If you ever tried to tell Amy that there was a time before The Doctor and Rose danced, she’d call you a liar... The Doctor and Rose just danced. It’s what they did. They made their way through their mad, beautiful, fantastic life spinning each other around and waltzing to a tango. Every turn the universe threw at them, they could overcome. To Amy, they were invincible—an indisputable fact of life.

But one too many turns may end up leading them on a collision course. One too many mistakes, one too many times they’ll have everything ripped away from them...

Entire civilizations see them as gods, but Amy has seen them in tears.

— An Eleven Era rewrite with Rose Tyler.
They’d regenerated together, but it was different for Rose. She wasn’t born Time Lord, she was made one when she looked into the heart of the TARDIS- and the TARDIS had looked back. One heart, and a human soul- she couldn’t change herself on a molecular level, but she could completely heal herself… in most cases... *it just took a while, that’s all.* At least that’s what the Doctor was telling himself anyway.

“Really really not good!” the Doctor shouted, feeling the new muscles on the new face he hasn’t seen yet move as he flew around the burning console. Two simultaneous regenerations in a single TARDIS. It was more than any ship was equipped to handle.

Rose was unconscious on the grating, regeneration energy still swirling around her. the Doctor was trying really very hard not to panic.

Before he could dwell too much on his unconscious wife though, the TARDIS doors flung open—clearly in a last ditch attempt at releasing the toxic air now swirling around the room attempting to suffocate the both of them. Apparently the energy from one or both of their regenerations had hit the center console.

The ship lurched suddenly and he went tumbling towards the open doors, only to catch himself by the tips of his fingers before meeting his doom on the English concrete down below. (And of course they were flying over London—where else would something like this happen to them?)

the Doctor rolled his eyes and shoved the sonic screwdriver currently impeding his grip on the TARDIS door frame into his mouth, sending a quick frantic glance towards Rose as he pulled himself up. Behind him Big Ben tolled, warning him of further impending doom.

He pulled the sonic back from his new mouth and aimed it haphazardly at the gyroscopic stabiliser, hoping to get the ship to calm down, but only accomplishing a small jump up, flinging him out the doors once more. He yelled and avoided the point of the clock tower by only a hair, blowing out a relieved breath afterwards as he hung by his fingertips.

Then finally, *finally*, he pulled himself into the burning console room and shut the doors behind him. Only getting a second to look at Rose’s still unmoving form before the TARDIS jolted and started spinning wildly through spacetime.

They crashed seconds or hours or centuries later. He still couldn’t *tell.* His time senses still weren’t functional. It felt like missing an arm. All he knew for sure is that they certainly weren’t upright, as they were in the swimming pool, and the swimming pool had been sideways since Rose was last cross with him. A fact he was a grateful for now since it otherwise could have been a much worse fall. Apparently in all the commotion the pool had appeared in the Library, and books weren’t
usually the best for breaking falls (he should know).

Of course, the library is directly across from the console room from which they fell... the TARDIS probably moved the pool on purpose then...

*Why were his thoughts so fuzzy?*

Never mind that though, the Doctor swam through the book filled water, thanking Rassilon for his respiratory bypass, and pulled Rose up by her armpits, digging in his bigger-on-the-inside pockets as he did. He knew he put that grappling hook somewhere—oh yes there it is.

He aimed blindly upwards and then began the very incredibly difficult task of spelunking up the TARDIS one handed while carrying his unconscious wife. The entire time thinking of only one thing...

*Apples.*

When they finally arrived at the front doors it was all he could do to flop over the edge with Rose in tow—her landing squarely on his chest. He moved her gently to the ground, barely taking notice of the little girl watching them.

He looked up to her as soon as he was sure Rose was still breathing. “Can I have an apple?” he asked, and not at all with his own permission. It seemed this new body had a tongue with a mind of its own. He’d meant to ask if the girl was alright, but he just couldn’t get this *craving* out of his head—hm, cravings... that was new.

“An apple?” the girl repeated incredulously, but she didn’t wait for an answer before she went on. “Is your friend okay?” She was eyeing Rose’s still gold-glowing body.

“I love apples!” the Doctor exclaimed, and then furrowed his brow as her words caught up with him. “She’s not my friend. Well no actually she’s my best friend. But more importantly—or perhaps maybe equally importantly—she’s my wife.” He cut himself off. *Wow,* he really could not *shut up* with this new mouth.

He wiggled his lips around distractedly before looking up to the little girl once more. “And she’s fine,” he said more to himself than to her. “We landed in the library,” he explained vaguely, knowing it wasn’t a full answer, but giving it anyway just because he could. He stood to his full height then, effectively stepping between Rose and the little girl.

“You’re soaking wet,” she challenged.

“Yes, we landed in the swimming pool.”

“You *said* you were in the library.”

“Well she’s a quick one isn’t she?” He thought towards the telepathic presence that was supposed to be Rose in his mind, but the lights were off. Closed for reconstruction. He shook his head as the dull ache at her absence set in.

“Are you a policeman?” she went on, not seeming to mind that she hadn’t gotten a proper answer out of him yet.

He furrowed his brow at her, completely unaware of how she could have come to that conclusion, and chalking it up to the minds of children. “Why?” he asked at first, meaning why did she think that, but then studied her face harder, suddenly more interested. “Did you call a policeman?”
She didn’t answer his question (fairly). “Did you come about the crack in my wall?”

He squinted down at her. “What cra-aahhh—!” His left heart sped up suddenly, stopped, and then went back to it, sending him back down to his knees in pain. He let out a small cough of regeneration energy.

The little girl looked between the quickly evaporating cough and the Doctor’s still-glowing wife. “Who are you two?”

His hands began to glow as well and he grinned up at her. “I’m the Doctor, and that’s Rose Tyler, my wife. We’re still cooking,” he said by way of explanation for the glowing. “I’m still conscious. I don’t know why, but it happens sometimes. She’s in a regeneration coma.” He hadn’t meant to explain further, but his mouth kept going anyway. “Does it scare you?” he asked, mind racing as his eyes studied hers.

“No,” she answered stubbornly. “You just look a bit weird.”

He laughed despite himself, and mentally chastised his too-quick mind with his too-quick mouth. “No, no no,” he said, unable to keep the word from repeating. “The crack in your wall, does it scare you?”

“Yes.” She said, without hesitation.

He jumped up, new and frantic energy consuming him. He could feel the soles of his trainers flopping and the wind hit his knees through the tears in his pinstriped trousers—and these were his favourites too. “Well then! No time to lose! I’m the Doctor! Do everything I tell you, don’t ask stupid questions, and no wandering off,” he ticked off what to him appeared to be the most pertinent rules on his long list of rules. “And help me get Rose up,” he added, turning around and lifting her arm around his shoulders, smiling grandly when the little girl grabbed her waist without question.

They stumbled into the nearby house that he hadn’t noticed before, the Doctor periodically tripping over his too-big feet in his too-small trainers. He set Rose gently on the couch as soon as he was led to it, and followed the little girl into the adjacent kitchen. She handed him the apple that he’d honestly forgotten about by that point. Funny now how the thoughts were quicker this time.

“If you’re a Doctor, then how come your box says police?” she asked innocently, but challengingly. (—So that’s why she thought I was a policeman!) He studied her, and took the proffered fruit without breaking eye contact. He took a bite, and then immediately spit it back out. Effectively, though unintentionally, surprising her into forgetting she’d asked a question. “That’s disgusting. What is that?” he declared, reveling only slightly in the back of his mind at the speed in which his thoughts were racing in and flying away, the stray ones spilling out his mouth in the process.

“An apple,” she answered incredulously, squinting up at him.

“Apples are rubbish. I hate apples,” he ranted without really meaning to.

“You said you loved them,” she argued, ginger brows furrowing further as the strange man got stranger.

“No, no. no.” He said, the word once again repeating as the thoughts attempted to catch up with his mouth— or perhaps the other way around? “I’ll have a yoghurt! Yoghurt’s my favourite. Give me yoghurt.”
She ran to the fridge, only questioning him with her eyes, and came back with the requested food. He took it and chugged, only to spit it out again in an instant. “I hate yogurt! It’s just stuff with bits in it!” he yelled, wondering himself what he was going on about. But he was hungry—

“You said it was your favourite!” She argued again.

“New mouth!” He exclaimed, finally vocalising what he’d been thinking since they’d landed in her back garden. “New mouth- new rules!” He meant more than just food, but didn't feel the need to say it. “It’s like eating after cleaning your teeth, everything tastes wro—!” His rambling analogy was cut short as his kidney decided to flop out. He cracked his back and hit his forehead—a little bit jealous of Rose at the moment as she wasn’t having to feel the whole process of regeneration.

“What is it? What’s wrong with you?” The little girl questioned.

“Wrong with me? It’s not my fault. Why can’t you feed me any decent food? You’re Scottish. Fry something—”

—‘Still rude then, Doctor.’ He heard suddenly in the back of his head and he grinned wildly.

“ROSE!” he yelled, spinning away.

When he arrived back in the sitting room Rose was attempting to stand, holding her stomach as she did, grimacing in pain. “Whoa whoa whoa!” he exclaimed, running over to stop her from getting to her feet. “Why are you up? You should have been out much longer than that.”

Rose looked around the unfamiliar surroundings. “Oh yeah like you’d know anything about human regeneration,” she quipped, ignoring his protests as she stood.

“Oh are you rude too now then?” he teased, grinning.

“Only to you, love.” She gave him a tongue touched smile.

He only wanted to kiss the look right off her face, but first he had to know. “Still love me then? Even with the new face?” he asked hesitantly, eyes flicking in between hers.

“Of course, Doctor,” she answered seriously, coming up on her toes to kiss him. She laughed when she pulled back though. “I loved old big ears didn’t I? Speaking of which…” she added, noticing the new big ears for the first time, grabbing them despite herself, and giving him a significant look.

“Oi!” He protested, but he was smiling widely at her with his hands still on her hips.

“Hold on!” she said, realising finally why the embrace felt different—and not just because of the new body. “You’re shorter!”

He scoffed, offense written clearly across his new features. “I am not!”

“You are!” she insisted, nodding and leaning up to kiss him again. His eyes stayed open to study her, but his lips pursed on instinct. She pulled back and giggled. “Yep, there’s definitely an inch less for me to raise to,” she confirmed.

Before the Doctor could pronounce more offense however, Rose turned to notice the little girl for the first time. “Hello dear,” she started, sounding very much like she did when she spoke to the TARDIS. “What’s your name?”

the Doctor realised he hadn’t asked before, and thanked Rose across their connection. She gave
him the telepathic equivalent of an eye roll in response, and he grinned and rocked back on his heels.

“Amelia Pond,” she said, in that confident way children do to the questions they’ve been asked their whole lives. Rose imagined she’d have the same tone if she’d asked for her age as well.

“Oh! That’s a brilliant name! Amelia Pond!” the Doctor exclaimed, surprising Rose with his manic energy. “Like a name from a fairy tale!”

The comment seemed off handed to both of the girls, but neither one of them mentioned it, deciding instead to just shoot each other knowing glances. “Rose, Amelia Pond was just about to fry something!” he declared, and flounced back into the kitchen.

The next ten minutes were a whirlwind of energy.

“Bacon!” He demanded, pounding his fork and knife on the table—much to Rose’s horror—only to spit it out seconds after placing the meat in his mouth.

Rose attempted to follow his train of thought speeding through the back of her head as she watched him, but it was less of a train and more of an avalanche of thought. She kept getting swept up and lost in it.

“That’s bacon,” he said, like he didn’t know before he’d eaten it, "are you trying to poison me?” He had an air of seriousness to his tone, and Rose tried to sort through that thought process to no avail as more came pouring through.

“How about beans?” Rose offered. Normally, she would stop the Doctor from being quite so imposing, but Amelia seemed to be enjoying herself despite the demands, so she allowed it to carry on. He’d made beans plenty of mornings for their breakfast for the last… hundred or so years since she’d been on the TARDIS. It had made it through the last regeneration, perhaps it would make it though—

“Beans are evil. Bad, bad beans,” he said with wide green eyes that Rose was already falling in love with.

Well there goes that theory. Rose shook her head and looked down to little Amelia. “At least it wasn’t on the floor that time,” she said, throwing a glance towards the apple bite and yoghurt splat in the doorway.

Amelia’s idea of “Simple, bread and butter,” was next thrown out the door—much to the displeasure of the neighbor’s cat. Rose sighed as the Doctor paced the kitchen floor and Amelia shuffled through the remaining contents of her fridge. “We’ve got carrots…” she offered eventually.

“Carrots?! Are you insane?!” he yelled, but the girls only rolled their eyes—it not being the first time he’d questioned their sanity due to their sustenance suggestions that evening.

“Wait no—hold on!” he exclaimed suddenly, pushing past Amelia. “I know what I need. I need… I need… I need—” He was stuck on repeat again, a new endearing trait Rose had now noticed, as his eyes searched frantically through the fridge. “I need… fish fingers and... custard.” He declared, pulling the two items out as he said them, and grinning triumphantly at his wife when he turned around.
Three minutes later Rose and Amelia sat opposite the Doctor, two spoons in the ice-cream tub, while he ate fish fingers and custard like it was the most delicious thing he’d tasted in centuries. His wife wrinkled his nose at him, but he ignored her, tipping the bowl of custard into his mouth, and wiping the mustache away with little care.

“Funny,” Amelia commented eventually.

“Am I?” he asked genuinely, eyes lighting up. “Good. Funny’s good,” he said it like it was fact, but the furrow in his brow and the questioning look he shot his wife said otherwise. She smirked in confirmation and he grinned again.

“Are we in Scotland, Amelia?” He changed the subject as quickly as he had been- finally allowing the question he’d been sitting on since he first heard her speak tumble out of his mouth.

Amelia set her spoon down and sighed deeply. “No. Had to move to England. It’s rubbish.”

“We’re always in England aren’t we Doctor?” Rose laughed. “All of time and space at our fingertips and we just can’t escape this country.”

He smirked knowingly in response. Little did she know he’d been thinking the same thing earlier as he was hanging precariously close to death over London. That was a story for another day though. A day when she wouldn’t get quite so cross at the information.

Amelia seemed unaffected by the ‘space and time’ comment, instead only nodding in agreement. “I know what you mean,” she said, earning chuckles from the two aliens.

Rose looked up to the ceiling suddenly though, as the thought that should have been her first finally occurred to her. Maybe regeneration changed her brain a bit too. “Amelia… haven’t you got a mum and dad? Are you home alone?”

“We would have woken them up by now,” the Doctor mused, catching the thought process.

Amelia looked down sadly though in response. “Haven’t got parents,” she answered, not offering any explanation. “Just an aunt.”

the Doctor nodded sadly. “I don’t even have an aunt,” he replied, hoping maybe it would make her feel better about her own situation.

“You’re lucky,” she told him instead.

The sadness was still behind his eyes, but only Rose could see it. He smirked at the little girl like he agreed, “I know.”

Rose inhaled quickly. “So your aunt then,” she started, “she’s left you all alone?”

“I’m not scared,” Amelia answered defiantly, meaning every word.

“Course you’re not!” the Doctor interrupted whatever his wife’s response was going to be. “You’re not scared of anything! Box falls out of the sky, man and his glowing wife fall out of the box, man eats fish custard-” He took a purposeful bite, and then continued speaking with his mouth full, "and look at you! Just sitting there!”

Amelia glanced at Rose and seemed to wonder for the first time if she should be worried, but the Doctor went on. “So you know what I think?”
“What?”

He shook his head and looked to her seriously. “Must be one hell of a scary crack in your wall.”

Real genuine fear painted Amelia’s features for the first time that evening and it took everything in Rose not to take her away right then. The only thing keeping her from it being that yeah, they probably should look into anything that could scare this child, and also that she was pretty sure they’d wrecked the TARDIS. So instead of taking Amelia and running like every instinct inside of her was screaming at her to do, she allowed the little girl to lead them up the stairs to her bedroom.

