

# The Doctor's Mrs Robinson

Alex Kingston romped as Moll Flanders and sizzled in *ER* – so how's life when she's not smooching with Matt Smith?

**Doctor Who**  
Saturday 7.10pm BBC1, BBC1 HD

ALEX KINGSTON is talented, beautiful, elegant and experienced enough at 48 not to demean herself by having a publicist as a babysitter, although she remarks, "Interviews usually upset me in one way or another." Her personal life, she insists, is off-limits. "I lead a very quiet life and never court publicity. I don't go to a restaurant and let slip I'm leaving by the back door, like some celebrities. My life isn't interesting enough for anyone to hack my phone. I don't agree with people opening up their lives to the public, but we've been brainwashed into thinking this is how it must be. I'm just not interested."

We'll ignore, for the moment, her marital status, her interesting way with actors who kiss over-enthusiastically, and the breasts she displayed magnificently in 17 energetic sex scenes during ITV's *Moll Flanders* in 1996, which led to worldwide fame as Dr Elizabeth Corday in *ER*, and discuss *Doctor Who* instead. She plays River Song [catchphrase "Hello, Sweetie"], a time-travelling action hero, who first appeared in 2008 when she was described as "sort of the Doctor's wife".

"I wasn't quite sure about accepting when I was asked to do two episodes. Living in America I hadn't followed the resurgence of *Doctor Who*, but I cried when I read the script to *Silence in the Library* because it was such a sad story – River Song encounters the Doctor in the 51st century. It's similar to Audrey Niffenegger's novel *The Time Traveler's Wife* – two people who have great love for each other, but are never able to meet in the right space or time. The sadness was of a woman with a close connection to the Doctor who sacrifices herself to save his life. I didn't expect to be asked back."

*Doctor Who*, though, ignores earthly conventions and last year River was resurrected. Time was going backwards, of course: in the earlier



**SMOOCHIE TIME**  
River (Alex Kingston) seized a moment with the Doctor (Matt Smith) back in June

"In *Let's Kill Hitler* a camera angle directly references *The Graduate*"

ALEX KINGSTON

episodes this year the Doctor was shot dead by someone in a spacesuit, but then the story continues centuries earlier in his lifetime when he's still alive. In June it was revealed that River is really Melody Pond, daughter of the Doctor's companions Rory and Amy; she was conceived on their wedding night while the Tardis was in flight, so she has Time Lord DNA.

Is she confused by the plots? "Steven Moffat engineers it so we can't understand. There are so many threads that tie up later and it's only then you understand why you did or said a certain thing. You have to trust implicitly he knows where he's going. It's clever. He knew River was Amy's daughter but didn't tell me because he felt I might empathise with her too much and be tempted to be more close, rather than maternal."

How long will she remain? "I can't say." Do you know? "I can't even say that."

Technique must be important? "The stories allow for a heightened form of acting. It's not kitchen-sink drama and the dialogue can be quite challenging. The humour is very welcome and I love the fact that apart from the basic storylines there are all sorts of things people from different generations can pick up on. They throw in sneaky references that go over the heads of children but parents and grandparents will understand. In the new episode, *Let's Kill Hitler*, there's a camera angle that directly references *The Graduate*, which film buffs will get immediately."

Indeed, Moffat calls her Mrs Robinson, after the mother in *The Graduate* who seduces the son of a family friend, and there's a bit of the cougar in Kingston's on-screen relationship with 28-year-old Matt Smith. "Well, I didn't kiss him in the earlier episodes."

Smith had better be warned if the kissing doesn't stop. One actor, who she won't name, was over-enthusiastic on stage and she bit his tongue, which needed four stitches. "I'm not a toughie, but I'd warned him and it was getting annoying," she explains, winsomely.

PARTS OF *DOCTOR WHO* are terrifying for children. "That's its power. It's part of their development, learning to conquer fear, which the programme does in an incredibly safe way. I remember at seven desperately wanting to see it but knowing I'd be terrified, so I'd either have a cushion in front of my face, or watch through a crack in the door. Although I squirm when I see myself – I'm super critical – I watch now with my daughter [ten-year-old Salome]. She's been on the set so tends to deconstruct it. That's her safety net."

"To be honest, *Doctor Who* fans are a mixture of crazies plus solid citizens, but they're relentless. On *ER* I'd be asked just once for an autograph. For these fans once is never enough and I find that a little hard to handle." She's had a respite recently as the insecure middle-aged mistress of a prince in a brilliant production of



**STEVEN MOFFAT'S**  
**EPISODE GUIDE ▶**  
**MATT SMITH AND**  
**KAREN GILLAN**  
**ON STARDOM ▶▶**





**BODICE BUSTER**  
Alex Kingston and Daniel  
Craig in *Moll Flanders*

of Friedrich Schiller's 18th-century play *Louise Miller*, at the Donmar Warehouse in London. "It was exhausting but also thrilling. I enjoyed every minute of it, although each time I came off stage I'd slump in the dressing room and have to gear myself up for the next powerful scene."

