirdly, it's Penelope as the Angel of Death and IR's functioning 'justice' loophole.

> **NEW CATEGORY -- It was the 60s!:** Penelope's talking teapot, used several times over the course of the show. Also, fashion over common sense. Tin-Tin's snug polo-neck and parka jacket while she fishes off the boat on a hot, balmy day.

ANOTHER NEARLY PERFECT  
9/10

Next time:  
THE IMPOSTORS!

have his, "Come on, baby," moment as the laser does its work. We see Southern is still struggling against the robot's immovable metal arms. Also, the fuses wait ominously in their little stack of doom. Scott is anxiously guiding the laser nozzle with his hand as Virgil finishes, and comments, "That's better, stand by for jet blast!" before he blows the next set of doors apart.

FAB 1 is still moving at speed, taking an unorthodox 'shortcut' by smashing through a gate into a field, and making a joke of a sign politely requesting users to keep it shut. We can add property damage and livestock endangerment to Lady P's list of misdemeanours so far, and all because Agent Southern's spacial awareness isn't up to scratch.

Southern is still struggling with the robot, and he moans that he still can't get free. I'm not sure what he'd be able to do by now even if he could, apart from throw himself on top of the charges - and that's no use unless he's made of Adamantium or something. The fuses begin to smoke, and the Tracys are at the last door with seven minutes to go. As the laser crawls halfway around the barrier, Scott urges Virgil to "try the jet now" as "time's running out!" So Virgil obliges.

The jet blast throws open the last doors. By some miracle they don't flatten Southern and the robot into pizza topping. Scott exclaims "I gotta get those fuses," and orders Virgil to take care of the robot. Scott rather gingerly gathers up the three lethal bracelets and then exits at top speed. Virgil gets to work helping Southern, assuring him, "We'll soon have you free," and I imagine he's trying hard not to imagine his brother getting blown to pieces outside.

Scott dives into *One's* cockpit and takes off. Better hurry, Scott. He's put the bracelets on TB1's hatch door and they're smoking away worryingly. Scott, sweating at the tension, flies low over the sea and releases them with seconds to spare! By another miracle they somehow don't slide off the hatch and back into the cockpit. The fuses hit the water and moments afterwards the sea erupts with explosions.

Scott reports to Jeff that he's succeeded, and that this is probably the last time the Erdman Gang can "try the bracelet trick on anybody," although I honestly don't see why, as it seems to have worked pretty well so far. Jeff agrees that poor Prescott is now "fully vindicated," and Scott adds that all remains is for Penelope to "tidy up the details". Yes, Scott, it's the Angel of Death's time to shine.

Penelope tells Parker that the rendezvous is in the "next field" and that she can hear their helijet. I'm impressed that the characters are finally *calling* them helijets, rather than 'copters as they've been doing all through the episodes before this. Dempsey and Kenyon have made it into the Leader's helijet, unaware of Southern's last minute rescue. Kenyon gloats that he's "glad" things turned out the way they did, as now he and Dempsey get "a bigger share of the loot". Dempsey has just realised this too. The Leader is gleeful, and "all" they have to do now is "escape into safety, and that should be quite a simple matter" - although isn't this rendezvous happening *after* the great big explosion that was meant to kill everyone? The Leader also hasn't spotted the shocking pink Rolls-Royce of Death approaching across the field. As he lifts off, the cannon emerges from FAB 1's grill, and opens fire. The helijet goes BOOM and collapses. No one's walking away from that one - but to be fair, they *were* trying to blow up the UK, for *money*.

There's very sad music playing over the next scene, as Virgil and Scott take care of the Worst Agent Ever. Southern is lying unconscious between them on the floor, but Virgil has made him up a little folded blanket headrest and is patting the guy's

head as he half-kneels beside him. Awww. Virgil sadly tells Scott that Southern is "in a bad way" and wishes he'd been able to "release him quicker". Scott consoles him, saying "you did your best" and noting that, "those robots aren't the *easiest* guys to handle." Scott adds that he'll call for an ambulance (not just nip over there in TB1?) but just then FAB 1 pulls up. Apparently Penny can cover the distance of a three hour rendezvous in about two minutes.

Virgil wonders how she "got on" and Scott asks her, "Success?" and she replies, "Success," which is all rather formal and succinct. They either know each other well at this point, or they're maintaining a professional distance. Scott then introduces Penny to the unconscious Southern, and tells her that the agent needs "hospital attention." She tells Scott to "get him in the car" (with his internal injuries? I hope they have a stretcher) and that she will take Southern to hospital herself.

Much later, it's night time at Creighton Ward Mansion. Penelope is dining with Southern in front of another roaring fireplace (excellent use of puppet perspective and scale in these shots). I always assumed that she was keeping him around for interrogation purposes after his recovery. He tells her she's been "very kind," and she sweetly asks if he's "fully recovered" now. He assures her he's "as fit as ever" while he chomps on a big cigar. He laments the end of his career as a secret agent. Penelope plays girlishly innocent, enquiring why that is. He patiently - and rather indulgently - explains that his cover is now blown (Ahem. *What* cover was this?) and gruffly tells her that secret agents can't operate unless they're incognito. Then he patronises her further by saying, "a peson in your position wouldn't know that".

Penelope momentarily forgets that *her* secret identity is very much intact (who knows how) and agrees, "Oh, no...of course not". She butters Southern up more by adding, "It does sound fascinating, *do* tell me all about it". I wonder if Southern checked his meal for truth drugs? The ex-agent acts slightly bashful, but she continues to charm him, saying that she'd always have liked to "do something exciting" like secret-agenting. Southern rather archly tells her that "it's not all romance," and that in reality "it's a tough existence," as you're "never being yourself". He stirs in some more patronising comments, stating that someone like her, "so sheltered and gentle," just isn't "the type." Wow, she's really been playing him here. He tells her pompously that, "We walk with danger as a shadow. Death is a constant companion." (I think he's practising for his book deal here.) And he instructs Lady Penelope, Angel of Death, to just be what she is, "A very beautiful lady".

Penelope takes this back-handed compliment rather impassively, and as the camera pulls back from her face I like to imagine that Parker is sneaking up behind Southern with a dart gun, ready to drag him off for some healthy interrogation.

Despite the dodgy secret agent, this is a thrilling, well-paced episode that brings together a very sadistic bad guy scheme and some innocent, and some not-so innocent victims in peril, all providing plenty of action for International Rescue. This is certainly one of the more ambitious stories with big scenery changes and an impressively large cast of characters. The pacing is especially good, and the lack of padding is clear as there's barely any time for the Thunderbirds to launch. The bracelets are also a great, creepy idea - it's a little like a kid's version of a *Saw* movie, in places. Or not. There's also some very inventive camera work, and I don't think I've seen more use of 'real hand acting' in any other episode.





# LIVE FROM THUNDERBIRD FIVE: TIC INTERVIEWS MATT ZIMMERMAN

Interview by Joanna Neilson and Pen Quiller; Edited by Samantha Winchester

Poor Ned. This was one interview he really wanted to do himself – but as we all know, he's on the run from the NSA because of that flap over his assistant, Raoul, accidentally revealing secret agent Double-0-Bondson's identity to the whole world via the NTBS Newsroom. Now Ned's dodging water mambas and skin pruning in the caves under Tracy Island, eating enough canned beans to carbonate the surrounding ocean and make the local fish burp. So the NTBS Management – those women in high heels on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor – asked Newsflash Editor Samantha Winchester to dispatch reporters Joanna Neilson and Pen Quiller to Matt's home in London, with instructions to do their best to fill Ned's number seven-and-a-halves (yes, he has really small feet for a man!).