As soon as they entered Rose was hit by the sheer amount of energy pouring through that crack. It was a wonder they hadn’t felt it earlier. Their spacetime senses really were messed up. They must be, as she can’t even figure the year. “Doctor—” Rose started.

“I know,” he whispered, squeezing her hand before striding purposely towards the source of their worry. “You’ve had some cowboys in here,” he mumbled, wondering distantly where that phrase came from. “...Not actual cowboys—though that can happen,” he amended, wondering distantly why he’d felt the need to even as he was.

The Doctor squinted at the crack, leaning forward to press the side of his body against the wall and tap on it, listening. “This wall is solid and the crack doesn’t go all the way through it... So here’s the thing. Where’s the draught coming from?”

Rose curled her lip and screwed her eyes shut, feeling nauseous. It was no wonder the crack scared Amelia so much—it was making Rose ill. The Doctor scanned the crack with the sonic and mumbled the all-too-familiar "Wibbly-wobbly-timey-wimey," making Rose open her eyes again. He was looking at her expectantly. "You know what the crack is?" he asked.

Rose did her best to try and find the answer in his thoughts, but they were all running together haphazardly. She shook her head, while beside her Amelia asked, "What?"

"It's a crack." He smirked slightly and turned back to it while the girls shared and exasperated look. "But I'll tell you something funny," he went on, "if you knocked this wall down, the crack would stay put, because the crack isn't in the wall.

Oh. Rose suddenly understood her headache.

But Amelia was shaking her head. "Where is it then?"

"Everywhere. In everything. It's a split in the skin of the world. Two parts of space and time that should never have touched, pressed together right here in the wall of your bedroom." He tapped the two sides of the crack in demonstration, sounding distant as he did equations in his head. He looked back over to Amelia suddenly. "Sometimes, do you hear—"

"A voice?" She cut him off, nodding. "Yes."

Right on cue a low growling sound filled the room, and Rose pulled Amelia closer to her on impulse as she felt the girl's fear.

The Doctor emptied the water in the glass beside Amelia's bed onto the floor, and used it as a sort of make-shift stethoscope. "Prisoner Zero has escaped," he heard through the wall.

"Prisoner Zero?" He looked to Amelia.

She was nodding frantically again, eyes blown wide. "'Prisoner Zero has escaped,'" she quoted.
"What does it mean?"

"It means that on the other side of this wall, there's a prison and they've lost a prisoner..." he muttered. "And you know what that means?"

"What?"

The Doctor let out a breath and spun to face her finally. "It means you need a better wall. The only way to close the breach is to open it all the way. The forces will invert and it'll snap itself shut. Or..." he drifted off.

"What?" Amelia asked seriously.

The Doctor kneeled down to eye level, taking the hand that wasn't in Rose's in his own. "You know when grown-ups say everything is going to be okay?"

Amelia rolled her eyes. "Yes," she sighed, sounding annoyed.

The Doctor smirked apologetically. "Everything is going to be okay."

Rose tilted sideways, and the Doctor hopped back to his feet in order to steady her. "Whoa!" He caught her just before she could completely lose her balance. "You okay?"

Rose nodded wearily. "Yeah, sorry, just the-" she gestured vaguely to the crack in the wall. "Time senses are going mad."

The tear in time and space, plus the TARDIS being wrecked- a ship with which Rose shared a biological connection too, all on top of still being in the process of regeneration. Her head felt like it was about to explode. She motioned behind her to the door. "I'll be in the corridor. You do your magic," she teased him despite feeling like she had the hangover to end all hangovers, and squeezed both his and Amelia's hands comfortably before leaving.

Out in the hallway she could vaguely hear the Doctor opening the crack, but her attention was almost immediately taken by a door at the end of the corridor.

"Rose!" the Doctor called, but she barely registered it, instead walking slowly towards the door.

The Doctor sighed and looked down to the little girl who he was still holding the hand of. "She's never been good at the no wandering off bit... it's why I married her."

Amelia smiled slightly despite the scary crack getting scarier, and followed him out her door.

"Rose! Rose, don’t go wandering off there’s an escaped—"

The TARDIS chimed just as Rose was reaching for the door handle. He was instantly distracted from the thoughts that watching his wife be brilliant were bringing at the sound of their home burning. "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no!" He exclaimed, the word once again stuck on repeat as he went flying down the stairs, Amelia keeping close to his heels as they ran out the door.

"-Five minute hop into the future should get it stabilised!" he was yelling, retying the grappling hook rope around himself in order to abseil back into the sideways control room. "—Rose," he said suddenly, for all the world looking like a lost puppy.

He was looking up towards the house hoping the blonde may appear in the next half a second he had to wait on her when Amelia spoke. “Can I come?” she asked, still not old enough to be afraid
of the rejection most adults fear when asking questions like that.

His attention went back to her. “Not safe in there, not yet. Five minutes! Give me five minutes!” he said, frantic once more and repeating himself again. “I’ll be right back,” he promised.

“People always say that,” she said sadly, like she spoke from experience.

He bent down to be eye level and spoke seriously with her once more, concentrating (harder than he used to have to, mind you) on giving her his full attention. “Am I people?” he asked, “Do I even look like people?” He paused, eyes flicking back and forth. “Rose is still up there, and I wouldn’t leave her if the universe was at stake, and I wouldn’t leave you either—not with that scary crack in you wall.” He smiled as his teasing brought a little hope back to her face. “I need you two to keep each other safe while I’m gone. Okay?” Amelia nodded. “Five minutes. I promise. Trust me, I’m the Doctor.” He said it all very seriously, and studied her one last time before hopping back to the TARDIS.

“GERONIMO!” He yelled, and Amelia heard a faint splash before the whooshing noise started, the box started fading, and she ran back up to the house to find Rose and get her things.

“Rose!” She called as she climbed the stairs, failing to notice the newly opened door when she ran past it towards her room. She’d packed her entire trunk and found her coat and hat before she realized than she’d yet to get an answer from the Doctor’s wife. “Rose?” She called again, walking more slowly around the second floor this time.

No one could ever accuse the Doctor of being a great driver, but he could always find his wife. One of the reasons they got married really. Telepathy is dead useful- kept them from being dead a lot of the time actually.

Ten minutes after leaving he arrived back again. “Amelia!” he called, exiting the still-smoking TARDIS. “Amelia, I worked out what it was! I know what I was missing! You’ve got to get out of there!” She’d left the door open, and he ran through it, taking the stairs two at a time, still yelling, only to get his mouth clamped shut by the hand of his wife. “Prisoner Zero—mm!” She pulled him back to the end of the corridor facing the door.

Wide-eyed and mumbling, he turned to see Rose’s face perched on his shoulder, fear written clearly upon her features, with Amelia tucked behind her hip. She nodded silently towards the now ajar door. “Doctor,” she whispered, “I was in there, but there wasn’t anything. I couldn’t see anything. But I sort of… I don’t know. Felt something. Amelia called my name and I ran to her before I could look around,” she filled him in quickly, keeping her eyes on the door.

“Perception filter,” he said, also staring at the door. “Somehow you noticed the door anyway, but not Prisoner Zero.”

“Prisoner Zero?” Amelia interrupted, stepping forward slightly. “Like from the crack in my wall? He’s in there?” She took a few more steps forward, pushing Rose’s hand out of the way, as though knowing its name somehow made the monster living in her house less scary.

“Amelia come back here,” the Doctor ordered frantically, putting a hand on her shoulder, but the little girl shook it off. The door snapped closed again.

“Amelia do not open that door,” Rose said, terrified for the child, but at the same time relieved the door had closed- even if ominous, it meant the alien wasn’t planning on attacking.
Amelia wasn’t listening though, walking slowly towards the door. “Stay away from that door!” the Doctor demanded to no avail. “Do not touch that door! Do not—”

The brave girl had grabbed the handle, and was turning it.

The Doctor threw his hands in the air, talking half to Rose and half to the universe at large. “Why does no one ever listen to me? Do I just have a face that no one listens to? … Again?” He turned to Rose and she couldn’t help the amused smile that graced her features before the seriousness of the situation set in again. In an instant they were both running in an effort to get between the little girl and the scary door.

The Doctor slammed his whole body weight against it, spreading his arms out either side of him, and staring down at Amelia Pond. “Amelia, do you remember those rules I told you about when we first landed?” he asked, sounding very paternal and earning an amused glance from Rose.

She nodded, but argued nonetheless. “So what? You’re just gonna leave it in there?”

“Of course not, dear,” Rose interrupted, placing a hand on Amelia’s shoulder. “We just can’t go walking in there when we don’t know what we’re up against.”

It wasn’t exactly a lie. It was certainly what they liked to think they’d do, but both her and the Doctor knew it wouldn’t be the first time they’d done such a thing if they were to open the door right now. It just seemed to them that Amelia was looking for trouble at this point, and maybe it wasn’t best to deal with this with a child at their side.

The Doctor, picking all this up from Rose’s thoughts, started scanning the door with his screwdriver. “If we can trace the signal—” he cut himself off as the light on his tool kept going out without his permission, and ran back to Amelia’s bedroom. “Yes! There we go, come here you beautiful thing!” he exclaimed triumphantly.

He froze minutely, surprised by the sudden onslaught of affection he felt over his bond with Rose, he looked up to find her watching him and he shot her a pleased sort of grin before turning back to Amelia. “Amelia, we’re going to go back in the TARDIS.” She opened her mouth, clearly to argue, but he kept on. “We’ll be back quickly, I promise. I came back this time didn’t I?”

Amelia crossed her arms defiantly and Rose kneeled down to eye level. “You have to stay away from the door while we’re gone, okay? Whatever is in there isn’t strong enough to come looking for a fight right now, but that doesn’t mean it won’t attack if provoked.” Rose’s eyes flitted back and forth as she studied the little girl, and was disappointed but otherwise unsurprised to still see the defiance in her eyes.

‘I have to lock her memory, Doctor’ Rose said, glancing up to him surreptitiously.

‘Rose…’ He started hesitantly.

‘Not us. Not everything. Just the door. If we leave now she’s going to open it and get hurt,’ Rose argued sadly. ‘You know she will Doctor, look at her.’

The Doctor was forced to take in the little girl’s rigid posture and folded arms, and concede his wife’s point.

Rose’s hand came up under the guise of moving a stray hair from Amelia’s face, but the Doctor watched as her fingers brushed over the child’s temple. In half a second she locked away the memory putting her in danger, and in turn deflating Amelia’s shoulders. “You promise you’ll come back?” she asked, all defiance leaving her eyes, quickly replaced by rejection.
“Cross our hearts,” the Doctor said as Rose pulled the little girl into a tight hug, “and by the way count them.”

Rose stood up and took her husband’s hand.

“Can’t I come with you?” Amelia asked pitifully

The Doctor shook his head. “The TARDIS is still unsafe. It’s barely okay for us.” Amelia looked down at her feet, and the Doctor went on. “Soon as we’re back though and everything’s safe, yeah?”

Her eyes brightened immediately. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Rose repeated, and the Doctor pulled her back towards the TARDIS.

“We’ll be back!” He called over his shoulder. “Five minutes! Tops!” And then the door slammed behind them.

Amelia Pond ran to her bedroom window to watch the Raggedy Man and the Golden Rose disappear into their mad blue box.

“Five minutes?” Rose asked, coughing on the fumes still spilling out of the TARDIS.

“Yeah it’s a time machine, I’ll promise any time I like.” He said, holding his shredded tie up to his face and hitting a few buttons on the console while Rose called for extractor fans that didn’t listen.

She adjusted some dials and pulled the dematerialisation lever. “Yeah but you’re a terrible driver.”

“Oi!” he protested, but was immediately cut off as he hit another control and turned the relatively-smooth trip Rose had started turned into a bumpy one. “Yes well... you’re not. It’s why I married you.” He teased.

“Oh is that the only reason then?” She grinned cheekily, and braced herself on the console as the TARDIS skidded to a halt.

They sputtered on the toxic fumes as they stepped out, the TARDIS practically slamming the door behind them. “Oh she’s quite upset with us isn’t she?” He ran his hand down the door.

“Well we did set her on fire, crash land, and then proceed to fly her twice afterwards,” Rose admitted before looking around. “Where are we, Doctor?”

“A prison ship—the one looking for Prisoner Zero to be exact,” he explained, attempting to shove his hands in his ruined pockets, but finding ash in one and his fingers exposed in the other. He decided even if they’d been decent pockets though he didn’t much care for the feeling anymore. There goes that habit then.

Rose stopped him before he could get too far on this ship he’d started wandering around without realising. “Wait, Doctor- listen,” she said, looking up to the ceiling.

A message was being played over the P.A. system on repeat: "Prisoner Zero will vacate the human residence, or the human residence will be incinerated... Repeat: Prisoner Zero will vacate the human residence, or the human residence will be incinerated...”

Rose’s eyes widened as she processed it. “Amelia!” she exclaimed, and they both started running
towards the center of the ship.

“We can’t stop them but we can slow them down. Give us time to get ahead and get Prisoner Zero and then—I don’t know. Something clever!” the Doctor yelled, pulling Rose by the hand as they ran.

They came upon a computer command system and the Doctor started sonicking it, growling as the light kept flickering and hitting it against the side of the screen in frustration. Finally though the ship’s blueprints came up. “Plasma engines, fission-electric…” he muttered, eyes flitting back and forth across the screen. He attempted to unlock the controls but cursed eloquently in Gallifreyan as the deadlock seal kept him out. “Can’t access the ship’s controls from here we’ll have to get to the front—”

“Wait hold on,” Rose said, grabbing his arm before he could turn. “Plasma engines, you said? That means they’re traveling by wormhole, yeah? Otherwise it would take them ages to get from here to Earth.” She scanned her timespace senses for confirmation of their coordinates. “We don’t need to slow them down, we just need to keep them from making the jump.”

“...And because they’re using wormholes we can manipulate their travel from the TARDIS!” the Doctor finished, grabbing her face and kissing her firmly. “Oh Rose Tyler, you’re brilliant!”

Rose grinned. “It’s why you married me, yeah?”

The Doctor spun on his heel and started back towards the TARDIS. “Well that and you’re dead sexy,” he answered cheekily.

Rose rolled her eyes despite the blush. “Didn’t think you could get even more of a flirt than last time.”

They have to fight the TARDIS a bit to get back through the doors but she eventually concedes, allowing them entrance, though Rose suspected it was only because they weren’t currently safe trespassing on the battleship.

“All right,” he said, pulling the monitor closer to him and flipping switches, “we’ll just reverse the polarity-”

“-engage a dampening field-” Rose added, typing something to his left.

-and slow down time in the wormhole,” he finished, flicking a final switch with a flourish and a grin. “Now back to Amelia Pond—whoa!”

He collapsed into Rose’s arms, clutching his chest, just as the TARDIS lurched forwards and started flinging them haphazardly through the Time Vortex. Rose likewise, felt a shooting pain all down her back as her kidneys attempted explosion and her regeneration energy flew there. “Not good,” she muttered, grabbing onto the console and helping the Doctor stand up straight.

“Really really not good,” he agreed, adjusting the coordinates as best he could while the TARDIS was trying incredibly hard to get them out of her fast as she could.

They crash landed again just as another explosion went through the ship.

Amy Pond was going through the kitchen pantry, already ready for work, when the whooshing noise filled the air, but- no- it couldn’t be-
“Amelia!” that familiar voice from her dreams called. “Amelia, we worked out what to do! We can fix it! You’ve gotta get out of there!” The sonic noise came through the keyhole and unlocked it, and she ran up the stairs.

“Amelia!” a woman called this time as the door flung open and two sets of footsteps filled the house. “Amelia are you there? Are you alright? Amelia!” They ran up the stairs and Amy hovered in the doorframe, hidden.