She has masses of curly red hair which she hated as a child. "It's served me pretty well, so I can't be mean about it any more," she says, smiling. And those of a lubricious nature will remember her body from *Moll Flanders* and *Croupier*, a 1998 Channel 4 film which became a modest hit in America. A friend told her it was the first time she'd seen real breasts on screen for a decade. "My body is unusual [in Los Angeles] because it hasn't been altered or chopped about," she said, and now adds she would never have any enhancing surgery. Not even as a time traveller.

When her first husband, Ralph Fiennes, left her in 1995 for Francesca Annis, 17 years his senior, she found success with *ER* and moved to America. Now, it is said, her second marriage, to a German journalist, Florian Haertel, is under strain after 13 years. Two years ago she talked publicly about the stress on her marriage over her desire for another child. Two attempts at adoption failed and "my husband isn't prepared to go down the IVF road again," she told *You* magazine in 2009.

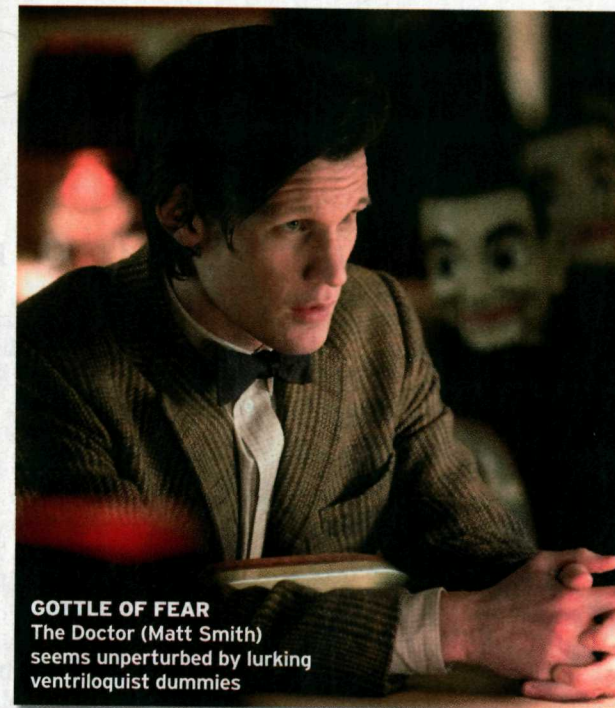
**I**S SHE NOW separated? "It's not appropriate to ask me that. I'm not sure where my home really is at the moment. I'm due to go back to the States, but I return here more frequently because I'm offered work. In America it's thin on the ground, although I've made a film, *Like Crazy*, which won the grand jury prize at Sundance Film Festival, so there might be a bit more buzz.

"I still consider myself English, and no matter how long - it's 14 years - I've lived in America, enjoy it and have made lovely friends, I still feel an outsider. I understand how this country functions. There's something in my body and my bones that makes me so comfortable. Just wandering through London I feel incredibly happy and at ease. I let the day take me wherever it leads."

Well hello, Sweetie. Or goodbye?



**ACTION STATIONS**  
The Tardis hurtles out of  
control in *Let's Kill Hitler*



**GOTTLE OF FEAR**  
The Doctor (Matt Smith)  
seems unperturbed by lurking  
ventriloquist dummies



## THE ULTIMATE EPISODE GUIDE BY EXECUTIVE PRODUCER STEVEN MOFFAT

**T**HE DOCTOR HAS an appointment. In Utah, by Lake Silencio, on the Plain of Sighs, an Impossible Astronaut will rise from the deep, and strike the Time Lord dead. We all saw it happen - his final moments, the failed regeneration, the body in the burning boat. No hope, no escape, no excuses: we have seen the future and the Doctor is not going to survive it. The summer is over, the Doctor is back - and he's embarking on his final voyage...

The first half of series six was all about questions. Who was the Impossible Astronaut? Who are the Silence and why do they want the Doctor dead? Who is River Song? Of course, we all know now that River is Melody Pond, the daughter of Amy and Rory, but that was never our question - who is she to the Doctor? She kisses him like a lover, but she's also the best liar he's ever met...

When last seen, baby Melody had been kidnapped by Madame Kovarian, with the clear intent to raise her into a weapon to destroy the Doctor - and we know that Melody is destined to become River, imprisoned in Storm Cage for the murder of the best man she's ever known. A terrible trap, centuries in the making, is closing around our hero, and this time he's not going to escape it.