*[PQ's Notes: Jo and I arrived at Matt Zimmerman's house, a 1930s terrace, just before our appointed time of 2pm. When Matt opened the door he admitted he had forgotten that we were coming that day – he said later he hadn't looked at his 'dance card' that morning. But he soon made us welcome, supplying us with coffee and mince pies.]*

*When you enter Matt's house, you are in no doubt that someone theatrical lives there; the hall, stairs and living room are decorated with framed theatre posters and photos. I spotted a photo of him with Tommy Steele and a sketch of him from Fiddler on the Roof.*

*I handed him a printed copy of the Newsflash, which Ned had made sure I brought. For reasons he wouldn't explain, Ned is especially fond of Matt Zimmerman...]*

**Matt Zimmerman:** OMG, that's nice....

**Pen Quiller:** It's all done as if it were Ned Cook...

*[Ned's Note: What does she mean, as IF..?]*

*Editor Samantha tries to wrestle the transcript away from him, at which Ned begins shrieking about paper cuts and ambulances.]*

**MZ:** Oh, yes (Imitating Cook) 'Hi, everybody!'

*[Ned's Note (stops shrieking immediately to listen): He does that so well. Sheer poetry!]*

**MZ** (reading): How many pages is this...?

**Joanna Neilson:** It's usually an electronic version.

**MZ:** Oh, I see, thank you very much!

**JN:** It comes out every couple of months.

**MZ:** Online or like that?

**JN:** Online, usually.

**MZ:** There used to be a Thunderbirds Online that kept everybody quite informed, including myself, about where in the world *Thunderbirds* was on and everything. Because I'm sort of like the accountant for Shane and David and myself, those of us that are left and alive, I am quite good at phoning up and saying 'Oh I'm terribly sorry, but it's being shown in Hawaii...' And they're very good at following that up, Granada and ITC, chasing them...

**PQ:** Must have been useful for you that something you did so long ago is still going on.

**MZ:** It is! I can remember, going back to the '60s when we were doing them [the episodes of *Thunderbirds*], Gerry saying to me. 'This will be your pension, boy.' You don't think about pensions, I was only in my 20s, but he was quite right...it was a nice little earner, you know.



**PQ:** Someone was telling me recently they had their nephews round and they sat them down in front of an episode, and they were eight years old and they'd never seen it on TV. He sat them down and he said they were absolutely enthralled, the current children in each generation.

**MZ:** Oh yes, every six or seven years there's a huge revival again. About five or six years ago, my godson, who goes to school in Woodford Green, was talking about *Thunderbirds* all the time, so he insisted that I come along and open up the fete at school – I've done that before. They had a booth set up for me and he brought all his little friends over to say hello, but the fathers, 35-year-olds, 40-year-olds or so, I couldn't get rid of them! I occasionally do gigs – you have to make a living – and I occasionally sing at clubs, and I did a thing about a couple weeks ago at the Epping Country Club. I talk about show business and all the shows I've done and tell a few stories. They're always very receptive. And at the end of the evening when I say goodbye and I thank them very much for being a lovely audience, I always say, 'Just before I go, I just must tell you something. I'm the voice of Alan Tracy in *Thunderbirds*' – and the place erupts! The men, primarily, they go crazy and then of course I can't get away because they're all going, 'Oh my God, oh my God, Virgil was my favourite!' And so on. It's always just unbelievable.

*[Ned's Note: Virgil, Virgil, Virgil! Remind me to talk to my publicist! I need more exposure!]*

**JN:** Yes, even just buying a card with *Thunderbirds* on it, immediately you get people will say something!

**MZ:** And it's even spookier. A couple of times, I have been in shops, talking to a salesman or a salesperson, usually a salesman, and we were discussing something and he'll suddenly stop and say 'Are you the voice of Alan Tracy?' And I say 'Yes,' and they go 'Oh!' I found it amazing, actually that they can pick that up, as my voice has changed since those days. It was very high then; I was very young.

**JN:** How did you and Sylvia work on creating Alan's character?

**MZ:** Well, it was mainly Sylvia who actually did the talking in those days, especially about the parts and that kind of thing. She said he's young,

he's spoiled, he's confident – because I gather after his mother Louise died giving birth to him, he was the youngest, and the other four brothers made a terrible fuss of him. And then you consider he's supposed to have been an astronaut at, what, 19-20? So he's not stupid, because you couldn't get that far at that age if you were. He's very 'I'll do it, I'll do it, I'll do it!' I think he's likeable, Alan, and of course he's got a terrible crush on both Tin-Tin and Lady Penelope. He *liked* Lady Penelope.

**PQ:** Did Sylvia give each of you a sort of rundown on your own character?

**MZ:** No, it never worked that way. Even in theatre, usually what happens is they wait to see what *you* do with it first, and then they'll say 'You're coming on too strong,' or 'Could you make him a little more serious, or a little more playful in the voice?' Because what you'd be doing [with *Thunderbirds*] was like radio, just recording the voice. The scripts were like radio plays, and we'd often go back and do a scene again, saying, 'Can we make it clearer?' Because although the puppets are going to show it, it's got to show in the voice as well. Sylvia was wonderful with that, she had a wonderful concept and wonderful ideas, and feelings about it all.

**JN:** And was it Lucille or Louise that was their mother's name? There's been a lot of confusion in the canon...

**MZ:** No, you're quite right, it was Lucille. It was his grandmother who brought him up, though. 'Can I bake you an apple pie? Oh, Alan...'

*(Much laughter about nuclear powered cookers.)*

**MZ:** That was basically it. We used to have a lot of fun in those studios in Slough. I must confess I have very fond memories. We used to do them on a Sunday, and we'd record two episodes. One in the morning, then we'd have lunch, and then we'd do the second one. There was very much a family feel to it, there really was. It was lovely; unbelievable.

**PQ:** I get the feeling you must have all had a lot of affection for your characters and things you did – like for Children in Need on the radio...

**MZ:** Oh, yes, yes, yes.

**PQ:** I was listening to it the other night, 'Remember to open the swimming pool before you





take off,' and it sounds as though you all enjoyed the people you played.

**MZ:** Oh, very much, we all became very fond of each other, very friendly. We didn't socialise that much, funnily enough, but it's also an act of socialising when you see each other every Sunday for months on end!

**JN:** You knew David Holliday before the show began?

**MZ:** Yes, I met David just before I joined *West Side Story* in the West End, because friends of mine were in *Flower Drum Song* in America and they had met David, and I met David through them basically. I met him as I was finishing up at LAMDA, and we got on right away. He had a wonderful sense of humour – anyone with a sense of humour is fine with me, but he was great. If it wasn't for David, I wouldn't have got married! We finished a tour of *West Side Story* – although actually I left it early on the continent. We were touring it after the West End, you see, and they were going off to Helsinki, and I had already arranged to be married on July 10<sup>th</sup> in Vancouver, where Shirley's parents were living. So I came back to England, money transferred and everything, but the money hadn't arrived in my bank yet, and I had to get my airplane tickets! And David said, 'That's OK, it's OK,' and he gave me the money to buy the airline tickets. I sent him back the money from Vancouver, I remember. So if it wasn't for David I wouldn't have got married! Because in those days money used to be very scarce.

**JN:** So you started off in Detroit?

**MZ:** I was born in Canada, but I lived in Detroit, yeah. People always say, 'Oh, you're Canadian,' and I say 'Well, yes, I'm Canadian on paper, but if you're born in the Virgin Islands it doesn't make you a Virgin!'