“Prisoner Zero is here! Prisoner Zero is here!” He was yelling frantically while Rose looked about the corridor. *No, not Rose. Rose isn’t real-

She turned back to focus on what her husband was doing and Amy took her chance, seising the cricket bat from the floor next to her, she crept out and aimed the makeshift weapon right at the back of both of their heads, but they turned around last second and got it full-forced. *Oh well.*

Muttering to herself, she dragged the two unconscious intruders to the end of the hall. Thinking quickly as they were beginning to come round again, she looped the costume handcuffs through the heating unit and locked each end around their wrists. She leaned against the stair railing, panicking only slightly, and watched as their heads started lolling and eyes rolled behind their eyelids.

“White male and female couple, mid-20’s, breaking and entering.” She muttered into her fake radio, praying they’d take the bait, “send me some backup I’ve got them restrained.” She turned to look at them finally as they stared at her incredulously. “Oi! You sit still.”

“Amelia…” The woman muttered, squinting at her. Amy’s eyes widened only half a fraction before she composed herself and shook her head.

The man cleared his throat and Amy was swept up in how they’re exactly the same. Same torn clothes and same faint golden light coming from the woman. The people that have plagued her nearly every thought since she was seven years old.

“... Cricket bat. I’m getting cricket bat,” he muttered, emphasizing the last two words and looking around wildly.

“You two were breaking and entering,” she said, leaning forward, hand on her hip.

But he didn’t seem to hear her. “Yeah that’s much better. Brand new me. Whack on the head. Just what I needed. Is that what you needed?” He turned to his wife who was still studying Amy cautiously.

She shook her head and raised her hand to rub at what would be a bruise if she wasn’t still regenerating. “Definitely not,” she answered plainly.

“Do you two want to shut up now? I’ve got back up on the way,” she threatened, hoping maybe if she said it again they’d believe her.

“Hang on wait no you’re a policewoman.” He rambled, looking her up and down, confusion written on his face as if he was trying to figure out what he was missing.

“And you’re breaking and entering. See how this works?” she replied snarkily.

“Awfully short skirt for a policewoman…” the wife commented, and Amy glared at her.

He tilted his head as if giving her that—*maybe that’s what he was missing*—either way he deemed
it not incredibly important at the moment. “But what are you doing here? Where’s Amelia?”

Amy straightened up. “Amelia Pond?”

“Yeah. Amelia. Little Scottish girl,” he held his free hand up to knee-height, "where is she?” He squinted up at her. “I promised her five minutes but the engines were phasing, we must have gone a bit far… Has something happened to her?”

“Amelia Pond hasn’t lived here for a long time,” she half-lied.

He seemed to choke on his own words and next to him the woman gasped. “How long?” he demanded.

“Six months,” she said, a whole-lie, but she wanted to see how he’d react.

“No! No, no, no, no!” he exclaimed, sitting back as the word got stuck on repeat like it did—no. “I can’t be six months late, I said five minutes. I promised.” He sniffed somewhat defiantly and she stared at him and the distressed look on his wife’s face before turning around.

“What happened to her?” Rose demanded, sounding heart broken. “What happened to Amelia Pond?” They both attempted to stand up despite the restraints.

Amy swallowed her feelings and spoke into the fake radio again. “Sarge, it’s me again. Hurry it up. These two know something about Amelia Pond.”

“I need to speak to whoever lives in this house right now,” he demanded from his place on the floor as she came back to stand in front of them.

“I live here.”

“But you’re the police,” he argued.

“Yeah, and this is where I live. Have you got a problem with that?” Amy realised the unlikelihood of the coincidence, and his wife squinted at her as she did too, but Amy kept her eyes straight.

“How many rooms?” He asked finally.

“What?”

“On this floor. How many rooms? Count them for me now.”

“Why?”

He stared at her, eyes old and sad and serious, just like she remem—no. “Because it will change your life.”

“Five. One, two, three, four, five—”

“Six,” Rose corrected her quietly—No, not Rose.

“Where?” She argued, but she couldn’t keep the frightened tone from her voice.

“Exactly where you don’t want to look. Where you never want to look,” he said quickly. “The corner of your eye. Look behind you.”

She did, slowly, and there it was, a door she’d never seen before. “That’s… that is not possible.
How is that possible?"

The woman answered. “There’s a perception filter around the whole door. I saw it last time. We should have done—” She cut herself off, still clearly caught on the news that Amelia Pond wasn’t there. If it was any other circumstance Amy might have felt bad.

“But that’s a whole room,” Amy argued, even as she was staring at the evidence. “That’s a whole room I’ve never even noticed.” Even as she was saying it though she felt like it was wrong—something niggling in the back of her head.

She walked towards the room slowly, deja-vu invading her every sense as they yelled at her not to open the door. “You need to uncuff us now!” he shouted frantically.

“I lost the key,” she mumbled distractedly, pulling the door knob open.

The Doctor started patting his pockets looking for his screwdriver. “My screwdriver!” He yelled towards the policewoman as she opened the door. “Have you seen it? Silver thing, blue at the end.”

“There’s nothing in here.” She said instead of answering.

“Whatever is in there kept you from seeing the whole room. What makes you think you could see it?” He answered sarcastically, and felt a half-hearted reprimand for rudeness come from Rose’s side of the bond—he ignored her.

“Silver thing, blue at the end?” The policewoman called.

“Yes, my screwdriver!” He looked up hopefully, like maybe the Universe would be kind and she’d walk out unscathed holding his sonic.

“It’s here,” she said after a moment.

“Must’ve rolled under the door,” he tried to explain, though clearly not believing it himself.

“Yeah… must’ve…” a long pause followed and then they heard a faint mutter, “and then it must have jumped up on the table…”

“Get out of there!” They both yelled over and over, pulling at their restraints, but still she didn’t appear. “What is it? What are you doing?” He yelled.

“There’s nothing here but…” She drifted off quietly, and if it wasn’t for their Time Lord hearing there’s no way they would have heard her.

“Corner of your eye,” Rose said hauntingly.

“Don’t try to see it! If it knows you’ve seen it, it will kill you!” the Doctor spouted off the warning quickly. She screamed shortly after and came running out with his screwdriver. “Give me that!” He yelled, and then pointed it at the door, locking it, before aiming it at the handcuffs where it flickered pitifully some more. “Come on what’s the bad alien done to you?” he mumbled, rubbing the odd substance off of it and shooting the policewoman a look that said she was the bad alien.

“Will that door hold it?” She asked, real fear finally present in her voice.

He was flippant with his reply. “Oh yeah, yeah, course! It’s an inter-dimensional multi-form from outer space—they’re all terrified of wood,” he answered sarcastically. Rose didn’t even bother to
reprimand him as she stared at the door in question and it started to glow.

“What’s that? What’s it doing?” the woman demanded.

“Don’t know,” he lied. “Getting dressed,” he answered somewhat honestly. “Run! Just go! We’ll be fine. We’re always fine. Your backup’s coming.”

“There is no backup!” She rolled her eyes, and pretty-much confirmed what Rose had been thinking.

The Doctor argued the obvious truth though as he is wont to do. “No, I heard you on the radio. You called for backup.”

“I was pretending. It’s a pretend radio,” she answered quickly.

“But you’re a policewoman!” he argued further.

“I’m a kiss-o-gram!” she exclaimed, and pulled her hat off, letting her long red hair spill down her shoulders- pretty much confirming Rose’s other suspicion. Scottish accent in England, red hair, brave defiant attitude? It was too horrible a thing to have had happened though for Rose to voice it out loud.

The door burst open then, and their eyes widened as a man and his dog walked over the fallen piece of wood. “But it’s just…” she started.

“No it isn’t,” Rose interrupted. “Look at the faces.”

The man was growling, not the dog, and soon he was barking as well.

“What? I’m sorry, but what?” she demanded, looking down at the couple that seemed to have all the answers at the moment.

“It’s one creature. One creature disguised as two. Clever old multi-form,” the Doctor explained quickly, unable to keep that old admiration for life out of his voice even while awaiting his death. “Bit of a rush job though. Got a voice a bit muddled did you?” He antagonized the alien, getting it to stare at him rather than the girls. “Mind you, where’d you get the pattern though? You’d need a psychic-link, a live feed. How’d you fix that?”

A sickening cracking noise came with every movement the alien made, and it all came to a boiling point as it opened it’s mouth to reveal rows of long pointed teeth.

“Stay, boy!” Rose tried, hoping maybe it came with the ‘pattern.’ It kept coming forward though.

“We’re safe. You wanna know why?” the Doctor tried, patting the kiss-o-gram’s shoes. “She sent for backup.”

“I didn’t send for backup!” She argued, misunderstanding, and the Doctor rolled his eyes.

“I know. That was a clever lie to save our lives. Okay, yeah! No backup! And that’s why we’re safe. Alone we’re not a threat to you. If we had backup then you’d have to kill us.” To their surprise the alien closed its mouth, seeming to consider his words.

Just as the words were out of the Doctor’s mouth though the P.A. voice from the ship enveloped the house. “Attention Prisoner Zero: The human residence is surrounded-”

“What’s that?”
“Well that would be backup,” the Doctor said quickly. “Okay, one more time. We do have backup and that is definitely why we’re safe-”

“Prisoner Zero will vacate the human residence, or the human residence will be incinerated…” The voice interrupted him.

“,Well apart from you know… incineration.” He said flippantly, and Rose had to keep herself from facepalming.

Prisoner Zero wandered into the next room to look out the window, and finally the Doctor got the sonic working. Quickly he unlocked their handcuffs. “Run!” He said, pulling both women by the hands and shoving them in front of him towards the stairs. They ran out the door, the Doctor locking it behind them. “Kiss-o-gram?” he demanded incredulously.

“Yes, a kiss-o-gram! What’s going on?” she demanded right back as they followed Rose to the TARDIS.

“Why did you pretend to be a policewoman?” He continued on his own line of questioning instead of answering hers. In front of them Rose rolled her eyes.

“You broke into my house! It was this or a French maid!” She yelled back. “Now what’s going on?”

He ran up behind Rose as the still-steaming TARDIS where she was jiggling her key in the lock to no avail. “An alien convict is hiding in your spare room disguised as a man and a dog, and some other aliens are about to incinerate your house.” He turned to her, speaking quickly. “Any other questions?”

“Yes.”

“Me too.”

Rose hit the TARDIS door angrily and the Doctor realised what was going on. “No, no, no!” He repeated for what was likely the eighth time since he regenerated. “Don’t do that! Not now!” He yelled at their ship, but didn’t get a response—not even a telepathic indignant sniff. She must be incredibly cross with them then.

“Come on!” The fake-policewoman yelled over the noise of the alien ship and the barking alien in her window. She attempted to pull the couple away but the Doctor stopped short. Rose’s breath caught in her throat as she realised her husband was catching on.

“No, wait, hang on, hang on, wait, wait, wait. The shed!” He exclaimed, running in the opposite direction from the escape route to examine the tool shed. “I destroyed that shed last time I was here! Smashed it to pieces!” He jumped over a bush to get right up next to it. Rose inhaled sharply as her suspicions were further confirmed at his discovery- and her husband began to pick up on them as well.

“So there’s a new one!” the girl said. “Let’s go!”

“Yes but the new one’s got old!” He argued, “It’s ten years old at least!” He sniffed it, ran his finger down the wood, and then licked his finger. “Twelve years. I’m not six months late, I’m twelve years late.” He turned angrily towards her, demanding answers. “You said six months! Why did you say six months?”

“He’s coming.”
“Why did you say six months?” He repeated.

“We’ve gotta go.”

“This matters. This is important. Why did you say six months?”

“WELL WHY DID YOU SAY FIVE MINUTES?” She finally yelled, officially losing any disguise she had left, and confirming Rose’s worst fears.

“What?” he sputtered, shell shocked, and Rose ran forward to grab both of their hands. “What?” he asked again, and a laser shot at them. “What?” he yelled, and she continued to ignore him as they ran further into the small town.

They slowed to a walk on a small one-way road lined by old stone walls, and the Doctor immediately turned to her again. “You’re Amelia,” he declared, and Rose rested her hand on his back.

“And you’re late,” she answered, walking ahead of them.

“Amelia Pond. You’re the little girl!” he repeated, lengthening his strides to match hers.

“I’m Amelia, and you’re late,” she said, not meeting his eye as they kept down the street.

“What happened?” he begged.

“Twelve years,” she answered firmly, still not meeting either one of their eyes.

“You hit us with a cricket bat,” he said incredulously.

Amelia scoffs indignantly, “twelve years!”

“A cricket bat!” he repeated, making an odd motion with his hands.

“Twelve years and four psychiatrists!”

“Four?” he repeated, curiosity getting the better of him.

She looked sideways at the couple. “I kept biting them.”


She stopped and finally turned to look at them for the first time since she yelled. the Doctor looked lost and confused. Rose looked heartbroken. It would have been easier had they both just turned out to be horrible people, but no, it’s only been so many minutes for them. “They kept saying you weren’t real,” she said firmly, albeit a bit sheepish.

A smile started to form on the Doctor’s face, but it was interrupted as the voice from earlier came over a nearby set of speakers. “Prisoner Zero will vacate the human residence, or the human residence will be incinerated… Repeat: Prisoner Zero will vacate the human residence, or the human residence will be incinerated…”

“No, no, no, no, come on,” Amelia groaned, and Rose couldn’t help but smirk as she repeated the word just like the Doctor did. “What? We’re being staked out by an ice-cream van?” she asked incredulously.

They ran up to the van in question as the man inside was splicing two wires together. “Why are
“You playing that?” the Doctor demanded.

The ice-cream man gave him a funny look. “It’s supposed to be Clair de Lune,” he insisted, brow furrowed as he tried to make sense of his tape with the alien message.

They looked around to realise the message was repeating itself over and over out of everyone’s mobile. Nearby a jogger stared down at her smartphone and a few paces away an elderly woman shook her flip phone incredulously and held it up to her ear. “Doctor, what’s happening?” Amelia insisted.

He shot Rose a look and knew she’d reached the same horrible conclusion he had. They took off at the same time by unspoken agreement, hopping the fence of someone’s back garden and entering their home unceremoniously, Amelia close on their heels.

They came in, slipping on the front rug a bit, and Rose spoke quickly to the elderly woman surprised to find the two strangers in her sitting room while a massive eyeball was filling up her television scree. “Hello. We’re doing a special on-television faults in this area——” Amelia came up next to them as soon as she said it though, wearing her policewoman costume.

“—Also crimes…” the Doctor added, looking the girl up and down. The older woman opened and closed her mouth a few times in confusion. “Let’s have a look then,” he said, stepping around the small sofa to take the remote from her.

“I was just about to phone,” she informed them matter of factly, “It’s on every channel!” the Doctor nodded politely and starting banging the remote against his palm before aiming it at the telly like that would do anything. “Oh, hello Amy dear, are you a policewoman now?” she asked, squinting at the young girl.

Amy’s eyes widened and she bent her knees a bit awkwardly. “Well… sometimes!” she let out.

“I thought you were a nurse,” the old woman went on, and Rose got the distinct feeling that the woman knew exactly what Amelia actually did.

“I can be a nurse…” she answered awkwardly, and Rose caught the Doctor’s look when he slowly raised his head as he took in what exactly Amelia was saying.

“…Or actually a nun?” the elderly woman squinted.

“I dabble!” Amelia exclaimed, aiming to cut the conversation short.

The woman nodded and took the out. “Amy, who’s your friend?” she asked, but the Doctor interrupted before she could answer.

“Amy? Who’s Amy? You were Amelia!” He demanded, sounding quite like a put-off father, and Rose had to hide her smirk as this whole scene unfolded before her.

“Yeah, and now I’m Amy,” she said flippantly.

“Amelia Pond!” he exclaimed. “That was a great name!” he argued like he’d named her that himself.

She squinted at him. “Bit fairytale,” she said, keeping her expression blank but her eyes full of all the emotion she was refusing to reveal.

The old woman whose home they were invading didn’t pick up on the unspoken conversation. “I
know you, don’t I?” she asked the Doctor, effectively breaking the eye contact he’d had with Amelia. “I’ve seen you somewhere before.”