Join the Doctor on six more adventures as he journeys to Lake Silencio for his final encounter. Time is catching up with the last of the Time Lords... but he's not quite done yet...

### 8 LET'S KILL HITLER

**Writer** Steven Moffat **Director** Richard Senior  
**Guest star** Caitlin Blackwood

Amy and Rory have waited a long time for news of their daughter. Too long. But when they summon the Doctor, the consequence will change all their lives. The Tardis crashes into Berlin in the 1930s and they find themselves face to face not only with Hitler, but with a unique assassin from the distant future - and that's only the beginning. In the *Führer's* office, at the heart the Third Reich, the Doctor is in for one the biggest shocks of his very long life...

### 9 NIGHT TERRORS

**Writer** Mark Gatiss **Director** Richard Clark  
**Guest stars** Emma Cunniffe, Daniel Mays  
Horror in *Doctor Who* comes in many forms and many places, and a cry of distress reaches the Tardis from the darkest and scariest place in the universe. But where is that exactly? This story began with Mark Gatiss and me chatting on the set of *Sherlock*. "I'd like to do scary," he said. "Do you know where the scariest place in the universe is?" I've known Mark for a while. If he's decided to tell me where the scariest place in the universe is, I'd better listen. "Where?" I quavered. "A child's bedroom," he answered. Parents of Britain - sorry, and good luck!

### 10 THE GIRL WHO WAITED

**Writer** Tom MacRae **Director** Nick Hurran  
Time travel is more than just an element of *Doctor Who* - it's one of the main characters. MacRae's stylish and moving script is one of the best uses of time travel in any story anywhere. It's mind-blowing and heart-breaking in every set of *Sherlock*. "I'd like to do scary," he said. "Do you know where the scariest place in the universe is?" I've known Mark for a while. If he's decided to tell me where the scariest place in the universe is, I'd better listen. "Where?" I quavered. "A child's bedroom," he answered. Parents of Britain - sorry, and good luck!

**IN THE LOOKING GLASS**  
"Amy and Rory's relationship  
is explored in great depth,"  
says Karen Gillan of tenth  
episode *The Girl Who Waited*



**COME DIG WITH ME**  
David Walliams plays a  
creature Karen Gillan  
describes as "a very  
submissive mole"

### 11 THE GOD COMPLEX

**Writer** Toby Whithouse  
**Director** Nick Hurran

**Guest stars** Caitlin Blackwood, David Walliams  
The brief to brilliant writer Toby Whithouse was just this - a hotel: make a hotel scary. All those corridors, all those identical rooms, those bleak and soulless bars and waiting rooms, that tinkling muzak - surely all that was made for *Doctor Who*, where the scariest things of all come bleeding through the ordinary world.

If you've seen Toby's wonderful *Being Human*, you've probably already decided he's a sick and twisted man. *Doctor Who* is delighted to confirm this simple truth for a BBC1 audience. (Oh, and do you have a ventriloquist dummy lurking somewhere in your house? Just asking, no reason...)

### 12 CLOSING TIME

**Writer** Gareth Roberts **Director** Steve Hughes

**Guest stars** James Corden, Daisy Haggard  
*The Lodger* was a surprise hit of last year's *Doctor Who*. It was a simple tale of a barny Time Lord in a flatshare with a nice man called Craig. Except when you say one of them's Matt Smith and the other is James Corden, then frankly you've got enough going on for a whole other series. I leapt at the chance of a sequel and writer Gareth Roberts leapt at the chance to take up his story again.

Events have moved on in Craig's life when the Doctor turns up on his doorstep for a second time; there's a terrible alien threat, of course, but never mind that - dear God, there's a BABY!

### 13 THE WEDDING OF RIVER SONG

**Writer** Steven Moffat **Director** Jeremy Webb

**Guest stars** Frances Barber, Simon Callow, Simon Fisher-Becker, Mark Gatiss, Ian McNeice  
"I don't want to marry you."  
"I don't want to murder you."

And here it is at last - the episode with all the answers, as the Doctor journeys to Lake Silencio for his date with destiny. While I was writing this, my wife asked me, "What happens?" and when I frowned, and pondered my answer, she hurriedly added, "In one sentence. Quite a short one." I thought a moment and said, "The Doctor goes to his certain death - and it doesn't work out as well he expected."

So welcome to what is, without doubt or serious competition, the wedding of the year! Early reports indicate that it could make *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* look like a fairly successful honeymoon...

**MATT SMITH AND  
KAREN GILLAN ON  
THE CHALLENGES  
OF STARDOM**