**PQ:** So what do you say you are, American? Canadian? British?

**MZ:** I always say I'm American, but born in Canada. If I'm filling out something official, and they say, 'What is your nationality?' I put down Canadian, because that's what my passport says.

There's also a bit of confusion about my birthdate, because I was born on Christmas Day. When I was about, I guess, 9 or 10, we had to get my birth certificate to somebody to do something, and when it arrived it had December 26 down as my birthdate. And my mother said to me, 'That's wrong, you were born on Christmas Day – I remember it very vividly!' She wouldn't let it go – she's a bit like me – and she went straight back to the hospital, which was a very Catholic Hospital called St Joseph's. She said, 'There's a mistake here,' so they went back in the records

and they said 'No, there's no mistake here.' She said, 'He was born on Christmas Day, I remember,' and they said 'Oh, no, nobody can be born on Christmas Day!' So they put it on my birth certificate as the 26<sup>th</sup> – but I'd always celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup>, and I still do. But when it comes to official business, I have to remember to put down the 26<sup>th</sup>! Very confusing. I'm a little schizophrenic, I just realised that!

**PQ:** Is that why you went into acting? Because you were schizophrenic?

**MZ:** It was a little like that! But it was really my parents' fault; my father had an orchestra, but as a child I had very bad bronchitis – and I'm smoking, for Christ's sakes! – and they took me to see a specialist when I was about five or six. I did something there...this is something I've been told, although I don't remember it...but apparently I'd heard something, and I started to sing. And the specialist told my parents, 'Give him singing lessons, that's the best thing for the lungs.' So I started to take singing lessons, and by the time I was six, my father started to use me with the orchestra. I'd sing with the audience. Then somebody heard me, and that's how I started singing on radio. And that continued on until high school, when my voice started to change. I still had a radio programme, and I started to do a bit of acting as well, and dance – I was also a figure skater, which actually led to the dancing.

I still love skating, still love it very much. Then when I finished high school I thought, you can't make a living out of it, it's very difficult – so although I took liberal arts, I also took accountancy and typing and shorthand, Pitman, very useful. I liked it. And I do love accounting – I love debits and credits, it's very balanced, very Capricorn. It all adds up. And I think it's good for an actor, as well, to give them something else they can do. So I still sang occasionally on the radio, and I did performances, and when I finished school I had two offers on the same day – one for an accounting firm and one to do a show, and the show paid three times as much! I took the show, and I never looked back. Everything goes that way, even the fact that I came to England...

**JN:** What was the trigger for that move?

**MZ:** I had worked at the Stratford Ontario, a Shakespearean festival, with Tyrone Guthrie, and I then did a play and I won an actor's big award and a lot of money came with it to study. And at that point my friend, an actor called George C. Scott, was in New York, so I flew down there to witness and to discuss it all. At that time he was at the Actors Studio, and I started taking lessons, working there as well. When I started to investigate, I found out – how old was I, 20, 21? – that if I stayed in America, while Vietnam was on, I was going to be drafted. My family solicitor in Detroit said 'You're going to be drafted, because there's nothing wrong with you.' So I went back home, and that's when I actually realised that of course I had this birth certificate that said I was Canadian. So I applied through my Canadian passport, and got in, and Richard West, the man who had adjudicated the show I was in, was a producer here in England for the BBC. He did a series called *Gary Halliday [1959-62 – Ed]*. I got in touch with him and he said 'You must go to LAMDA.' So I contacted LAMDA, and when they accepted me I flew over – well, I came over by boat actually, and I'm not good on water...and it was four days.

**PQ:** What did you think of London in the '60s?

**MZ:** OMG, when I first arrived? Spoilt American. Well I came over with a girlfriend and the first place we stayed in had no central heating, there was like a gas bar...and it was September, and it was getting cold. If you wanted a bath there was a geyser [*a hot water heater that had to be turned on before use – Ed*]...and you had to put in fourpence and you got this much water. The

bathroom had no heating, either. I was, 'I can't live like this.' So I found a flat in Queensgate, close enough to LAMDA. And in the meantime of course you had the London smog, which I found very romantic. I liked all that

**PQ:** How was your bronchitis in that?

**MZ:** Oh yes, occasionally in the old days I'd have trouble with it. But I haven't had bronchitis for years. And London itself appealed to me terribly – I really enjoyed it, with the theatre and all that. When I got to LAMDA I found it very hard to understand what British people were saying to me, 'Haw haw haw,' and I'd have to say 'I'm terribly sorry, I'm a bit deaf.' And the first show I saw was *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'be*, which was a cockney play.

**JN:** That must have been an experience!

**MZ:** I kept saying 'interpreter, interpreter!' LAMDA was just a little building at that point, the school. I loved it, but the first morning we were there we had to do a movement class at 8:30am, and there was linoleum on the floor in the room and it was *freezing*! There was no heat on, there was just an electric bar or something which they put on. And the first thing the instructor said was, 'Everybody lie down on the floor.' We're all in our tights and everything, and I wouldn't lie down on the floor. I said, 'It's freezing! I'm going to end up with arthritis!' So I went up to the principal's office and said, 'Is it too much to ask that the fire goes on an hour before we go into the room, because it's freezing in there.' And he said, right there in his office, 'You're absolutely right, Matt.' So we got the heat turned on, and within a couple of months of course I fell in love completely with London. It helped that we had a better flat by then of course, with central heating and a shower, but no, it was lovely, and London was alive in the '60s.

**PQ:** Just as London was coming into itself.

**JN:** And coming out of post war depression.

**MZ:** Yes, it was 1959 when I came over here. It was very lively. I'm a great coffee drinker, and there were a couple of places, like the Cordoba, where we could get a pretty good cup of coffee. You certainly couldn't get cappuccino or anything like that. But I had to be careful with the language because I was allergic to a lot of things, I'm Mr Allergy. One of the things I'm allergic to is lamb, and once when we went to a restaurant they had chops on the menu, which I presumed were pork. And of course they were lamb, and I had to send them back because I'm allergic. I got myself a car, a little Morris Minor, and I used to have to start it with a handle after being in the West End after a show. It drove fine. My girlfriend went back to the US – we were offered a show in New York and I couldn't do it, and we were breaking up anyway. So she went back to do the show, and in the meantime I met the woman who became my future wife, my Shirley. And we used to get in this car, the Morris Minor, after the show, and she was sitting in the seat and I used to say to her 'You're turning the key off.' 'No, I'm not,' she'd say, and she'd hold her hands up. And I'd say, 'You're doing *something*!' And she was doing it with her knee. She was very funny.

**JN:** When you started to do *Thunderbirds*, did you talk about how popular it would become?

**MZ:** I think we had done about six episodes, and we went in one Sunday and Gerry had had a meeting with Lew Grade, who loved it and had said, 'It's not long enough.' So we had to go back and record to make hour episodes, and we thought, 'Hmm, this sounds interesting.' Remember, this show was made primarily to sell to America, that's why we had to use American voices. David and I were always correcting the others on pronunciation! So we did go back and we recorded them all, and we ended up making 16. We're talking 1965 now... And they were launched, and *pow*! And something else happened...I don't think





people usually thought too much about who did voices in things like this...I mean, they knew who Mel Blanc was, who did Bugs Bunny, but they didn't know who did the actual voices of cartoon characters or puppets. But because our names came up at the end of the show, and there were only about eight of us who did all the voices — it wasn't as though 35 names came up — suddenly we started to get calls from newspapers and magazines for pictures and stories. That was nice, and we thought this is really taking off, wonderful! And then they told us we were doing another 16, and of course by this time the money had been coming in so we then moved to the studios in Denham. And by the time we'd done the second lot the series had really taken off.