He leaned down, and Rose realized this new regeneration had a proclivity for getting incredibly close to people when he spoke. “Not me! Brand new face!” he said, and Rose stifled a giggle as he stretched said ‘brand-new face’ comically while standing so close to the woman. “First time on. My wife though maybe!” He exclaimed, gesturing grandly and proudly towards Rose. “I don’t know where we are. She’s a Londoner!” He didn’t give Rose a chance to introduce herself though as his gaze flicked back to Amy. “What sort of job’s a kiss-o-gram?” He demanded.

She crossed her arms. “I go to parties and I… kiss people.” She cleared her throat as he gave her the most heartbreaking look, but went on determinedly. “In outfits… it’s a laugh!”

“You were a little girl five minutes ago!” He said sternly, and Rose couldn’t help but feel like she was witnessing a father and daughter argument this time.

“You’re worse than my aunt!” she exclaimed.

“I’m the Doctor; I’m worse than everybody’s aunt,” he said with so much conviction but still Rose had to stifle her laugh at the ridiculousness of that statement. He turned back to the elderly woman he was still standing very close to as if remembering she was still there. “And that is not how I’m introducing myself,” he said to her, but also as a statement to the universe at large.

He picked up the nearby stereo and sonicked it a few times, each time the message arrived in a different language, and Rose had only a little time to worry about the TARDIS not translating, before he was speaking again. “Okay, so it’s everywhere. In every language. They’re broadcasting to the whole world.” He set the stereo down.

‘And that means-’ Rose started inside his head.

‘Yeah. Human residence. The Earth. Pretty much as bad as it gets,’ he answered, shooting her a furtive look as he ran to the open window to look up towards the still blessedly-empty sky.

“What’s up there? What are you looking for?” Amy demanded at his side, but he didn’t answer. He shook his head towards Rose who let out a sigh of momentary relief.

“Alright, okay.” He started, pacing. “Planet this size, two poles your basic molten core-”

“-they’re going to need a 40% fission-blast.” Rose finished, scanning through the blueprints they saw of the ship in her head. “But they’ll have to power up first—” she started hopefully, just as the Doctor came face-to-face with the new man who’d come through the door.

“What would you say, Rose? Medium sized starship?” he spoke to his wife, but leaned further into the new man’s space, scanning his eyes wildly without really seeing them. “That’s twenty minutes,” he concluded. He started going up and down on his toes in front of the tall bloke and Rose realised he was thinking about the comment she’d made about his height a few hours ago now—or twelve years ago, depending on how you looked at it. “What do you think? Twenty minutes? Yeah, twenty minutes.” He repeated as the stranger stared at him confusedly. “We’ve got twenty minutes,” he said finally, dropping back to his heels and looking around the room.

“Twenty minutes to what?” Amy asked, looking between the Doctor and Rose.

“Are you the Doctor?” The new bloke interrupted, and both he and Rose startled. “And Rose?” he added, spinning to point at the blonde.
They both shot each other a look, wondering if maybe they had met these people.

“They are, aren’t they!” the older woman exclaimed, grinning brightly as she solved the riddle she’d been working on since they’d walk in. “The Raggedy Doctor and The Golden Rose!” Amy grimaced and Rose had to stifle her snort at the look the Doctor was giving her. “All those cartoons you did when you were little!” she reminded Amy like maybe she’d forgotten. “The Doctor and Rose! It’s them!” she exclaimed again like she was informing Amy on this for the first time.

Amy cleared her throat. “Shut up,” she said softly.

The Doctor looked around for a second like he was lost. “Cartoons?” he asked distractedly, like he didn’t know the word.

Rose laughed and sat down on the couch, crossing her legs, the Doctor following suit, though he sort of just flopped there. “I’ve always wanted to be a cartoon,” she mused good-naturedly.

“Gran, It’s really them!” The bloke enthused, ironically ignoring them.

“Jeff, shut up!” Amy said, brushing imaginary hair out of her face. “Twenty minutes to what?” She asked again, attempting to get back to the important conversation. The one about the safety of their lives.

The Doctor sat forward and watched the creepy eyeball on the television screen. “The human residences,” he explained quickly, “they’re not talking about your house—they’re talking about the planet. Somewhere up there, there’s a spaceship. And… it’s going to incinerate the planet.” He paused, and the now more-daunting message filled the room again. “Twenty minutes to the end of the world.”

A few dramatic moments passed before him and Rose stood at the same time and made their way out the door—not saying anything to the shellshocked Jeff and his gran, while Amy gave them a half-hearted smile before following them out.

Walking quickly, they were back on the stone building lined street. “What is this place? Where are we?” the Doctor asked as a little innocent boy with a toy helicopter passed.

“Leadworth,” Amy answered shortly.

The Doctor shot his wife a look—her having better Earth geography than him, but she only shrugged in response. “Where’s the rest of it?” He asked, earning a ‘rude’ from Rose that he promptly ignored. He got to do that in end-of-the-world situations (and in retrospect they really should start to worry about how often they are in such situations that they had rules surrounding them).

“This is it,” she said.

“Is there an airport?” Rose asked hopefully. Plenty of small towns had airports after all.

“No,” Amy answered, deflating Rose’s shoulders, but the Doctor continued down that line of questioning despite the likelihood.

“A nuclear power station?”

Amy let out a cross between an incredulous laugh and a scoff. “Yeah, no.”

“Even just a little one?” he said, looking around and limping a bit as his hip struggled.
Regeneration really did make him feel all 900 and something of his years.

“Nope.” She said simply, waiting for the evaluation of her tiny town to be over.

“Nearest city?” He asked, thinking maybe he’d have time to get somewhere more productive.

“Gloucester, half an hour by car,” she answered quickly.

“Haven’t got half an hour. Have we got a car?” He said quicker, and Rose felt like she was watching a tennis table match when these two spoke.

“No,” she sighed.

“Well that’s good!” He exclaimed sarcastically. “Fantastic, that is. Twenty minutes to save the world, and I’ve got a post office.” He gestured widely to the building they’d just passed. He turned to her again as they walked. “And it’s shut!” Rose could feel his frustration and anxiety coming off of him in waves, and she was quite sure she’d still be able to even without the bond linking them together. He jutted his arm out in front of him suddenly as they came to what appeared to be the center of the small town. “What is that?” He demanded.

“It’s a duck pond!” Amy answered incredulously, and they ran to catch up with his lengthening strides towards the pond. His hip seemed better now.

“Why aren’t there any ducks?” he asked, like it was a personal attack against him that there weren’t any ducks in the duck pond.

“I don’t know! There’s never any ducks!” She was frustrated now with his seemingly endless ventures away from territory that made sense.

His eyes studied hers. “Then how do you know it’s a duck pond?”

“It just is! Is it important, the duck pond?”

“I don’t know. Why would I know?” He got out just as his right heart decided to take a kip and he clutched at his chest, falling back to sit at the edge of the duck-less duck pond. Rose ran to squat next to him. “This is too soon. I’m not ready. I’m not done yet.”

Rose brushed his new floppy hair out of his new green eyes and projected as much belief in him as she could over the bond. He grinned at her and clutched at his hip just as the sky went dark.

“What’s happening? Why’s it going dark?” Amy voiced the questions on all of their minds.

“What’s wrong with the sun?” She asked, squinting at the odd looking ball-of-fire, as the lights came back on.

“Nothing,” Rose answered for him. “You’re looking at it through a forcefield. They’ve sealed off your upper atmosphere.” She explained, and distantly she wondered when she stopped thinking of the Earth as ‘hers.’

“And now they’re getting ready to boil the planet,” the Doctor said flippantly, earning a glare from both the women that he ignored. Finally, he could stand again. “Oh and here they come!” He said, looking towards the townsfolk gathered on the green, all with their phones pointed towards the sky. “The human race. The end comes, as it was always going to, down a video phone!”

Rose looked at Amy. “He gets a superiority complex about humans when he’s stressed,” she said, and he turned around to scowl at her.
Amy’s eyes flitted back and forth between the couple. It was them saying ‘humans’ like that, like they weren’t, so, so… casually, that set her off. “This isn’t real. This is some sort of wind up isn’t it?” she asked, half-daring to hope.

“Why would we wind you up?” He frowned at her.

“You told me you had a time machine.”

“And you believed me!”

“Yeah, and then I grew up,” he shot back, twisting her hands together and not looking up to meet their eyes. She knew Rose was looking at her with that heartbroken expression again.

“Oh you never wanna do that.” He said quickly, looking around, like he was thinking of something else as he said it. “No, hang on, shut up, wait! I missed it!” He hit himself in the forehead and both Amy and Rose stared at him like he was a mad man. “I saw it. And I missed it. What did I see? I saw… what did I see?”

“The nurse.” Rose said, eyes wide. And yes, yes the nurse. ‘Rose you are beautiful!’ He told her, and she gave him a tongue-touched smile.

“Twenty minutes!” He exclaimed, turning to Amy and getting close to her face. “We can do it. Twenty minutes, the planet burns. Run to your loved ones and say goodbye, or stay with us.”

Amy studied him for a moment and she was halfway to saying ‘no’ and throwing him in a looney bin when she caught the look on Rose’s face. She was looking up at him with so much love and affection… and her shoulders were squared like she was really ready, like she saved the world on a daily basis and this was another day on the job. And right behind their eyes, right behind all the manic energy and love for each other… was this weight, the weight of the world that they were taking on right now and have been for who knows how long. That couldn’t be faked. “What do we do?” she said finally, earning dazzling grins from the both of them.

“Stop that nurse!” He exclaimed, and they took off running.

The Doctor grabbed the nurse’s phone as he ran past him, holding up the screen to make sure what he and Rose caught was correct. It was, of course it was. “The sun’s going out, and you’re photographing a man and a dog. Why?” He placed the phone back in his hand rather forcefully.

Amy ran up as the nurse continued to stare at the couple incredulously. “Amy?” he turned to her for answers, and she grabbed his arm comfortably.

Rose didn’t miss the familiar gesture, but she locked her smirk away carefully. “Hi!” Amy said, lightly, leaning into him. Rose raised an eyebrow. “Oh this is Rory, he’s a- …friend.” So a new relationship then, Rose thought.

“Boyfriend,” Rory laughed awkwardly, and Rose thought she knew the feeling. Her and the Doctor weren’t exactly textbook. It took him ages to admit he loved her, and even that was after they’d realised she was part-Time Lord. He’d been too terrified of losing her for so long. Well she’d been… 22 anyway, and now at 122 that felt like many lifetimes ago, but still.

“Sort of, boyfriend,” Amy corrected, and Rose tilted her head—feeling a bit like a concerned mother.

“Amy!” Rory protested awkwardly, looking at her sideways.
But the Doctor, not paying nearly as much attention to the relationship as Rose, didn’t allow Amy to respond. “Man and dog, why?” —Oh right, twenty minutes to save the world. Suppose relationship trifles can wait then, Rose reminded herself.

There was a long pause as Rory took the Doctor in, instead of answering he went, “Oh my god, it’s him. It’s them!” He pointed at the couple and looked at Amy.

She grimaced, “Just answer his question, please.”


“Yeah, they came back,” she finally admitted it out loud.

“But they were a story! They were a game!” he protested, and Rose thought she finally got why people were doing this. For twelve years they were just a story that Amy told, and now to them it seemed as if they’d suddenly come to life. It would be like if Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore walked onto the TARDIS.

The Doctor, not half as interested in the small developments like Rose, pulled Rory by his jacket and came nose to nose with him, frustration written clearly upon his features. “Man and dog. Why? Tell me. Now.”

“Sorry.” Rory said, shaking his head. “Because he can’t be there. Because he’s in a hospital, in a coma,” the Doctor said the last words with him. Rory nodded, “Yeah.”

The Doctor grinned. “Knew it,” he bragged, and behind him his wife rolled her eyes. “Multi-form, you see?” He clapped Rory on the shoulders and finally let go of his jacket, brushing it out, and then grabbing his shoulders. Turns out this new Doctor was more tactile than before, Rose thought she could get used to that. “It can disguise itself as anything, but it needs a live feed. A psychic link with a living but dormant mind.” He poked Rory hard in the forehead at that, and over her husband’s shoulder Rose sent him an apologetic look.

Behind them, in front of the tudor home, the dog and man in question barked. The Doctor started towards him without a second thought. “Prisoner Zero.” He said by way of greeting the criminal alien, hands in his pockets despite his earlier decision to abandon the habit. Must be the trousers.

“What, there’s a Prisoner Zero too?” Rory asked Amy, gaining Rose’s attention as well.

“Yes,” Amy answered quickly, not taking her eyes off the Doctor.

Then the spacecraft came overhead. Around them the humans lifted their video phones again, but the Doctor surreptitiously pulled the sonic out of his pocket, suddenly glad for the old habit. “See, that ship up there is scanning for non-terrestrial technology.” He ignored Rose’s comment of ‘Very Spock,’ and kept his gaze locked on the prisoner. “And nothing says non-terrestrial like a sonic screwdriver.” He said, cleverly holding up the tool for emphasis.

He grinned like a child and held the screwdriver up, that all-too-familiar noise filled the air as all around them the street lamps blew out, car horns blared, motor-scooters went off on their own (their respective old ladies screaming ‘STOP!’) and sirens wailed as the nearby fire truck rolled away driverless, the fire brigade themselves running after it with shouts of ‘Oi! Get back here!’ as if it was sentient and dutiful. Behind him Rory and Amy laughed merrily and the Doctor felt that giddy sense of pride that always came when people enjoyed him doing something clever. “I think someone’s gonna notice, don’t you?” he concluded cheekily.
He pointed his tool at the closest telephone booth and sent it into sparks, only to have the sonic spark at him as well a moment later, falling out of his hand. “No, no, no, don’t do that!” he pouted, picking up the burnt screwdriver from the grass and slamming it back down in a fit. He pivoted around to see the ship leaving. He’d burnt out his sonic for no reason then too. “No! Come back!” he shouted to no avail, “He’s here!” He flung his hands down as the ship disappeared once more, and Rose called his attention.

“He’s gone, love.”

“The drain,” Amy interrupted frantically. “He just sort of… melted down it.”

“Well of course it did,” the Doctor snapped bitterly, and he informed Rose that he knew he was being rude before she could say anything, and she smirked.

“Well what do we do?” Amy asked, clearly unfazed by his attitude, a trait Rose decided she quite liked in the Scottish girl.

“It’s hiding in human form. We need to drive it into the open,” Rose explained as kindly as she could, cutting the Doctor off from saying the same thing in a more condescending tone.

“No TARDIS, no screwdriver, 17 minutes,” he said. “Come on, think. Think!” he muttered to himself.

Amy turned to Rose as the Doctor continued to look off into the distance and talk to himself. “So that thing... that thing hid in my house for twelve years?” She asked.

Rose put a hand on her shoulder. “Multi-forms can live for a millennia… maybe more. Twelve years was like a pit stop.” She glanced over to Rory as he studied her husband and smirked to herself distractedly before flitting back to Amy.

“What about you two then?” Amy asked, studying Rose’s eyes again. “You look young but your eyes are old. Both of you. And you say you’re time travellers… what’s all that about?”

Rose sighed. “I’m... 122 years old, I think. It’s hard to keep track sometimes in the vortex.”

Amy took a step back, her eyes widening, “No you’re not. You’re lying. Look at you. No one looks that good at 100. And I should know, I live in Leadworth.”

Rose smirked. “I’ll take that as a compliment then.” She shook her head before going on. “I met the Doctor when I was just nineteen. Properly human then.” She eyes got distant. “Then… a lot of things happened that I may explain when we have more than seventeen minutes left to live,” she joked half-heartedly. “Short story short is I don’t age- neither of us do. The Doctor is a thousand and something. He lost count way before he met me.”

Amy studied the woman curiously as they approached the Doctor and Rory, but decided to drop the subject for now. “So how come you two show up again on the very same day that lot do, the same minute?” she asked, leaning into the Doctor.