**JN:** There was a proper industry — Shane said that the workshops were always quite a dangerous place as the models were always flying towards you very fast!

**MZ:** I never spent much time in the workshops, I must confess, in fact the only time I ever went in the workshop was actually the first time I saw my voice come out of the puppet Alan. I had to go and record a wild track on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> episode, in the workroom. I showed up and my voice came out of this puppet, and my stomach went 'urk!' It's a very strange feeling because I wasn't trying to disguise my voice at all, you know, so it was me. Spooky.

Every once in a while, too, the puppets had to pick up a glass or something, which they can't, so they'd put a sort of latex glove on my hand and I had to learn how to pick up the glass without moving my fingers, like this. And one time, Alan had to do something they thought the puppet couldn't do, and they were going to dress me up as him, with the helmet on and everything so you couldn't see my face too clearly — but they wound up finding a way for the puppet to do that, so it never happened that I got to be Alan's double.

**PQ:** What did you think of the puppet — did Alan look how you thought he'd look?

**MZ:** The reason I got the job was David Holliday phoned me and said, 'They haven't cast this voice yet' — when they recorded the pilot for Alan's little bit he did in the first episode it's Ray Barrett's voice you hear. So he'd said to the producers, 'You want Matt Zimmerman.' So he told me to go contact Sylvia's office and go and see her. And when I opened the door, she looked at me and she said 'Don't speak.' And Alan was standing on her desk, so that's first time I saw Alan really, with the blond hair and the blue eyes. I sat down, and Sylvia looked at me and said 'OMG, the cheekbones, the cleft in the chin, the big eyes...'

And I had hair in those days! She said, 'You look very much like the puppet!' And then she said 'Now you can talk,' and I said 'Nice to meet you, my name is Matt Zimmerman,' and she said 'That's it, that's the voice!' When I did interviews in those days, people used to think Alan was modelled after me.

They had lovely stories, but anytime the show was shot, it was all done on a stage no bigger than this. The explosions were amazing effects, before all the graphics they have now. And at night they used to hang Alan on one end of the rack and Tin-Tin on the other, and when we came in, in the morning, they'd be hanging together...I guess somebody was fooling around! Great time, great times indeed. And we went on to do two films, of course.

**JN:** Did you find Gerry and Sylvia had different styles of organisation and directing and worked in different areas?

**MZ:** The thing is I don't remember Gerry that much. Sylvia and I got on, and we still do. Gerry's got a funny wit...when he sees me he always says 'Who did you play again..?' and I say, 'I played Kyrano!' The only picture I have in my mind of Gerry — and I don't even know if it was a true picture, actors are terrible! — is him standing in the control booth. He never came in that much; he was the impresario, the entrepreneur sort of thing. I can still see him in my mind with a cigar, like Lew Grade, standing there, and when I was younger he scared me a bit. He doesn't now, but when I was younger, he did, yes.

**PQ:** And this was when you were doing your recording, was it, and you'd have Sylvia in with you?

**MZ:** Yes, she would be doing Lady Penelope with us.

**JN:** What do you remember about recording 'The Duchess Assignment' with Ray Barrett?

**MZ:** Well they wanted Christine Finn to do the Duchess's voice and she couldn't do it; she tried and it just didn't work. And Sylvia couldn't do it either, and they said, we have to do *something*... And Ray suddenly did this voice, you know, 'Lady Penelope!' (*imitates Ray Barrett doing the Duchess of Royston*) and they said, 'Oh, fine, try it.' And we all fell about laughing and of course it worked beautifully.

**JN:** Very panto dame!

**MZ:** I thought it was very Dame Edith Evans at the time! It was very funny. How we got through that episode, I'll never know, I never laughed so much in my life. And it could get funny recording anyway, the room was barely bigger than this, and I remember we had three microphones hanging there and we all stood in front of them. And when you're working, you've got your scripts, you read your lines, and then you move or something, and they say, 'Let's do it again, we heard paper noise.' You can't read normally, turning the pages, because the microphone picks up the noise; it goes 'rustle rustle rustle.' So when you're reading on the radio there's a method: you hold the paper you're reading and when you're coming to the end of the page, you drop the paper, and then you check where you are next...and then they suddenly say 'Oh, we have to go back and do that over again,' and so then there's all of us searching for our papers on the floor of the recording room! Very funny. Those were good times.

**PQ:** Did you ever have to have a conversation with yourself? I know David must have done.

**MZ:** I think I did a couple of times... It does happen, it used to happen a lot, but you just get used to it. I did a thing for *Newsnight* the other night, a cartoon called *Doonesbury*, very popular in America. I went in and I read four strips, and I did all the voices. You get used to talking to yourself!

**JN:** Did you ever compete with different voices between all of you on *Thunderbirds*, did you try out some different impressions?

**MZ:** Oh yes, sometimes they'd say, 'We want somebody who's a maniacal Arab,' and it was usually David that got it, because David was phenomenal at doing different voices. Shane always felt he couldn't do them at all.

**PQ:** Shane's voice is very distinctive

**MZ:** I used to panic when it was me, because I used to think, 'Oh no, they all sound like me!'

**JN:** *Thunderbirds* was good practise for picking out specific voices. I think it's only if you'd watched them as much as perhaps we did growing up that you'd have noticed!

**PQ:** I certainly remember that as a kid I never thought 'Oh, that's the same voice,' but now it's a little clearer. My parents watched it with me when it first came out, and they probably got a lot of enjoyment out of it — but probably different parts of it than I did as an eight year old. Now I can enjoy the parts that they did.

**MZ:** They were wonderful scripts.

**JN:** When the Jonathan Frakes movie came out, did you see that? The American film version in 2004 of *Thunderbirds*, did you catch it?

**MZ:** No, I've never seen the *Thunderbirds* remake. I just gathered it never worked. It was all about Alan, but no International Rescue, and that's what *Thunderbirds* was about! It's the most important thing about *Thunderbirds*. A real life organisation was formed by doctors and other members of emergency services, you know, and they actually used to go out, to earthquakes and things — I raised money for them a couple of times. I don't know if they still exist...

**JN/PQ:** Yes, they do! [*International Rescue Corps, founded in 1981 after a major earthquake in Italy. Based in Grangemouth, Scotland. — Ed*]

**MZ:** (Claps hands): Wonderful, I didn't realise, there you go!

**PQ:** The world would love to have an organisation like the 'Tracys' International Rescue. You wish there was somebody like Jeff Tracy, and *Thunderbird Two*, and the Mole — for things like the Chilean Mining Disaster.

**MZ:** It's wonderful work they do — I admire those people very much. I seem to remember them in Mexico for some reason, doing something for a flood or an earthquake or somewhere on the news. International Rescue, wonderful.

**PQ:** I did a feature about them for the Newsflash once, and I read that the guy who runs it said 'Well, it's all right if we go abroad, but if we're in *this* country and we call up and say "We're International Rescue..."'





**MZ:** Very funny, yes. ‘No, no, we really *are* International Rescue..!’

**JN:** I also wanted to ask you a bit about the children’s television you did in the later on in the ‘80s, early ‘90s, like *T-Bag* [ITV, 1985-1992 – Ed] and *Mike and Angelo* [ITV, 1989-2000 – Ed] as well.

**MZ:** They just did a big DVD release, I just did an interview on there and it’s just come out, I saw a copy someplace. *T-Bag* was wonderful, I think I did...five or six episodes. I’m still in touch with the writers of that. I used to do the opening voiceover on *Mike and Angelo*. And there was another one called *Spatz* [ITV, 1990-1992 – Ed], I did an episode of that. I enjoy children’s TV.

**JN:** Which would you rather work in, film, TV or stage?

**MZ:** I love the stage, I love working on stage because I’m basically a stage actor. I’m a method actor, I live on stage – but I do love radio, and I did a lot of radio here and in America. I like radio because you have to rely only on the voice to get an emotion across, a feeling across. You’re getting an extra benefit as an actor on the stage, because you can use your body of course, but if you’ve learned to use your voice as well... I like television, but I always found TV studios cold for some reason, I was always freezing in them. And films – I don’t mind films, but they get on my nerves, because you’re sitting around forever before you go on. It takes all day to do three minutes on a film. I remember when I did *A Man for All Seasons*, six weeks I was on it, and they let me go home on holiday, and then Columbia Pictures called me and said they needed me to go back for a couple of shots. They paid for everything, but they ruined my holiday to make me come back and film two more days. I remember they put me in a beard and a moustache and this wig and everything, and the last time I put it on in the morning I remember I started to cry. ‘I can’t stand this anymore - the glue – I can’t stand the glue!’ I react to it as well, which is not good – Mr Allergy, remember? But that film was still a fun thing to do.

**JN:** What would you say was your most rewarding role?

**MZ:** Every one I do. I had a great feeling for Tony in *West Side Story*, I find that very moving, there’s something about Tony that appeals to me very, very much. I was Herr Schultz in *Cabaret*, at the end of a two year tour, and I liked him, he and I got on. In fact Jenny Logan, who played Frauline Schneider...we had tea yesterday to catch up on news and that. I liked Herr Schultz, he had a soul and a feeling and a history, and when you were playing him, you didn’t know what the future was going to be like for you, because of the Nazis and all that. I remember I warned the directors when we first started rehearsing the role – I said, ‘You know I’m going to cry.’ And he said, ‘What?’ and I said, ‘I’m going to cry in this role. I’m going to be singing and I’m going to cry – I know these people are a bit funny about that but I can’t help it.’ And I did, in that last scene on stage the tears came up and I just couldn’t help it.

**JN:** So that was the character talking to you, there?

**MZ:** Oh absolutely, absolutely. I remember one time on stage with one of the Nazis, something was going wrong and apparently they were talking to me, saying, ‘Matt, Matt!’ and I was just

carrying on doing what I was doing. And off stage they said ‘We were trying to tell you something,’ and I said, ‘Ah, well, I wasn’t Matt. If you’d said “Herr Schultz!” I would have reacted immediately.’ I get so intense, very caught up – that’s why all actors are so crazy. I mean, like with Tony, at the end [of *West Side Story*] when he gets shot, they used to be carrying me off and tears would be falling down my face, I couldn’t stop it. That first London production, I understudied David (Holliday), and he was only in the show a week and a half and then he was off, and I was on, as Tony. It was wonderful.

I can’t play Tony anymore! Last time I played Tony was 1976. I was in my middle 30s and I said to my agent ‘I can’t do this anymore, no more Tonys, I can’t do them.’ And he said ‘They can’t find people who can sing in that accent anymore,’ and I said ‘I don’t care, I’m sorry, I can’t be up on stage pretending to be 19 anymore, it’s driving me crazy!’

**JN:** So, you’ve recently finished *Cabaret*?

**MZ:** Yes, it was a two year tour. I was glad to be home because I was getting up on Sundays, and at home things had to be done and the house was falling apart. So I said to my agent, I don’t want to do any more shows at the moment. I was offered two pantomimes but I said no, I don’t like pantomimes all that much. I mean, I’ve done them, you know; and it would have ruined my Christmas. I do like my Christmases, I like them very much. I’ve done a couple of voiceovers, that keeps me going. I’m up for a commercial at the moment, I saw them again yesterday, for Roundtrees Fruit Pastilles.



**PQ:** Have you ever thought of writing your autobiography like Shane?

**MZ:** Oh, no. No. It’d be one page.

**PQ:** But you’ve done so much!

**JN:** Have it ghost-written, maybe?

**MZ:** I just find it – I’ve been asked to write it, my agent keeps going on about it, you know (*sighs*). I dunno, I just...if I wrote about anything I’d write about 40 years of being married to my wife.

**JN/PQ:** Awww!

**MZ:** Yes, and a lot of people would be in tears, they’d be crying, saying, ‘What has he written this for?’ But as to writing about the business, I don’t know. That’s work, you see, I would write about *life* if I wrote about anything, so...I’d write about people, you know.

**JN:** So are there any plays you’d like to do that you haven’t done...any musicals?

**MZ:** I’d like to do *The Sunshine Boys* [written by Neil Simon, produced on Broadway in 1972 – Ed], about the two old ex-vaudeville performers, but other than that, no, I can’t really think of anything, off the top of my head.

**JN:** Do you have advice for new actors today?

**MZ:** Don’t do it! I feel sorry for a lot of the young kids in the business nowadays. It’s a very crowded profession, much more so than when I was around. The thing about acting, if you want to be in the business and be an actor – is ‘stickability.’ You’ve got to realise that there are going to be days and weeks, for some of my friends, *years*, when you don’t get a job, and you have to find ways to handle that. If you give up, it’s not going to happen. You have to stick at it, that’s all there is to it. Doors don’t open so much as you have to *make* doors open for yourself. And when you get a bit established you can, to a certain extent – but you have to go out and chase things, you have to be able to take rejection, and you have to realise that no matter how good you are, or how much you’ve done, they’re always going to ask you to prove it at an audition. No matter how well they know you, they’re still going to say, ‘Matt, could you sing for us?’ You gotta prove it, every time, and that for some people can be soul destroying.

The other thing I think you should have is have a sense of humour about yourself, because if you *don’t* have a sense of humour you’re going to fall by the wayside because it’s important to be able

to laugh at others and at yourself and what you do is not take yourself seriously. Take each day as it comes. That’s all you can do.

**JN:** What’s the most surprising thing that no one knows about you?

**MZ:** Most surprising thing...(muses). I started smoking to lower my voice. I had a very high, light tenor speaking voice. Alan, right? Very high, very soft, very high. And somebody said to me, ‘If you smoke, it’ll lower your voice.’ And it did. But once my voice lowered, I should’ve given it up, but I never did. I’ve gotten into the habit now. I do give it up sometimes, for a year at a time, but then I’ll start again – especially if I’ve got a lot of singing to do, I stop for a while...but that’s why I’m

able to sing ‘down there.’ I couldn’t do that years ago, down there, no. That’s a secret nobody knows, there.

**PQ:** Matt, thanks very much for your time.

**JN:** Yes, on behalf of the Tracy Island Writers Forum and the Tracy Island Chronicles website.

**MZ:** Very nice to have met you!

JN: One last question, before we go...which was your absolute favourite *Thunderbirds* character?

**MZ:** Oh, there’s no doubt there. Ned Cook! He was the star of the show, wasn’t he? Such range, such depth, such pathos...such perfect hair. And the voice? Sheer brilliance.

**JN** (whispers): Thanks, Matt. The check’s in the mail. And don’t worry...we won’t print that.

[Ned’s Note: He had me at “star.”]



# THUNDERBIRDS THE COMIC!



## #4 THE UNINVITED

by CAMERON STEWART

"The Uninvited" is one of the most popular episodes of *Thunderbirds*. It features many themes: peril, exploration, discovery and a huge amount of mystery. It also features the mysterious tale of the Zombites, the undiscovered race of the Sahara Desert. It's interesting to note that the Zombites were never referred to as 'Zombites' once on screen during the original episode, although they were named as such in the series script.