“There’s two explanations and it’s probably both.” Rose answered.

“They were looking for him, but they found us. They saw me through the crack, got a fix, and followed me here. When we left your house we went on that ship. We tried to slow it down to buy ourselves some more time before it got here. Still not sure if we succeeded, the TARDIS sort of exploded halfway through. They may have followed us through the wormhole. Either way, they’re late because we are.” He explained quickly, talking half a mile a minute, but Rose couldn’t blame
him. They were on a very serious time limit at the moment. “Nurse boy—Rory,” the Doctor corrected himself before Rose could. “Give me your phone,” he said, holding out his hand.

Rory just looked to Amy though. “How can they be real? They were never real.”

The Doctor squinted at being ignored, “Phone. Now. Give me.” He repeated, and finally Rory handed it over distractedly.

“It was just a game when we were kids,” he said to Amy, like she didn’t know. “You made me dress up as him.” Rose snorted despite herself at the image, but the Doctor didn’t seem to be paying any attention, already scrolling through the phone.

“These photos, they are all coma patients?” he asked. Rory confirmed and the Doctor immediately corrected him. “No. They’re multi-forms. Eight comas, eight disguises for Prisoner Zero.”

“He had a dog though, there’s a dog in a coma?” Amy said over his shoulder.

“Well, the coma patient dreams he’s walking a dog, Prisoner Zero gets a dog.” He explained, far more patient with Amy’s questions than Rory’s. “Laptop!” He exclaimed suddenly. He pointed at Amy, tossing the phone from one hand to another. “Your friend, what was his name? Not him, the good looking one.”

“Thanks,” Rory interrupted, to which Rose put a comforting hand on his shoulder. The Doctor had even less manners than usual when he was under time constraints. He much preferred to be lording over time—as it were—than being held down by it.

“Jeff,” Amy answered quickly.

“Ohhh, thanks,” Rory said, and Rose got the feeling this was a typical concern of his. Rory turned to Rose who gave him as much of a comforting look as she could manage given the circumstances. He seemed to appreciate it though nonetheless.

“He had a laptop in his bag!” the Doctor went on, ignoring Rory further, though Rose wasn’t sure he was doing it on purpose- he just wasn’t very good with trifles, much less in the middle of a crisis. “Big bag, big laptop!” He clapped Rory on the shoulder to get his attention again. “I need Jeff’s laptop!” He looked between the two humans as he had an arm around each of them. “You two, get to the hospital. Get everyone out of that ward. Clear the whole floor. Phone me when you’re done,” he ordered happily, and then grabbed Rose by the hand and hauled her back in the direction of the laptop.

“You’re going to hack into that call aren’t you?” Rose asked, smirking, as they ran towards the house.

The Doctor grinned at her. “You know me too well,” he said, flinging the front door open and flying to Jeff’s room without greeting to his gran. Rose remedied that quickly before following him.

“Give it here!” the Doctor was saying when she entered, pulling the laptop from Jeff, and Rose smirked when her husband’s eyes widened at the screen and sent a look over his shoulder to the poor human. “Blimey! Get a girlfriend, Jeff,” he mumbled, and Rose snorted—much to Jeff’s horror.

His Gran walked in then. “What are you doing?” She asked Rose, but the Doctor interrupted on impulse.
“The sun’s gone wibbly. So right now, somewhere out there, there’s going to be a big old video conference call.” He typed rapidly without looking at the screen, but instead at the elderly woman who he could impress. “All the experts of the world, panicking at once! And you know what they need? Me!” He smirked and threw a look to his wife who only rolled her eyes at his cockiness—some things never change. Third regeneration on since she’s met him and he’s always so impressive and knows it. “Ah! And here they all are!” he exclaimed, eyes back on the monitor. “All the big boys. NASA, Jodrell Bank, Tokyo Space Center, Patrick Moore.” He ran his finger down a list on the screen. Behind him Jeff was looking over his shoulder wide-eyed.

“Oh I like Patrick Moore!” Jeff’s gran exclaimed merrily, and Rose giggled at this woman’s ability to just roll with everything the Doctor said. If she didn’t have a bad hip Rose would ask her on the TARDIS in a heartbeat.

The Doctor seemed to be thinking the same thing as he grinned up at her. “I’ll get you his number!” he offered happily. “But watch him, he’s a devil.”

“You can’t just hack in on a call like that,” Jeff protested. Clearly he didn’t get his gran’s spirit in the gene pool.

“Can’t I?” the Doctor challenged, and Rose crossed her arms at his flippancy. He didn’t seem to notice though as he pulled the psychic paper out of his pocket and waved it at the camera while they all questioned who he was and what he was doing there. “Gentlemen,” the Doctor started, “hello! Yeah, I know, you should switch me off, but before you do watch this!” He started typing rapidly again, and Rose moved from the door to look over his shoulder. “Fermat’s Theorem—the proof, and I mean the real one never before seen. Poor old Fermat got killed in a duel before he could write it down.” He rambled as he typed, and looked up to Jeff’s gran sheepishly. “My fault. I slept in,” he added, still typing, and Rose had to bite her lip as she remembered just why he’d slept in that morning.

“Oh!” he exclaimed, looking back down. “And here’s an oldie but a goodie—why electrons have mass.” A diagram showed up on the screen, but he kept going. “And a personal favorite of mine: faster-than-light travel!” he sent more diagrams and Rose a cheeky look. “Plus a photo of me and my wife on our wedding day. Yes I look different, it’s complicated. But she doesn’t, see!” He pulled Rose into frame and she smiled and waved awkwardly. “Oh, and a joke!” He added with a flourish.

Rose sat down next to him just as he finally looked up to the gathering group of world leaders in the video call. “Look at your screens. Whoever I am, I’m a genius. Look at the sun. You need all the help you can get. Fellas, pay attention,” he said before launching into his spiel. Rose cut in occasionally to either explain the things he forgets aren’t common knowledge, or answer the questions so that he won’t get too annoyed.

A bit later, as they were all launching into the instructions given to them by the Doctor, he was meanwhile typing wildly on Rory’s mobile. “Sir, what are you doing?” The associate from NASA called.

“I’m writing a computer virus,” the Doctor answered, not looking up to the man. “Very clever, super-fast, and a tiny bit alive—but don’t let on. And why am I writing it on a phone?” He looked up from what was a bored and incredibly fast pace explanation to grin excitedly. “Never mind, you’ll find out. Okay! I’m sending this to all your computers. Get everyone who works for you sending this everywhere. Email, text, Facebook, Twitter, Bebo, radar-dish—whatever you’ve got,” he listed off seriously. “Any questions?”

Patrick Moore spoke up first. “Who was your lady friend?”
Jeff pulled back his chin and the Doctor squinted at the man. “If you’re talking about my wife—well, *don’t be,*” he said firmly. “But if you’re talking about Jeff’s gran, I’ll get you her number.” He winked cheekily and Mr Moore smiled brightly.

The man from ESA ignored that. “What does this virus *do?*” he asked, getting back to the issue at hand.

“It’s a reset command, that’s all. It resets counters. It gets in the wi-fi and resets every counter it can find. Clocks, calendars, anything with a chip will default to zero at exactly the same time.” The Doctor looked up again once he pressed send. “But yeah, I could be lying. Why should you trust me? I’ll let my best man explain,” he said, sitting forward.

There was an awkward pause as Jeff looked around at the people on his laptop screen, and finally the Doctor looked over to him. “Jeff, you’re my best man,” he whispered.

“You what?” He let out.

The Doctor turned the camera towards Rose (*she’s pretty that’ll distract them*), and put his hand on Jeff’s shoulder. “Jeff, in ten minutes you’re going to be a legend. In ten minutes everyone on that screen is going to offer you any job you want. But first, *you have to be magnificent,*” he spoke quietly, but with so much reverence Rose forgot to pay attention to the world influencers currently throwing questions at her about her husband. “You have to make them trust you, and get them working. This is it Jeff. Right here, right now. This is when you fly. Today’s the day you save the world.” He smiled warmly and clapped the man on the back.

“Why me?” Jeff asked, clearly expecting some deep philosophical meaning or prophecy.

“It’s your bedroom,” the Doctor shrugged, effectively ruining the awe-inspiring mood. “Now! Go, go, go!” He turned the camera back to Jeff, and stood to take Rose’s hand and run out the door—nine minutes left. He turned around suddenly though in the sitting room and ran back to Jeff’s room. “Oh and delete your internet history,” he ordered, giving him a significant look, before taking off again, grabbing his wife as he went.

They ran through the garden quickly and paused at the edge of the pavement. “We can’t run to the hospital in time,” Rose said, looking around.

“I think,” the Doctor said, smirking, “I just found our transport.” He tilted his head towards the vehicle he’d spotted and Rose grinned up at him.

“Stealing a fire truck then?” Rose asked, with her signature tongue-touched smile.

In lieu of answering he ran towards the fire truck in question with Rose hot on his heels. Amy phoned just as they started driving, leaving the confused fire brigade in their wake. *God bless the psychic paper.*

“Doctor? Rose? We’re at the hospital, but we can’t get through,” Amy said on the other end of the line.

The Doctor and Rose rolled their eyes at the same time. “Look in the mirror, Amelia.”

“Oh.” There was a small pause where they could hear Rory talking in the background. “Haha! Uniform! Are you on your way?”

“Yeah should be there in record time.” Rose answered, a death grip on the door handle. He really was an absolutely atrocious driver—no matter the vehicle. At least in the TARDIS she knew the
ship would keep them safe. A fire truck on tiny English streets during the end of the world? Not so much.

“You’ll need a car.” Amy warned, thinking of the distance.

“Don’t worry!” the Doctor laughed, and Amy heard sirens in the background. “We’ve commandeered a vehicle!”

She hung up, but seconds later as they were speeding down the road the phone rang again. Rose answered, not bothering to put it on speaker this time as the sirens were too loud. “Are you in?” she yelled by way of greeting.

“Yep,” Amy answered, for too calmly for someone tracking down an alien convict for the first time, ”but so’s Prisoner Zero.”

“You need to get out of there then! Amy it’s not worth it!” She argued before Amy could, knowing that she would. But instead a lot of commotion and no words came through the speakers. “Amy? Amy what’s happening?” Rose asked. Only more noise followed so Rose repeated the question until finally Amy spoke.

“We’re in the coma ward, but it’s here. It’s getting in,” she spoke quickly, and finally Rose detected proper fear in her Scottish accent.

“Which window is she?” the Doctor yelled.

“What, sorry?”

“Which window?” Rose repeated, louder and closer to the speaker.

“Uh… first floor on the left- fourth from the end.” She replied frantically.

Seconds later Rose managed to text “DUCK!” right before they crashed the ladder through the window. They scaled up it quickly, and landed next to Amy and Rory. The Doctor put his arms around the couple's shoulders. “Right! Hello! Am I late? No—” He straightened up as the words hit him, and looked at the clock over the door. “Three minutes to go. We’ve still got time.”

“Time for what, Time Lords?” Prisoner Zero had taken on the form of a woman with her twin girls in either hand. The Doctor and Rose walked forwards, standing shoulder to shoulder in a face off against the alien.

“Take the disguise off and they’ll find you in a heartbeat. Nobody has to die,” Rose spoke, offering the best option first, even though she knew from experience it would never take it.

“The Atraxi will kill me this time,” Prisoner Zero said, and Rose squinted. The Atraxi have a dangerous prisoner that has escaped multiple times and still it managed to do it again? “If I am to die, let there be fire,” it said, eyes glowing, and Rose noticed that sickening cracking noise again. Overhead the clock turned to 11:49.

The Doctor chuckled humorlessly. “Okay. You came to this world by opening a crack in space and time. Do it again. Just leave.” He didn't really care if the prisoner escaped, he just needed the Earth to come out unscathed. It wouldn’t exactly be the first time they’d let a prisoner run free.

It tilted her head, “I did not open the crack.”

“Somebody did,” he argued.
“The cracks in the skin of the universe! Don’t you know where they came from?” It asked mockingly, looking between the two Time Lords. They only stared at her in response, and it raised her eyebrows. “You don’t do you?” She took on the children’s voice then. “The Doctor and Rose in the TARDIS don’t know!” she exclaimed, referencing the children’s stories about them floating around the universe. The child's voice sang mockingly, “Doesn’t know, doesn’t know!”

They glared menacingly in response. 11:50.

It’s voice went back to the woman’s. “The universe is cracked,” she said, not like she was telling them, but rather like it was reciting something it’d read in a book. “The Pandorica will open. Silence will fall.” It sounded like a prophecy though she said it like fact.

They stared at her for a few moments, but before they had time to respond the clock clicked again, and this time before the minute was up. 00:00 it read. They grinned despite themselves. “And we’re off!” the Doctor exclaimed. “Look at that!” He pointed over the prisoner’s head to the clock, and looked back towards the humans at the window.

“Do you know what’s happening?” Rose asked the prisoner, tilting her head as it was her turn to mock. “In one little bedroom our team is working. Jeff and the world, and do you know what they’re doing? They’re spreading the word.” Rose enunciated each word carefully, enjoying the look on the criminal’s stolen face.

“All over the world,” the Doctor grinned, “Quantum-fast! The word is out!”

Rose smirked and took a step forward threateningly. “And do you know what that word is? ... Zero,” she breathed, raising her eyebrows.

“Now me,” the Doctor started, pulling Rose back towards him surreptitiously. “If I was up in a battleship monitoring all of Earth’s communications, I’d probably take that as a hint. And if I had a whole battle fleet surrounding the planet, I’d be able to track a simple old computer virus to its source in—what?” He looked up, calculating. “Under a minute?” He reached into his pocket. “The source by the way, is right here.” He held up Rory’s mobile. And right on cue a light filled the coma ward as the ship locked in onto the signal.

“Oh I think they just found it!” Rose gave the alien a significant look.

“The Atraxi are limited,” It said cockily—as if they needed telling. This was the race currently hell bent on blowing up an entire planet just looking for one little alien after all. “While I’m in this form they’ll still be unable to detect me. They’ve tracked a phone, not me.”

“Yeah, but this is the good bit,” Rose said, biting her lip and looking up to her husband. “The really really clever bit.”

He couldn’t help but smile either. “Do you know what this phone is full of?” he asked merrily. “Pictures of you!” He dropped the final piece of their plan. “Every form you’ve learned to take, right here! Oh and being uploaded right about... now!” He pressed send with a flourish. “And the final score is: No TARDIS. No screwdriver. Two minutes to spare... Who da man?” He yelled, throwing his arms in the air.

An awkward silence ensued in which the alien convict tilted her head, Amy sucked her lips in with a look, Rory shifted his gaze away, and Rose tried not to burst out laughing, placing a comforting hand on his hip. “Oh... I’m never saying that again. Fine,” he mumbled, looking around at the blank faces and to his wife.
“Then I shall take a new form,” Prisoner Zero spoke up, neck cracking.

“Oh come on, you know you can’t,” the Doctor said, not losing any of his confidence. “A link like that takes months to form.”

“And I’ve had years,” It answered, not missing a beat. The woman and the girls glowed, and behind them Amy crumbled to the floor. The Doctor and Rose ran to her.

“Amy!” Rose called.

“You’ve got to stay awake,” the Doctor insisted, placing his hands either side of her face.

“Doctor.” Rory said seriously, bringing their attention back to the alien. Where once three ladies stood now a perfect imitation of the Doctor.

He stood up, clearly confused. “Well that’s rubbish Who’s that supposed to be?” he asked, looking between Rory and Rose.

“Oh, it's you.” Rory squinted at him.

“Me?” The Doctor looked down at himself. “Is that what I look like?” he said to Rose who nodded, smirking despite the situation.

“You don’t know?” Rory asked disbelievingly.

“Busy day,” the Doctor answered shortly, and beside him Rose shrugged when Rory shot her a look. Now really wasn’t the best time to explain regeneration and time travel. “Why me though?” he asked, walking forward. “You’re linked with her. Why are you copying me?”