In the comic adaptation, a lot more explanation is given as to who they are, why they exist, and what happens to them after the episode is over. It is a fair assumption that Alan Fennell, who wrote the episode and the adaptation script, had a lot more figured out about this mysterious race of people than what had originally been given on screen. On the page, he revealed answers that fans could only guess at themselves during the intervening years.

Steve Kyte, who previously drew "Pit of Peril," returns here to draw his second, and sadly final, comic adaptation. I have recently discovered, thanks to Richard Farrell (editor/creator of *Andersonic*), that Alan Fennell didn't want to use Kyte as an artist all the time because he was afraid that the fans would come to expect that high standard of work. That shows that there is both a pro and a con to having the superior artistic talents of Steve Kyte!

Oh dear! It appears that the Zombite leader has spouted "Ump-ar," and aimed a couple of missiles at us. So we'd better get on with it!

### Artistry

Once again we see that Steve Kyte uses the same colour palette as the original episode for all the characters, objects and vehicles. Here again, each character has been drawn in precise detail by Kyte, and looks authentically human. However, it's interesting to spot that Scott in this story has been given red hair instead of dark brown. This is quite a common occurrence in comics; sometimes people with black hair end up with blue instead, because it's easier to shade. The Zombite personnel all look true to the episode, and he doesn't make them look insignificant, but instead draws them with a depth of detail that makes them seem just as important as the Tracy brothers [*above right*]. The Zombite leader has a fantastic panel where he looks straight ahead and monologues his plan [*above right*]. Steve Kyte added in a wonderful shading effect to make him look positively evil. Archaeologists Lindsey and Wilson also look instantly recognisable as the characters from the episode; Lindsey with his stubbly beard and Wilson with his bushier one.

*Thunderbird 1* is the first of the fabulous Thunderbird craft that appears in the story. Kyte has given the blue 'Bird an iconic look, befitting its impressive image. Even when it crashes in the desert, Kyte emphasizes the sheer importance of it. [*below*] The Zombite craft that shoot *Thunderbird 1* down have a highly vicious look, which adds to the ominous feeling that they mean business. [*far right*]

The enormousness of *Thunderbird 2* is elegantly captured both when it lands at *Thunderbird 1*'s crash site and when it takes off at the end of the story while the Pyramid of Khamandides explodes. *Thunderbird 3* makes a brief appearance in the episode, but that doesn't stop Kyte from really giving the ship some great panels. [*bottom right*]



In all of them it really shows that he took the time to draw them as dynamically and accurately as any other vehicle in the comic, even ones we see for much longer periods.

The Jeep that Lindsey and Wilson drive seems to have met the same fate as the Sidewinder did in Steve Kyte's previous illustration of "Pit of Peril." Instead of the colour of the Jeep being grey, as it was in the episode, he has made it

a dark green – probably because for artistic purposes the grey alone didn't stand out too well against the yellow sands of the desert.

One thing that I have rarely talked about is how the artist draws locations. I think in this case it's valuable to point out how Kyte has drawn the Sahara. He has beautifully glamorised the locale by giving it a peaceful blue sky over a golden desert. It's really something worth looking at.

### Dialogue

This comic adaptation is a bit different from any of the others we have encountered thus far. Usually, scenes and people have been cut out to shorten the length of the story. In the adaptation of "The Uninvited," however, Alan Fennell has actually added scenes and written new dialogue to properly introduce the Zombites and let us get to know who they are. We discover that they are at war with another group of people, known as the Nebab. In the comic they believe that *Thunderbird 1* is part of the Nebab and this is the reason they shoot it down (which was an out-of-the-blue event that went unexplained in the original episode). It also gives this lost Saharan race a bit more depth of character, especially when the Zombite Leader refuses to attack *Thunderbird 1* and 2 after learning they are part of International Rescue.

However, when *Thunderbird 1* returns to rescue Wilson and Lindsey, the Leader then comes up with a plan.

ZOMBITE LEADER  
You see, Aziz... We will capture all the Thunderbird machines...and with them, we will defeat Nebab!



More details are added to the story. In the comic, the Leader orders a strange chemical be put into the fountain that Lindsey and Wilson drink from. This then becomes the reason why Lindsey goes a little crazy and shoots at Scott – and explains why Lindsey, who seems to be the more cautious one of the two earlier in the episode, always telling Wilson to slow down while they're driving, should suddenly act in a way that seems to be completely out of character. Alan Fennell isn't trying to rely here on the 1960s excuse that Lindsey goes a little mad at the vast amount of wealth that they have discovered. In the 1990s he is catering to a much more sophisticated audience, and he wants the story to hold up, so he gives us reasons why.

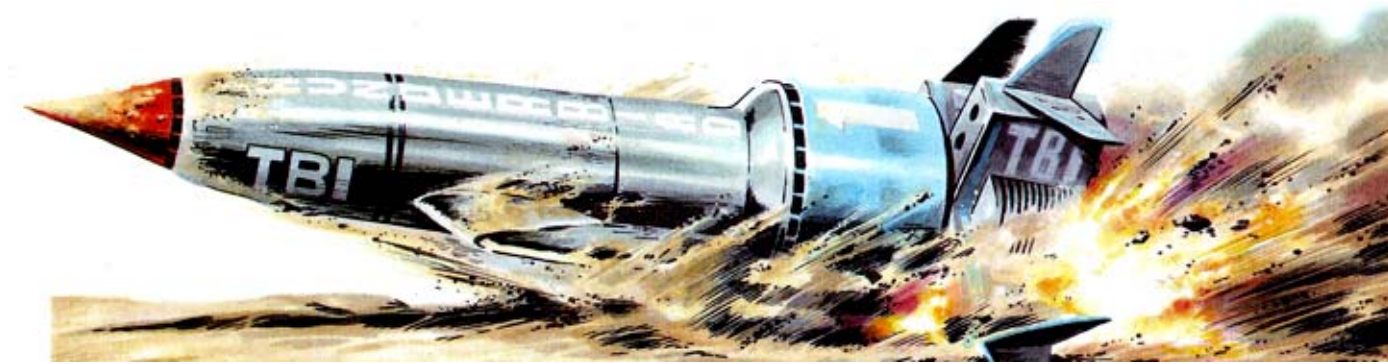
### Detail

Out of all the artists hired for the comic adaptations, Steve Kyte stands out as being one of the best when noticing tiny bits of detail within the episodes. This eye for detail includes the type of gun that Scott is carrying in the shootout with Wilson, the different weapons used by the Zombites, the coloured stripes on the Zombite craft at the beginning of the episode, and the Zombite logo itself. He even goes so far as to rectify the problem of the reversed logos in the command room of the Pyramid.

### Conclusion

All in all, "The Uninvited," in my opinion, is one of the best comic adaptations there is. Steve Kyte has brilliantly captured the feel of the story, with Alan Fennell giving fans even more to look at than in the original episode. 10/10.

**NEXT TIME:  
CITY OF FIRE**





# Lessons in BETA READING

Samantha Winchester

The giving and receiving of critique has regularly been a hot topic on the board at the Tracy Island Writers Forum, so I thought I'd take a shot at putting into words some of the lessons I've learned – mostly the hard way – in my years of beta reading. (And my apologies to Alaina, who first suggested this as the subject for an article, for taking so long to get to it!) I'm also going to do a follow-up next time that will look at things from the perspective of how writers should choose, work with and treat their beta readers.

## LESSON ONE: CHOOSE YOUR PROJECTS – AND YOUR WRITERS – CAREFULLY

I don't think anyone really knows what to expect when they first start beta reading. I know I didn't! When I first got into that line of work – and it is *work*, I'm not sure if all writers who don't beta read fully realize that – I received several requests to look at stories. Sadly, a significant portion of those inquiries led to situations of conflict and disaster. How did this happen, when my intentions were only to help?

Primarily because I wasn't prepared for the harsh lesson in psychology I was about to get. Some of the stories needed a great deal of help, but that wasn't the problem. The problem was that most of the writers of those stories were completely unwilling to either acknowledge that fact, or do anything about it. I found that out the hard way when I, naively and full of enthusiasm, walked into these situations much as a potential renovator would into a house that was in bad shape. I'd make note of the holes in the walls, the damaged floors, the leaky roof, and come up with a plan for getting the job done – only to grind to a dead halt when the reaction of the writer wasn't "Yes, let's roll up our sleeves, I want this to be the best fic ever," it was "OMG, you horrible person, how *dare* you say those things about my beloved story! Look at all the reviews I get! People *love* my work!"

(I should say here that I also encountered writers who really did want to work hard at improving their writing... and although they're pretty much unsung in this article, they were what kept me going despite the discouragement of their more intractable counterparts.)

So what did I do? Well, being a stubborn person, I slapped band-aids on my wounds and kept stumbling forward for a while. Not all the writers cursed my family lineage and stormed off in tears – some were actually very nice, but simply said words to the effect of "Thanks but no thanks; I just want to have fun, and what you're asking me to do is too much like work." Frustratingly, this was sometimes accompanied by questions like, "Why don't the big [i.e., prominent in the fandom] writers review my work?" After a while I had to stop banging my forehead against the desk... I was starting to leave a dent.

And then I ran into the one that changed everything. This particular writer had fundamental characterization problems with the central character of the piece, who needed to become a completely different person for her plot to work at all. When I tried to tell her this as gently as possible, she wrote me a raging email telling me that I had destroyed her will to write, she was going to pull her stories down off fanfiction.net and burn them all, and she hoped that I was happy because it was all my fault.

That out of left-field experience brought me to a screeching halt, forcing me to take a hard look at the way I was doing things, and to figure out what changes I needed to make if I was to keep beta reading. I took inventory, and realized that the writers I really wanted to work with were the ones who were prepared to work, period, and were willing to try their very best to reach the highest standard they were capable of. And while exceptions were always possible, I wanted them to have already done their best to learn the basics of the English language – spelling, grammar and punctuation. Words are a writer's tools, just like musical notes are the tools of a musician. Without that basic foundation, not much is

going to happen that is worthy of being read. (I will always make exceptions for those writers for whom English is not a first language. Sadly, though, the worst offenders are often native English speakers!)

What I realized I had to do was to begin vetting requests very carefully. What I would suggest to a beta reader who gets an email request from a writer they are unfamiliar with is to try to find examples of that writer's work before saying yes or no. It's a quick way of getting a feel for how much help the writer needs, and whether you are the right beta for them. A potential beta needs to be realistic about how much time they have available and how much patience they have, both for the level of the writer's work and also for the subject matter the writer prefers. Looking at the writer's work ahead of time can help avoid a great deal of hard work that only ends up being thrown out amid unpleasantness, and a graceful exit can be made without hurting someone unnecessarily.

## LESSON TWO: ESTABLISH THE GROUND RULES UP FRONT

I warn everyone going in that I'm a tough beta. I'm not going to just say "Oh, this is perfect, don't change a thing!" unless of course it really is. That statement alone has probably made some writers decide not to pursue working with me. But I believe that's for the best, in the long run.

I also ask writers what they kind of beta job they want. If they're just looking for me to fix their spelling and grammar, but want me to ignore any plot/characterization issues I might find, then I'm not the beta for them. Not much point waxing and polishing the outside of the car



Tin-Tin wasn't quite sure if asking Jeff to beta her first *Stingray* story was a good idea or not...

when the tires are bald and the engine sorely needs tuning. And if they're going to thank me in the author's notes on their story, then I want the finished result to be something I can be proud to say I was involved with.

## LESSON THREE: TEST THE WATERS FIRST

Once the decision is made to go forward with a beta assignment, it's a good idea to make the first approach a somewhat tentative one. After reading the piece, I usually give general overview suggestions first, specifically to see what kind of response I get. And then I have to *listen*. If it's obvious from what they say that they are not willing to do the work they need to do, I should immediately and gracefully withdraw. No point wasting my time or theirs, and this way the majority of the heartache and misery, not to mention the time-consuming arguments and strife – is averted as much as possible for both parties.

## LESSON FOUR: EDITING ISN'T REWRITING

This one took me a long time to master. In the beginning, I got carried away by both my enthusiasm and my passion for what I felt was the "right" way to do things. I would wade in there, do a lot of redlining, and make heavy-handed proclamations about how the piece should be restructured. The problem was, as I eventually realized, I often wasn't betaing the project that was in front of me,

I was reworking it in the way that I would have done it, if it had been mine. I got strenuous opposition from a couple of the writers I was working with, whose objections were quite justified.

After the light finally dawned, it was obvious that I had to make some changes. I began to state my opinions as *options* for the writer I was working with, rather than *commands*. I disciplined myself to stick as closely as possible to what structural changes were necessary to support the storyline and outcome the writer was going for, if it worked, even if I would have preferred to go in another direction. As a compromise, I did allow myself to offer suggestions when I felt that a major opportunity was being missed... but I now made sure to always state them as simply alternatives, rather than directions the writer *had* to take. What I didn't change was pointing out logic lapses, plot holes and failures in the writer's research process that would bring down the existing story if they weren't attended to. I feel that addressing those things is the basic duty of a beta, whether the writer wants to hear them or not.

## LESSON FIVE: LEAD WITH A POSITIVE

Tell them what you like about the story, what is working, before you get into what *isn't*. This is vital. When I first started betaing, I was guilty of being so enthusiastically laser focused on the "fixing" that I went right in with "Look, this isn't working, but here's what we need to do." I forgot that most writers (including me!) often have difficulty separating their egos from their writing, so the first thing I needed to do was highlight what the writer was doing right, *before* I outlined what the problems were. It's a case of "doing unto others." This is the way I'd prefer my own writing to be beta'd, so this is the way I need to beta for others.

Of course, it goes without saying that although I might sometimes have to really reach for encouraging things to say, I would never *invent* a positive. Nothing good can come from venturing down that path, since it is only honesty that can give us a starting point for growth and improvement. When I was growing up out in the Far East, I had a friend whose parents worshipped the ground she walked on, building her up far beyond her real capabilities. Her father, who often directed local theater productions, would make behind-the-scenes deals to secure her good acting roles, even though her performances were mediocre at best. Her mother, a music teacher, would accuse other students of singing flat, obscuring the fact that her daughter had the unusual tendency to sing sharp. This gave my friend a completely inflated view of her own talents.

Unfortunately it all ended badly, because when she left school and went out on her own, she made an attempt to enter the world of professional performing, and was devastated when her audition process was an unmitigated disaster. The truth came far later than it should have, and instead of being the impetus to improve, as it might have been earlier in her life, it was such an overwhelming and embarrassing reversal of fortune that it destroyed her dreams. Honesty is always the best policy – as long as it is delivered in a positive, encouraging fashion.

I love beta reading, although I don't have nearly as much time for it these days as I'd like. There's nothing like the charge of seeing your writer turn a so-so story into a truly excellent one. And when I see them get terrific reviews in part because they followed the advice I gave them, I cheer right along with them. It's a rewarding process, but it can be a difficult one, and sometimes you have to remember that you can't win 'em all. So if you find yourself spending more time beating your head against walls than having positive discussions about plot and characterization, then possibly you might be making one or more of the mistakes that I did. And maybe it's time to figure out if it's your approach that needs adjusting, or whether you might just be the wrong beta for the writers you're working with.