The imitation-doctor didn’t answer though. Instead little Amelia’s voice came from somewhere behind him. “I’m not,” she said, stepping around him, with an imitation Rose on her other hand. “Poor Amy Pond. Still such a child inside. Dreaming of the magic Doctor and Rose she knows will return to save her.” She paused, studying the couple as Rose came next him. “What a disappointment you two have been,” she practically spit in their faces.

The Doctor stared at the little girl for a second. “No, she’s dreaming about us because she can hear us,” he said quickly, pivoting on the spot to run back to Amy. Rose stayed frozen in front of Prisoner Zero though.

“In the room, the room in your house you couldn’t see?” he said, unlocking the memory Rose had barred twelve years ago, but guiding her towards the one from today. “Remember you went inside. We tried to stop you, but you did. You went in the room. You went inside. Amy. Dream about what you saw,” he told her, but it sounded like begging.

In front of Rose Prisoner Zero started glowing again, and Rose took a step back as it transformed into the horrific worm-like alien it really was. “Well done, Prisoner Zero.” Rose's voice was still a little hollow. “A perfect imitation of yourself.”

Outside the light from the ship grew brighter, and Prisoner Zero thrashed about angrily. “Silence, Doctor. Silence will fall.” It hissed menacingly, and then disappeared.

They searched each other’s eyes afterwards, both wondering at the ominous prophecy the alien had been so keen to tell them of, but also knowing something else was more important at the moment. This wasn’t over yet. They ran to the window. “The sun…” Rory said, looking around them from
his place on the floor next to Amy. “It’s back to normal. That’s good, yeah? That means it’s over.”

Amy woke with a start, and looked around confusedly as Rose followed the Doctor to the other side of the room where he was typing something into the phone again. “No, it’s not over. I’m tracking the signal back... Sorry in advance,” he threw over his shoulder to Rory.

“For what?” Rory asked hesitantly.

“The bill.”

“Hey-” Rory started, but the Doctor was already speaking into the receiver, Rose standing close next to him with her arms crossed.

“Oi! I didn’t say you could go!” He yelled angrily. “Article 57 of the Shadow Proclamation. This is a fully established, level-five planet. And you were gonna burn it? What?” he asked incredulously. Next to him Rose bit her thumb nail. “Did you think no one was watching? You lot… back here, now!” he demanded, snapping the mobile closed and tossing it back to the confused humans.

They walked out of the room with long strides, Amy hot on their heels while Rory stammered. “Uh… did he just bring them back? Did he just save the world from aliens, and then bring all the aliens back again?” He asked incredulously, but no one was was paying him any mind. He sighed and followed.

“Where are you going?” Amy yelled to their backs, and Rose slowed down to walk next to her.

“He’s angry,” she muttered to the redhead and her boyfriend while her husband flippantly answered “The roof!” and then something indecisive before taking a sharp right. “You’ll see,” she said, sighing as they followed him.

“What’s in here?” Amy asked as they entered the locker room.

“I’m saving the world!” the Doctor exclaimed, throwing random clothes behind him as he did. “I need a decent shirt. To hell with the raggedy. Time to put on a show!” He threw another jacket that landed in Rory’s face and began loosening his tie and undoing his buttons without a second thought.

“You just summoned aliens back to Earth. Actual aliens. Deadly aliens. And now you’re… taking your clothes off.” Rory protested, starting strong and drifting off awkwardly as the Doctor’s shirt came off.

“Turn your back if it embarrasses you!” the Doctor answered flippantly, but Rose shook her head.

“Nu-uh.” She said, pulling both Amy and Rory by the shoulder to face the other direction. “I haven’t even seen this new body properly yet, I’ll be damned if someone else does.”

Rose turned back around herself though and smirked. “Do I detect a hint of jealousy, love?” Her husband threw over his (bare) shoulder as his trousers came down.

Rose wouldn’t dignify that with an answer. Which really was answer enough.

Moments later they were walking out on the roof, Rose watching his body move in the deliciously tight brown corduroy trousers and red patterned shirt. At his thighs the same color red suspenders dangled. (‘Suspenders, Doctor, really? Are you someone’s grandad?’ ‘Shut up. Fate decided to
give me the face of a twelve year old, apparently. I might as well try to look my age. Maybe get some respect.’ ‘And suspenders are going to do that?’ ‘Shut up’). Around his neck the three ties he still couldn't decide between when time ran out laid under the popped collar. Rory held all the suit jackets he’d had thrown at him earlier. The Doctor strode purposely towards the giant eyeball of the ship.

“So this was a good idea was it?” Amy demanded, sounding incredibly Scottish. “They were leaving!”

“Leaving is good. Never coming back is better,” he replied quickly, not taking his eyes off the ship. Behind him Rose stopped their little group short before they got too close. “Come ooooon then!” he shouted. “The Doctor will see you now!” The eyeball zoomed up to him, pupil dilating back and forth as it scanned him.

“You are not of this world,” it announced as he pulled up his suspenders.

“No, but I’ve put a lot of work into it.” His green eyes looked threateningly up through his lashes. They could not dare question how he cares for Earth. His gaze flicked down to the ties on his shoulders, and hummed-and-hahed for a bit over them. He held them up for the eyeball to see. “I don’t know… what do you think?” he casually asked the aliens for style advice.

“Is this world important?” the ship asked, ignoring the Doctor’s current debate over fashion.

The Doctor flicked the solid colored tie off, and rolled it up. “Important?” he asked incredulously. “What’s that mean ‘important’?” He threw the tie at Rory who caught it deftly. “Six billion people live here. Is that important? Here’s a better question. Is this planet a threat to the Atraxi?” He threw the purple spotted tie behind him and it landed on Amy’s shoulder. “Well come on. You’re monitoring the whole planet. Is this world a threat?” he demanded, and Rose couldn’t help the shiver that went up her back.

In front of him the eyeball projected an image of the Earth, and then through it history flashed by rapidly out of order. World War II, Nuclear Bombs, Apollo 11, The Pyramids, Buddha, Reconstruction, The Aztecs, Gandhi— “No,” it finally concluded.

The Doctor threw the last tie behind him. “Are the people of this world guilty of any crime by the laws of the Atraxi?”

More history flashed by, quicker than Rose could place—even with superior Time Lord senses. “No,” it concluded again.

“Okay. One more, just one…” He began buttoning his top button. “Is this world protected?” In front of them all the aliens that have ever come to Earth popped up, a lot of which Rose was there for, and she couldn’t swallow around the lump in her throat. “Because you’re not the first aliens to come here. And what you’ve got to ask yourselves is: what happened to them?” He spoke dramatically, walking off to grab the last articles of clothing he needed. While his back was turned all his past regenerations appeared, and tears sprung to Rose’s eyes at the last two… The Doctor walked through the hologram of his previous face to make a point, and Rose laughed on her tears. He was wearing a tweed jacket with leather elbow pads… and a bowtie—looking dorky and adorable and … sexy as hell facing down the alien ship. “Hello. I’m the Doctor,” he rocked back on his heels, all bow legged and floppy haired.

“Basically… Run,” he finished severely, despite the smile at the corners of his mouth. The eyeball studied him frantically and then zoomed back to it’s place on the ship, flying away quicker than it had the first time in the face of the Doctor.
Rose ran up to him through the wind and threw her arms around his neck, laughing as he picked her up and swung her around. Between them something burned in his coat pocket and they jumped apart so Rose could pull it out. In her palm sat two glowing new TARDIS keys. They grinned manically at each other and ran for their home—faster than they had all day.

They didn’t stop until they reached their ship still sitting in Amy’s back garden. “Okay,” Rose said, running her hand down the side of the door.

“What have you got for us this time?” the Doctor asked, grinning and turning the key with a look towards his wife.

They opened both doors together and were instantly blinded by golden light. Shiny copper walls surrounded them, the windows Rose had always wanted scattered about along with the lights. In front of them a flat floor led to some stairs up to the console, rather than a ramp. Instead of grating a sleek glass floor revealed the wires underneath, and on the other side another set of stairs could lead them down below for repairs—no more crawling under the grates for them. The console itself was new too, more lit up and spinny than before. The center time rotor even had a new cloister bell as well.

“She’s beautiful,” Rose whispered reverently, running her hand across the panels.

He was already in the middle of typing in the coordinates for the moon before Rose realized what he as doing. She put a hand on his arm and stopped him just in time to hear Amy’s frantic call of “Doctor! Rose!” from outside. Rory was behind her as they stepped outside, closing the door behind them.

“I thought you were leaving again.” She said, eyes full of worry. She’d left the ‘without me’ out, but it was clear in her face.

“Amelia Pond, the girl who waited.” The Doctor smirked. “You’ve waited long enough.”

Amy swallowed and stepped forward. “When I was a kid, you said there was a swimming pool, and a library, and the swimming pool was in the library,” she said, looking up to the impossible blue box.

“Yeah. Not sure where it’s got to now,” he answered, raising an eyebrow at Rose. “It’ll turn up… So, you coming?”

Amy’s eyes were wide, and she reached behind her for Rory’s hand. “No,” she said quietly, and Rose felt a sudden sense of deja-vu at the scene… but this was different.

“You wanted to come twelve years ago,” the Doctor said, smirking—clearly unfazed.

“I grew up.” She argued, and Rose watched as Rory held her hand tighter, worry painting his face. He wasn’t trying to hold her back. He wouldn’t ask her to stay like Mickey had asked her, but he was terrified he was going to lose her.

Her husband didn’t seem to notice all that though. “Don’t worry. We’ll fix that,” he laughed, and Rory swallowed anxiously behind his girlfriend.

“Rory, we’re asking you too.” Rose added, and Amy turned around quickly to see her boyfriend’s reaction. His eyes widened as he looked between the three of them.
The Doctor finally caught on. He snapped, and behind them the door opened—effectively making their decision for them. Amy and Rory walked ahead of the alien couple, looking around awestruck at the bigger on the inside machine. Rose closed the door behind them and leaned against it while the Doctor ran up the stairs.

“So,” He started after a minute, walking around the console, he pulled the new screwdriver from the panel next to the zig-zag plotter, thanking the TARDIS as he did, and Rose came up to wrap her arm around his waist. “All of time and space, everything that ever happened or ever will…”

“Where do you want to start?” Rose finished, glowing brightly.

Chapter End Notes

comments keep writers writing ❤️
“So what… really properly is this then? I know you said TARDIS—a time machine—but where are we?” Amy asked, strolling around the console as her imaginary-friends-come-to-life worked together hitting buttons and pulling levers.

“TARDIS: Time And Relative Dimension In Space,” the Doctor said, grinning, as he pulled the monitor to him. M31, it read in Gallifreyan. “And right now we're just outside the Andromeda Galaxy. About 2.6 million light years from Earth.”

“What?” Amy looked between Rose and the Doctor. “We can’t be in space.”

Rose giggled. “Well this is a spaceship,” she said, ignoring the indignant scoff the TARDIS gave her in the back of her mind. The Doctor stroked her consolingly even while he grinned at Rose.

Amy crossed her arms. “Prove it,” she said, a glimmer in her eye.

Rose flipped the switch to raise the panels on the new windows. Outside millions of stars glittered back at them, and just in the distance they could make out the faint dusty purple and yellow light from Andromeda. Amy shook her head. “This can’t be real,” she insisted, but it was breathless.

Rory answered before either of the aliens could. “So ‘time machine’—that you could believe. But ‘spaceship’—things we have on Earth—that’s too far fetched for you?”

Amy turned so that her hair flew around dramatically. “I’m not sure I believe it’s a time machine either to be fair.”

Rory rolled his eyes. “How couldn’t it be? They look exactly the same as how you described them twelve years ago. And they were surprised you’d grown up.”

“Well Rose said she’s 122 and the Doctor’s over 1000—doesn’t seem like they’re doing much growing up themselves either.”

Rory’s eyes widened as he looked at the seemingly-young couple, and the Doctor smirked, giving his wife a significant look. Rose shrugged, “Sometimes telling people our age is the easiest way to get them to trust all the mad things we say.”

“Humans and their fixation on aging…” the Doctor mused. “They’ll never stop trying to defy it while actively comparing people’s worth by it… But I’ve met newborns who were smarter than men that have lived for millennia.” Rose snorted while the humans continued to stare at them. He sighed, “Come along, Pond.” And pulled her by the hand.

He flung the doors open, filling the TARDIS with the light of the universe as Rose and Rory came
up behind them. Amy bounced on her heels and looked about wide-eyed. “So what would happen if I—” she cut herself off, stepping one foot out of the ship, and immediately feeling gravity shift, pulling her upwards. The Doctor grabbed her ankle just before she could get too far.

“Yeah sorry,” Rose called, “I extended the air shell but not the gravitational field!”

Amy didn’t look bothered however, instead looking around awestruck at the universe. “Come on, Pond,” the Doctor said with a smirk, pulling her back in as she laughed. “Now do you believe us?”

“Okay, your box is a spaceship! It’s really, really a spaceship.” She chuckled and looked out again. “We are in space!” she yelled to the stars, reaching behind her to grab Rory’s hand. “Whoo!”

“What about the time travel thing then?” Rory asked after joining in on Amy’s joy.

“Well I think we just found our proof for that,” Rose answered distractedly. She was squatting down to look at something just below them, and the Doctor furrowed his brow, coming up next to her.

“Now that’s interesting,” he said before turning on his heel and running for the console, Rose following after closing the doors. “29th century! Solar flares roast the Earth and the entire human race packs its bags and just moves out until the weather improves!” He adjusted a few levers and typed in some things as he spoke. “Whole nations! Migrating to the stars! Isn’t that amazing?” He pointed to the still-open window as they came up next to the ship. “This is the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland—”

Rose snorted. “Even in deep space we can’t escape them, Doctor.” She laughed merrily and he smirked at their inside joke.

He grinned. “All of it, bolted together, and floating in the sky. Starship UK: it’s Britain, but metal,” he went on with a smile. “That’s not just a ship, that’s an idea. That’s a whole country living, and laughing… shopping.” He furrowed his brow and earned laughs from his companions. “Searching the stars for a new home,” he concluded, looking to Rose—the home he found after he’d lost everything—and retched out to take her hand.

“Can we go out and see?” Amy bounced on her toes hopefully.

“Course we can,” the Doctor answered, poking her nose like a proper dad before pulling Rose to the console so they could land her. “But we’re not getting involved in the affairs of other peoples or planets,” he insisted, much to the amusement of his wife, but she otherwise didn’t correct his delusion.

They materialised without fuss and the Doctor pulled up the CCTV footage. “Oh that’s interesting…” he mumbled, brow furrowed, and Rose looked over his shoulder. “We’re here!” he suddenly announced grandly, grabbing Rose’s hand again and running out the doors without a second thought for their companions because there was a crying little girl somewhere on this ship.

Amy and Rory shared a look, taking a a few minutes to watch what the Time Lords had seen on the monitor, but eventually followed their alien chauffeurs through the doors. Outside, the thick crowd kept them pinned to the TARDIS, but they could see over the sea of heads that the Doctor and Rose were making their way back to them from the distraught little girl she presumed they went to. “We’re in the future,” Amy breathed, spinning around with both of Rory’s hands in hers as the looked around the London Market. “Like hundreds of years in the future.” She stopped them to look at the Doctor. “I’ve been dead for centuries.”
“Oh, lovely,” he said, stepping closer to her, “you’re a cheery one.” He grabbed her arm. “Never mind dead! Look at this place! Isn’t it wrong?” he challenged them as he led their little group through the marketplace.

“What’s wrong?” Rory asked, sounding anxious. It seemed to him that trouble followed these two aliens and their strange blue box. Rose looped her arm through his comfortably and grinned as they followed their respective significant others.

“Come on, use your eyes!” the Doctor told the group, but mostly Amy. “Notice everything! What’s wrong with this picture?” Rose looked around too, trying to sort through her husband’s thoughts but coming up annoyingly blank. She couldn’t see anything wrong, but hold on—

“The bicycles?” Amy guessed randomly as the second one drove by. “Bit unusual on a spaceship isn’t it?”