*Next Time: The Care and Feeding of Beta Readers.*



# Sam's POOLSIDE POINTERS

Samantha Winchester

Ned's still missing.

You'd think I'd be overjoyed, wouldn't you? But funnily enough, I'm starting to miss little things about him...his irritating, nasal voice, usually pitched just a little too loudly for normal conversation...his constant hyperbole...the demonic arch of his eyebrows... his hypoallergenic, stink-you-out-from-thirty-feet-away eucalyptus cologne (they could use that stuff as riot gas!) I must be crazy, wanting him to turn back up. But let's face it, who will I make fun of if he doesn't?

I've decided I'm going to have to play detective with a bit more enthusiasm...which might mean actually foregoing a few hours of sun by the pool. The sacrifices I make!

Gordon's sitting over by the cabanas, talking to Alan about finding a bunch of exploding fish, of all things, in the water near the island... I didn't even know fish *could* explode, but I guess he's the expert. He's got some big old deflated balloon thing on the concrete beside him, and while he's talking, he's putting things into a plastic box that seems to be attached to the balloon. Is that a copy of *The Dangerous Book for Boys*? Sure looks like it... I wonder what that's for?

Well, I'm not quite ready yet to get up off this extremely comfortable, extremely expensive but slightly embarrassing pool lounge (I hear the designer calls it "biomorphic," and "ergonomically perfect for ultimate relaxation," but Ned kept going on in that obtuse way of his that it looks like I'm lying on a giant tongue!). So in honor of our missing quasi-celebrity, here are some of the more choice howlers Ned has uttered in his journalistic career. No point wasting an opportunity to kick a guy when he's (potentially) down, right?

You get a gold star if you can spot all the mistakes Ned makes below:

## MADAM GILLYLEE'S EPI-SCOPE

Can you guess which *Thunderbirds* character and episode this horoscope relates to? You'll find the answer somewhere in the [NEWSFLASH!](#)



### CAPRICORN

January Capricorns must know the goal of marketing and advertising is to draw the attention--even for a second--of a general public that is oblivious to the existence of your business, and humor is one of the very best ways to accomplish this. If done correctly a good strong business slogan blurs the line between advertising and entertainment.

So you ought to do better than 'Never Give Up At Any Cost.'



### AQUARIUS

February Aquarians living with their grandmother and sitting around waiting for the next meal the whole day must be careful not to pack on the pounds. Or else they will become badly overweight and one day discover that even when they forget their weight belt they can still manage to get down to the bottom of the sea.

Don't wait for that eye opener.

Recalling his childhood meeting on Martin Luther King Day with poet and civil rights activist Dr. Maya Angelou, then in her nineties, "She was still as sharp as a button. Couldn't pull the sheep over her eyes. I've always wondered why they named that big famous clinic in Minnesota after her, though -- it's not like she's a *medical* doctor."

On why he never takes notes during an interview, "Photogenic memory. Never forget a thing. Well, except that one time when I switched the names of that senator's daughter and the stripper he was having the secret affair with. You know people still bring that up? Jeez! You'd think there'd be a statue of limitations."

Talking about his experiences interviewing Korean dictator Kim Jong-un, son and successor of the infamous Kim Jong-il, "Did you know he really wanted to be an actor? Daddy wouldn't let him, I guess. I tried telling him you can't teach an old leopard how to change his spots, but it didn't do any good. The whole interview, he wandered around in a bedsheet talking in Islamic pentameter."

On his first visit to India, "Wasn't anything like I thought it would be. I thought they all drove motorcycles and wore turbans on their heads!"

Hmmm. I think I just heard Alan say Ned's name, and he and Gordon looked at each other and laughed. One of those mysterious, "We've got a secret" laughs. And now they're leaving, taking their big old balloon thing with them. I'd better follow them and see what I can find out! See you next time...and hopefully we'll have found Ned by then. Otherwise I can see a milk carton picture in his future...

the roaming cone  
Scott uses all his powers of mental persuasion...



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NED COOK'S  
NTBS NEWSFLASH!



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## TRACY ISLAND CHRONICLES

You may be wondering... why did we create this newsletter, *The Tracy Island Chronicles* and its brother sites *The Tracy Island Archives* and *Tracy Island Writers Forum*?

What was the point?

The point was, first and foremost, to preserve the beloved 60s television show *Thunderbirds* that we all know and love. We showcase the best of the best fanfic on TIC, we have lots of pictures, we have sound bytes, we have information on the voice actors behind the marionettes and we have fan-created vids. Not only that, you'll find useful links, games and trivia...and eventually we will also have information in Brains' Lab that outlines all gathered evidence for the two different timelines you might be aware of (2026 vs. 2065).

TIA also archives excellent TB fan fiction, and the TIWF Yahoo! group exists for us to have a place to talk about writing and *Thunderbirds*... but not just that. It's to become part of a community of caring people, a quasi-family, if you will, where we can come together from all different parts of the world under the umbrella of a show that has endured for 40 years.

This newsletter exists to make sure all of you know everything that's new in our family of sites. We hope you find it informative and fun and that you look forward to receiving it every two months! (At least... we try to get it out every two months -- you know how 'real life' is!!!)

So that's why we do this. We love fan fiction. We love writing. We love *Thunderbirds* (some of us are a little hung up on certain Tracys!) and we care about those of you who also share these loves.

Thank you for your support throughout these last few years and stick around... because in the grammatically incorrect words of many who have gone before, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!!!"

## HOW TO RECOMMEND STORIES FOR TIC

The *Tracy Island Chronicles* does not accept submissions directly. Original Series-based (non-Frakes-movie-verse *Thunderbirds*) fan fiction is invited to TIC by our committee, but we depend on YOU to recommend really good *Thunderbirds* fan fiction. So if you find a story that you think is "the best of the best," drop Mobile Control [[ticmobilecontrol1@gmail.com](mailto:ticmobilecontrol1@gmail.com)] a line and let us know!

## HOW TO JOIN THE TRACY ISLAND WRITERS FORUM

TIWF's credo is:

We exist for the sole purpose of discussing creative writing. The point is to better ourselves as writers through advice, constructive criticism and conversations regarding writing well. A lot of the discussions may revolve around Gerry Anderson's *Thunderbirds*, but we by no means wish to limit ourselves to the writing of fan fiction in any genre. If you care about your writing, this is the place to be!

So if you like to read TB fanfic, write TB fanfic, beta TB fanfic, like to write, want to write or are just interested in joining a fantastic group of people, go to the *Tracy Island Writers Forum* [[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Tracy\\_Island\\_WF/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Tracy_Island_WF/)] and join today! Remember, we also do special update announcements as special notices on TIWF, so sign up to make sure you know what's going on!

## WANT TO GIVE NED COOK A HAND?

So, you read this newsletter and think, "Hey, I have something I'd like to write for that!" Well, here's your chance to become a contributor.

What do you have in mind? Send it in either MS Word document format or plain text format as an attachment to [ticmobilecontrol1@gmail.com](mailto:ticmobilecontrol1@gmail.com) and our contributing editors will let you know what they think.

We do ask that before you submit anything, you please ensure grammar and spelling have been checked. Ned gets annoyed if he can't understand what he's reading! [Oh, and Ned reserves the right to edit any submissions he receives. It's just how he is.]

## HOW TO UNSUBSCRIBE FROM THIS NEWSLETTER

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