“Says the girl in a 21st century fake police costume,” Rose piped up, earning a small ‘oh my god’ from Amy as she apparently only just noticed her wardrobe. She pulled at her skirt hem awkwardly.

“Now, come on!” the Doctor exclaimed, ignoring the girls as he pivoted in place and pointed at each of them. “Look around you. Actually look… Life on a giant starship. Back to basics. Bicycles, washing lines, wind-up street lamps…” As he rhapsodised Rose realized he felt something was off the same way she did, but he couldn’t see it. That’s why he was asking Amy. “But look closer,” he went on, still trying to pull the answer from his rambling, hoping perhaps it may spill out in his jumbled thoughts. “Secrets and shadows, lives led in fear. Society bent out of shape, on the brink of collapse. A police state—policewoman—Excuse me.” He cut himself off as Rose’s thought about feeling finally reached him.

He grabbed the water glass off the nearby table from a perturbed couple and set it on the ground without explanation. ‘Rude’ Rose chastised him, and he looked up to see who he’d disturbed. “Sorry,” he apologised, thinking on his toes to please his wife. “Checking all the water in this area. There’s an escaped fish,” he said before he could really process it, and then tapped his nose.

‘Did you see that?’ he asked Rose, who was still staring at the water warily. She nodded imperceptibly, and he pivoted back around quickly. “Where was I?”

Why did you just do that with the water?” Amy furrowed her brow.

“Don’t know,” he lied. “I think a lot. It’s hard to keep track,” he added honestly.

Behind him, Rose rolled her eyes at the understatement as she felt his head spinning in the back of hers.

He went back to the thing he could (sort of) see. The thing he thinks they saw with the little girl. “Now, police state, do you see it yet?” He found the little girl again looking around wildly just as Amy asked where. “There,” he said, pointing to her. They sat down on the bench a few yards away.

“One little girl crying,” Amy said finally, as they all watched her. “So?” Rory was on her left, the Doctor to her right, and Rose beside him.

The Doctor sighed and rubbed his hands before clasping them together. “Crying silently,” he corrected. “Children cry when they want attention, cos they’re hurt or afraid… When they cry silently it’s because they just can’t stop. Any parent knows that.”

“Are you a parent?” Amy asked, too busy trying to figure out the Doctor to notice what Rory did.
Rose looked down, and the Doctor looked around to avoid the answer. “Hundreds of parents walking past this spot and not one of them asking her what's wrong,” he said quickly, speaking out loud to keep up with his thoughts. “Which means… they already know, and it’s something they don’t talk about. Secrets. They’re not helping each other so it’s something they’re afraid of. Shadows. Whatever they’re afraid of it’s nowhere to be seen. Which means... it’s everywhere. Police state.”

Amy looked back to the girl only to find she’d gone. “Where’d she go?”

“Deck 207, Apple Sesame block, Dwelling 54A, Mandy Tanner,” he answered easily, earning wide eyes from Amy and Rory. “Oh! Er, this fell out of her pocket when I accidentally bumped into her.” He pulled small child’s wallet out of his pocket. “Took me four goes.”

Rose sighed, cutting him off. “You two go. Ask her about the things in the booths,” she said, looking around at the almost clown-like robots in carnival fortune teller booths with wide disorienting smiles. “They’re everywhere.”

“Aren’t they just things?” Amy asked, with that very human-quality of not asking questions about things that are odd but appear to be common place.

“They’re clean,” the Doctor explained, standing up. Everything else here is all battered and filthy —look at this place. But no one’s laid a finger on those booths. Not a footprint within two feet of any of them—look.”

“Meet us back here in half an hour.” Rose said, scooting closer to Rory as the Doctor pulled Amy up.

“Wait no hang on what are you two going to do?” Amy demanded.

The Doctor and Rose shared a look and he answered for her; he was much better at telling half-truths than her. “We’re splitting up. Everyone gets a partner. Girls and boys—or rather: Humans and Time Lords!” He placed a quick kiss to Rose’s lips and pulled Amy away before she could do the same for Rory.

They watched them go for a moment, and Rose was halfway to standing up when Rory put a hand on her arm. “Kids… is that—is that a touchy subject?” he asked hesitantly.

Rose sighed and sat back down. “The Doctor he—he had kids.” She was looking everywhere except for Rory. “A long time ago. And he doesn’t really talk about them. Even I don’t know the whole story… Parenting was different on Gallifrey, it wasn’t…” she drifted off, finally meeting his eyes. “But that’s not—that’s not why he was being deflective.”

“Why then?” he asked, but caught himself just as quickly. “You don’t have to answer me. I know we don’t… really know each other. I just—you seemed sad, when Amy asked…”

Rose searched his eyes for a long moment before deciding to answer. “We… tried, once,” she said eventually. “A while ago but not really… sometime after Donna left.” She looked sideways at Rory as she realised she wasn’t making any sense, but he didn’t seem to mind so she went on. “I carried her to term. Everything was okay until—” she cut herself off, choking on a sob she couldn’t hold back.

Rory sucked in a breath and pulled her closer, understanding the unsaid ending to the story. He’d been a nurse for a few years now and spent a lot of that time in the neonatal clinic, but even still— intrapartum deaths were extremely rare. He held her for a bit- reflecting on what the Doctor had
just said about silent crying, before finally speaking. “What’s her name?” he asked.


Rory didn't know what 'Gallifreyan' was, but he smiled honestly. “That’s beautiful.”

She smiled brightly in return even as more tears rolled down her cheeks. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.” He nodded before standing up and holding out his hands for her. “Now, I got the feeling the Doctor wanted us to do something about the water?”

“So is this how it works then, Doctor?” Amy asked as they started towards Deck 207. “You never get involved in the affairs of other peoples or planets—unless there’s children crying?”

The Doctor studied her profile. “Yes,” he said simply, but she only smirked and didn’t comment further—for which he was grateful.

They turned a corner at Dean Street and the child in question spoke up from a nearby stack of barrels. “You’re following me,” she said, all traces of her earlier tears dried.

“You dropped this,” Amy answered, not missing a beat as she held the wallet out.

“Yeah,” she said, taking it from her. “When he kept bumping into me.” She gave the Doctor an annoyed look and then started on again.

“Yeah, I told him you’d notice” Amy ran to catch up with her.

“No you didn’t!” the Doctor protested, but Amy only shot a cheeky grin over her shoulder.

“What’s this?” she asked, stopping with the little girl. Over the gate and a red-and-white striped tent, a giant sign read ‘Magpie Electrics’ and The Doctor had to bite back a growl at the name. If he wasn’t sure before that there was something going on, now he was positive.

“There’s a hole,” Mandy answered. "We have to go back.” Her tone said that this was an everyday occurrence, but fear was behind her eyes.

“A what? A hole?” Amy asked, as the Doctor ran and jumped over the gate and she followed (except she simply opened it and walked through).

“Are you stupid?” Mandy demanded, even as she walked towards them. “There’s a hole in the road. We can’t go that way… There’s a travel pipe down by the airlocks if you’ve got stamps—what are you doing?”

“Oh don’t mind me!” the Doctor called over his shoulder as he sonicked the lock—it was taking a while though. “Never could resist a keep out sign!” He sounded less like rebel and more like a giddy child.

“What’s through there, what’s so scary about a hole?” Amy asked, looking over his shoulder. “Something under the road?”

“Nobody knows,” Mandy answered, looking to the nearby thing in the booth. “We’re not supposed to talk about it.”
The Doctor didn’t reply as he was still aiming the sonic at the lock—new tool, what could he say? But he sent a significant look to Amy. “About what?” she asked.

“Below,” the little girl replied ominously, and Amy gave her an exasperated look.

“What? And just because you’re not supposed to, you don’t?” Amy crossed her arms.

“You sound Scottish,” Mandy observed instead of answering, and the Doctor smirked.

“Yeah, I am Scottish! What’s wrong with that? Scotland’s gotta be round here somewhere.”

The Doctor adjusted the new dials on the sonic—he’d needed more time to fiddle with it apparently before they went flouncing off again. “No, they wanted their own ship.”

Amy chuckled. “Hm. Good for them. Nothing changes.”

The Doctor let out an amused sound and then an “ah-hah!” as the lock finally clicked open. He seemed so pleased, Amy didn’t say that she easily could have picked it with her hair clip. “You coming?” she threw casually over her shoulder to the girl as they scooted through the tent.

“No!”

“Suit yourself.” And then the flap closed shut behind them.

The Doctor was already scanning something with the sonic by the time Amy’s eyes adjusted to the dim lighting. She looked around curiously, breathing deeply.

Beside her a wind-up torch sat. She picked it up and got it working just in time to see a giant claw attacking her. They screamed and backed out of the tent again to avoid being pierced—only to find themselves surrounded.

Rory followed Rose down a maintenance ladder and watched as she placed her hand against one of the nearby walls. “No, it can’t be,” she mumbled, leaning against it trying to hear something—anything.

“What?” Rory asked, following suit.

“Feel. Listen.” Rose called on the senses that the Doctor had omitted earlier. “This is a spaceship yeah? So why can’t we feel the engines?” Rose’s eyes flickered to the ominous glass of water sat in the middle of the corridor and wandered over to it. “Why isn’t the water vibrating?” she asked.

“The impossible truth,” a voice whispered from somewhere, answering before Rory could. A cloaked and masked woman stepped out from the shadows. “Hidden in a glass of water. Not many people see it. But you do, don’t you Rose?”

“You know me?” she sounded more curious than worried.

“Keep your voice down,” the woman insisted, and Rose raised her brow. Rory came up beside her then, looking nervously at the mysterious figure seemingly straight from a comic book.

“Then answer the question,” Rose stage-whispered back.

“There are many stories of the Doctor and Rose,” she answered finally—vaguely. “This man,” she said, inclining her chin to Rory, “he dresses as a doctor but he is not your doctor.”
“Nah, my Doctor dresses like a dork,” Rose joked pleasantly despite the ominous situation. “Are you saying I need my husband around to get things done?” she challenged, raising her brows.

Even behind the mask the mysterious woman’s eyes glimmered at the force that was Rose Tyler. “Never,” she answered firmly, and Rose grinned.

“I’m Rory by the way. I’m a nurse. Not a doctor.” He raised his hand awkwardly. The woman nodded politely.

“So where are the engines?” Rose asked finally, speaking loudly again—mostly because she forgot rather than any defiance. She walked back over to the power boxes on the wall and opened one up. “These power couplings,” she observed, recognising them from something similar on the TARDIS, “they’re not connected at all. They’re just dummies.” She knocked on the wall. “It’s hollow! It’s almost as if... there’s no engine at all.” The mysterious woman spoke with her on the last words.

Rory furrowed his brow as the women stared each other down. “But that’s not—! It’s working! We saw it working!” he insisted.

“The impossible truth,” the woman repeated, still whispering as she looked at Rose. “We’re traveling among the stars in a spaceship that could never fly.”

Rose crossed her arms. “How?”

“I don’t know,” she answered truthfully. “There’s a darkness in the heart of this ship. It threatens every one of us. Help us, Rose. You’re our only hope.” Without waiting for an answer (because if the stories were to be believed, then she knew what her answer would be), she handed Rose the tracker. “Your Doctor and friend are safe. This will take you to them. Now go!” She pivoted away and started taking long strides towards the end of the corridor.

“Who are you? How do we find you again?” Rose called to her back, studying the device before handing it to Rory.

She paused only for a second to look over her shoulder. “I am Liz 10, and I will find you,” she whispered, and then left without another word.

Rory pointed at the place where she’d disappeared. “Did she just drop a Star Wars reference on us while we’re in space?” he asked, not an ounce of insincerity in his voice. Rose just laughed.

Amy woke up slowly, slumped sideways in a rather uncomfortable chair, and allowed the room to focus. A metre away, the thing-in-the-booth was smiling creepily down at her. Amy’s eyes widened, suddenly awake, and she jumped up to take in her surroundings.

“Welcome to Voting Cubicle 330C,” an automated voice said from somewhere she couldn’t discern. “Please leave this installation as you would wish to find it. The United Kingdom recognises the right to know all of its citizens. A presentation concerning the history of Starship UK will begin shortly. Your identity is being verified on our electoral roll.”

Amy sat down again, mouth agape, and took in the old-looking, yet futuristic set up in front of her as a series of commands flashed by. “Name: Amelia Pond,” it said eventually. “Age: 1306.”

She laughed incredulously. "Shut up!"

“Marital Status:” it went on, making Amy sit up straight, “Unknown.” She sat back, shoulders
deflating—course they didn’t know anything really interesting. In front of her the screen rolled a few times until a bespectacled greying old man appeared.

“You are here now because you want to know the truth about this starship,” he began, “and I am talking to you because you are entitled to know. When this presentation has finished, you will have a choice. You may either Protest or Forget.”

Amy sat forward at the words, studying the buttons in front of her. On either side of a large square button that said ‘RECORD’ sat two small circular ones: ‘PROTEST’ and ‘FORGET’ respectively.

The man went on, “If you choose to protest, understand this: if just 1% of the population of this ship do likewise, the program will be discontinued, with consequences for you all.” He spoke sadly, but threateningly. “If you choose to accept the situation, and we hope that you will, then press the ‘forget’ button,” he practically begged. “All the information I am about to give you will be erased from your memory. You will continue to enjoy the safety and amenities of Starship UK, unburdened by the knowledge of what has been done to save you.”

Amy's jaw tightened.

“Here then, is the truth about Starship UK, and the price that has been paid for the safety of the British people. May God have mercy on all of us,” he finished ominously, and on the screen the truth flashed before Amy’s eyes.

Before she knew what was happening her hand was on the ‘FORGET’ button, and she had tears in her eyes. In front of her another message began, but instead of the grey man from before it was her… tears streaming down her face and speaking urgently. “This isn’t a trick, this is for real,” she said to herself. “You’ve got to find the Doctor and Rose, and you’ve got to get them out of here. Don’t let them investigate; stop them. Do whatever you have to do. Just please, please, get them off this ship!” she begged, tears interrupting her words as she rocked anxiously back and forth on the chair.

Behind her, the door opened to reveal the Doctor, Rose, Rory, and Mandy Tanner. The Doctor bounced into the room, but stopped short when he saw the screen. “...Amy?”

The message was repeating. “Listen to me, this isn’t a trick this is for real, you’ve got to find the Doctor—” Amy cut it short, hitting the red-glowing ‘forget’ button again and turning the screen black once more.

“What have you done?” he asked, but Amy didn’t answer—she couldn’t answer. Rory shoved passed the alien couple to take Amy’s hands in his and study her glassy eyes.

“Amy, what’s wrong?” he asked, worry in every syllable.

Her eyes flitted back and forth, studying his. “I don’t know,” she turned quickly to The Doctor and Rose. “Why don’t I know? Why don’t I remember what I’ve done?”

The Doctor jumped up on the chair quickly and began sonicking the light. “Yeah, your basic memory wipe job. Must have erased about twenty minutes,” he said, clicking the screwdriver shut and turning back to them.

“But why would I choose to forget?” Amy protested (ironically).

“Cos everyone does,” Mandy spoke up for the first time from just outside the room. “Everyone chooses the forget button.”
The Doctor stepped forward. “Did you?”

Mandy furrowed her brow at the strange man. “I’m not eligible to vote yet… I’m twelve. Any time after you’re sixteen though you’re allowed to see the film and make your choice.” She shrugged under the attention of the three adults. “... And then once every five years.”

“And once every five years everyone chooses to forget what they’ve learned. Democracy in action.” He grimaced and turned back to the monitors.

“How do you not know about this?” the girl asked. “Are you Scottish too?”

The Doctor and Rose laughed. “Oh he’s way worse than Scottish.” Rose snorted.

“I can’t even see the movie, won’t play for me,” the Doctor added, hitting buttons haphazardly.

“What about you then?” Mandy said, turning to Rose. “You sound like you’re from London.”

“That’s because I am from London.” Rose smirked, only a little surprised to find they could still discern accents on a single ship homing three countries.

“Then how come you don’t know? You haven’t voted?”

Rose raised her eyebrow mysteriously. “Just because I’m from London doesn't mean I’m from this one,” she answered, earning a significant look from her husband.

Amy ignored the little conversation. “It played for me,” she said.

“Well the difference being the computer doesn’t accept me as human,” he answered quickly.

Amy wasn’t altogether surprised. She’d gotten enough information out of them to assume they weren’t by this point. Though she did have one qualm with the fact. “You look human.”

“No, you look Time Lord. We came first.”

Amy leaned forward. “So there are other Time Lords, yeah?” she asked innocently, but she felt Rose straighten behind her and suck in a breath.

“No,” he answered, looking between her and the screens and Rose, like he couldn’t decide on which would be easiest. He kept speaking though, it seemed that in this new body he couldn’t stop. “There were, but there aren’t… Just me now...” He opened and closed his mouth a few times. “Long story, there was a bad day. Bad stuff happened. And you know what? I’d love to forget it all, every last bit of it. But I don’t. Not ever.” He gave her a stern look and Amy pulled her chin back, getting that feeling that she often did around him that she was being reprimanded. “Because this is what I do, every time, every day, every second. This—”

Rose grabbed his arm before he could do anything too rash. “The computer doesn’t recognise you as human. Do you really think anything productive is going to come of you hitting the big ominous button?”

He squinted at her, a bit like a child. “It might.”

“What about you?” Rory asked Rose. “Are you human?” He knew she was a-hundred-and-something, but he rationalised that could just be alien tech.

Rose stood in front of the monitors hopefully for a second, but sighed when nothing happened. “Not enough of one anymore, apparently. Or actually it might just be because you lot are in here.”
“Can I hit the button now?” the Doctor asked hopefully with a bit of a pout. She had interrupted what he’d set up to be a very dramatic moment.

“Best not,” another voice answered from behind them, and Mandy started when she turned to see the cloaked and masked woman behind her. “Don’t worry, love,” Liz 10 said, taking off her mask. “Just me.”

“Oh you look quite lovely without your mask,” Rose commented, smirking, and earning an incredulous look from her husband.

Liz 10 ignored her and walked towards the other humans. “You must be Amy.” She smiled, sticking her hand out. “I’m Liz, Liz 10- already met your Rory-the-nurse.” She nodded towards Rory. “You two are travelling with the Doctor and Rose, yeah? Tricky business, that.”

“How do you know who we are?” the Doctor interrupted.

“You’re a bit hard to miss, loves.” She grinned. “Mysterious strangers. M.O. consistent with that of higher alien intelligences—” the Doctor grinned at the ego stroke, and Rose rolled her eyes at him, but Liz went on. “—Hair of an idiot,” she added with a significant look to his floppy hair, which he ran his hands through on impulse while Rose giggled. “I’ve been brought up on the stories,” Liz went on, taking on a reminiscent, awe-inspired tone. “My whole family was.”

“Your family?” he questioned, but behind them the thing-in-the-booth was getting angry so he spoke faster. “You’re over 16. You voted. Whatever this is you’ve chosen to forget about it—” he started.

“No,” she interrupted boredly. “Never forgot, never voted. Not technically a British subject.” Behind them the Smilers started to stand. “Oh we’ve done it now,” she said, bringing everyone’s attention to the now-attacking mechanical dummies. “Let’s move!”

She led them quickly down a series of ladders and corridors before finally somewhere in the bowels of the ship she answered the Doctor’s first question properly. “The Doctor and Rose Tyler. Old drinking buddies of Henry XII, tea and scones with Liz II. Vicky was a bit one the fence about you two weren’t she? Knighted and exiled on the same day!” she exclaimed as they walked, listing through only part of their history with the British Monarchy.

“Liz 10!” Rose said with dawning comprehension.

“Liz 10, yeah.” She said. “Elizabeth X—AND DOWN!” she yelled suddenly, spinning and aiming her weapons at the quickly approaching Smilers over the heads of her subjects, bringing them to their knees. “I’m the bloody queen, mate,” she said, to their kneeling forms. “Basically, I rule.”

All their heads snapped to their left, a loud clanking interrupting any of their responses. They ran towards the door, the Doctor unlocking it with his sonic and Liz closing it behind them. “There’s a high speed vator through there,” she said as the Doctor and Rose crouched down to get a better look through the bars surrounding giant claws coming out of the the floor. “Oh yeah, and there’s these things… Any ideas?”

“We saw one up top,” he said to Rose rather than Liz as he scanned it. “It’s all one creature… reaching out. It must be going through the mechanisms of the entire ship.”

“What, like an infestation?” Liz asked, and the Doctor nodded shortly, even though he wasn’t quite sure that was it. “Someone’s helpin’ it. Feeding it. Feeding my subjects to it!” she yelled angrily, pushing past them to walk on. “Come on! We’ve gotta keep moving.”
‘It’s screaming,’ Rose said to him as they continued to stare at the creature hand-in-hand. He nodded.

“Doctor?” Amy said at the same time Rory said “Rose?” They were holding hands and halfway to following Liz down the corridor.

The Doctor placed his palms against the cage. “We should never have come here,” he answered sadly, as the likely horrible truth of the matter set in. He looked at the two humans shortly before grabbing his wife’s hand and walking past them.

They ended up following Liz into what appeared to be her highness’s royal bed chambers. In the corner of the room a fallen chandelier and what appeared to be a few dozen half-filled water glasses sat on the floor. The Doctor stepped through them carefully. “Why all the glasses?”

From her four-poster bed Liz answered solemnly, “To remind myself every single day that my government it up to something. And it’s my duty to find out what.”

Rose picked up the mask the queen had left haphazardly on the floor and ran her fingers down it. It was… old. She furrowed her brow at her husband as she shared that information. He took it from her carefully. “A queen going undercover to investigate her own kingdom…” he mused, looking up to Liz.

“Secrets are being kept from me.” She sat forward. “I don’t have a choice. Ten years I’ve been at this—my entire reign—and you’ve achieved more in one afternoon.”

He looked sideways at her as he paced the room, him and Rose having a silent conversation as she spoke. “How old were you when you came to the throne?” he asked out loud.

She tilted her head. “Forty. Why?”

He didn’t answer, studying the mask and talking to Rose again. Amy turned around from the mirror where she was taking off the silly Police vest she was still wearing and tying her hair up—now she just looked like a scantily clad business woman. “What you’re fifty now?” she asked, plopping down on the seat in front of the bed. “No way!”

Liz smirked. “Yeah, they slowed my body clock. Keeps me looking like the stamps.”

Rory laughed as he realised his earlier assumption that there would be tech in the future to keep people looking young was correct. Though he also assumed 'looking young for fifty' and 'living to a be thousand years old' weren't actually the same thing.

The Doctor sat down on the bed as his last question was answered. “And you always wear this in public?” He held up the mask.

She squinted at him. “Undercover’s not easy when you’re me,” she defended. "The autographs, the bunting…”

He looked down to mutter at the mask. “Air-balanced porcelain… stays on by itself because it’s perfectly sculpted to your face.”

Her brow furrowed, not getting it. “Yeah… So what?”

“Oh Liz… so everything…”

Before he or Rose could explain though, the door behind them clicked open.
What are you doing?” Liz demanded of the group of black-cloaked government officials like the ones who’d taken the Doctor and Amy earlier. “How dare you come in here?”

The Doctor stood to come eye-level with the one who appeared to be leading them. He looked at the Doctor, even as he spoke to Liz. “Ma’am you’ve expressed interest into the interior workings of Starship UK. You will come with us now.” His head turned to her finally at the last sentence.

She stood up and strutted casually over. “Why would I do that?” she said, her rebellion shining through as she looked him up and down. Instead of answering though, the man’s head turned 180 degrees to reveal the face of an angry Smiler bolted to the back of his head.

“That’s not—” Rory cut himself off before he could say ‘possible.’ It seemed everything was possible around the Doctor and Rose Tyler.

“How can they be Smilers?” Amy asked, taking a step forward.

“Half-Smiler, Half-Human,” Rose answered, not taking her eyes off the things.

Liz stepped up to them, seemingly unfazed. “Whatever you creatures are, I am still your Queen. On whose authority is this thing done?”

“The highest authority, ma’am,” a half-machine voice answered.

“I am the highest authority,” she growled.

To their surprise it agreed. “Yes ma’am. You must go now ma’am.”

“Where?”

“The Tower, ma’am.”

They were led to an ancient looking structure made of stone and wooden doors with iron handles—wholly out of place in the 29th century starship if it wasn’t for the dozen or so computer terminals lining the walls surveying the ship. And in the middle of it all sat a laser, periodically shooting something below it. In a few places scattered about the floor giant grates covered multiple claws like they ones they had seen earlier.

“Doctor, where are we?” Amy asked, looking around warily.

He spun around and gestured grandly to the room even as his anger began to seep through his every cell. “The lowest point of Starship UK,” he answered, “the dungeon.” And he didn’t have enough energy left in him to joke about it ironically being called ‘the tower.’

An older man with white hair and large round glasses approached the queen, putting down his hood as he did. “Ma’am,” he greeted politely.

“Hawthorne!” she exclaimed, clearly surprised. “So this is where you hid yourself away.” He bowed his head. “Think you’ve got some explaining to do.” She leaned in threateningly close to his face.

The Doctor walked up behind him before he could. “There’s children down here… what’s all that about?” he asked, rubbing the head of one as a line of them went by.

Hawthorne seemed unperturbed as he spoke the horrible words. “Protesters and citizens of little
value are fed to the beast. For some reason, it won’t eat the children.”

The Doctor glared at him. “Torture Chamber of the Tower of London,” he said to his wife and their companions and the Queen, barely managing to keep the bite out of his words and his hand from curling into a fist. “Except it’s not a torture chamber is it?” He spun to walk around the monitors. “Well, except it is. Except it isn’t. Depends on your angle.” He came to a stop at the laser and the fenced in area it was aimed at.

“What’s that?” Liz asked, looking down at it, as Rose came to stand next to her husband, a tiny gasp escaped her when she saw what it was.

“Well, like I said, it depends on your angle,” he replied bitterly. “It’s either the exposed pain centre of big fella’s brain being tortured relentlessly…”

“Oh?” prompted Liz.

“Or it’s the gas pedal,” he went on, caustic. “The accelerator, Starship UK’s go-faster button.” Next to him Rose put her hand to her mouth as what they’d been thinking was finally laid in front of her, but the rest of the group was slower on the uptake without the advantage of spending all day in his head.

“I don’t understand,” the Queen said shortly.

“Don’t you?” The Doctor walked towards her. “Try. Go on. The spaceship that could never fly: no vibration on deck. This creature, this poor trapped terrified creature, it’s not infesting you. It’s not invading, it’s what you have instead of an engine.” He was furious, each word burning their skin as he said it. “And this place down here is where you hurt it, where your torture it, just to keep it moving.”

Tears hovered at the edges of everyone’s vision as he finished speaking, and Rose couldn’t help the small shudder of breath she let out. The Doctor walked over to wrap his arms around her. He was still so angry, but Rose needed him. She put her hands to her ears and he heard it too—the screaming.

“Tell you what,” he started, moving away from his wife to run to the grating. “Normally it’s above the range of human hearing.” He ripped off the grating, wanting them to hear what he and Rose could—what they couldn’t stop hearing. “This is the sound none of you wanted to hear,” he pointed the sonic at the claw, filling the chamber with the it’s never ending screams of pain.

It went on and on and on until finally Liz said “stop it” so miserably that he had to. After a moment she turned to her cloaked subjects. “Who did this?” she demanded.

“We act on instructions from the highest authority,” Hawthorne answered calmly.

“I am the highest authority,” she said for the second time that day. Hawthorne only smirked in response, but she went on. “The creature will be released. Now.” No one moved. “I said now!” she shouted. “Is anyone listening to me?”

Rose handed the Doctor the porcelain mask. “Liz,” he got her attention, “your mask.”

“What about my mask?” Her brow furrowed at the seemingly non-sequitur.

“Look at it.” He tossed it to her. “It’s old. At least 200 years old, I’d say.” His eyes studied hers.

She still didn’t catch on though. “Yeah… it’s an antique, so?”
“Yeah, an antique made by craftsmen over 200 years ago, and perfectly sculpted to your face.” He explained stoically. “They slowed your body clock, all right, but you’re not 50… Nearer… 300,” he told her, watching as the dawning comprehension colored her features. “And it’s been a long old reign.”

“Nah, it’s 10 years.” She argued, unable to accept the evidence right in front of her. “I’ve been on this throne 10 years.”

The Doctor nodded. “Ten years. And the same ten years over and over again, always leading you…” he walked over to the small polling station he’d noticed earlier and snapped as he pointed to it. “Here.”

Liz looked at the two buttons. One said ‘FORGET’ like the ones in the main parts of the ship, but the other didn’t say protest; it said ‘ABDICATE.’ She turned slowly to Hawthorne, tears blurring her vision. “What have you done?”

“Only what you have ordered.” He spoke as if on script, as he did every ten years. “We work for you, ma’am. The Winders, the Smilers, all of us.” He clicked a button on the side of the monitor and the screen rolled until it focused on Liz’s face.

“If you are watching this… if I am watching this…” she started sadly. “Then I have found my way to the Tower of London. The creature you are looking at is called a Star Whale.” She said, as a diagram appeared. The Doctor pulled Rose closer as she gasped. They’d come across Star Whales before. “Once, there were millions of them. They lived in the depths of space and, according to legend, guided the early space travellers through the asteroid belts. This one, as far as we are aware, is the last of its kind.” The Doctor looked down and Rose hugged him tighter at the words, Liz went on though, tears rolling down her cheeks. “And what we have done to it breaks my heart… The Earth was burning. Our sun had turned on us, and every other nation had fled to the skies. Our children screamed as the skies grew hotter… And then it came, like a miracle. The last of the Star Whales… We trapped it. We built our ship around it. And we rode on it’s back to safety.” She paused, and the present-day Liz shuddered as her own tears continued to fall. “If you wish our voyage to continue, then you must press the ‘forget’ button- be again the heart of this nation, untainted. If not… press the other button. Our reign will end, the Star Whale will be released, and our ship will disintegrate… I hope I keep the strength to make the right decision.”

The message ended, and Amy turned to face the Doctor and Rose. “I voted for this. Why would I do that?” she asked, holding Rory’s hand tighter than she ever had before.

He sighed, and Rose buried her head further into his chest. “Because you knew if we stayed here, I’d have to make an impossible choice,” he answered, stroking Rose’s back. “Humanity or the alien… You took it upon yourself to save me from that… and that was wrong.” He closed his eyes and the anger consumed him. “You don’t ever decide what I need to know.” He glared at her and Rose sniffled into his oxford—only proving to make him more cross with Amy.

“I don’t even remember doing it!” she argued, letting go of Rory’s hand as her own anger came over her, matching his. It was easier to be angry than sad.

“You did it that’s what counts,” he bit back, pointedly ignoring the tears on the edges of her vision.

“I’m… I’m sorry.” she barely registered Rory’s hand on her shoulder as she stared up at the Time Lord.

“Oh I don’t care,” he grumbled, and Rose pulled away from him in order to compose herself. “As soon as I’m done here you’re going home.” He squeezed Rose’s hand quickly before walking
around to the other computers.

Amy looked to Rose miserably, but Rose didn’t notice, too busy trying to stamp down the memories the situation was dredging back up.

Amy let her anger come up again and she rounded on the Doctor. “Why? Because I made a mistake?” she demanded. “One mistake? I don’t even remember doing it, Doctor!” She yelled, and finally Rose looked up and attempted to process everything that had been said outside of her’s and the Doctor’s heads. Rory caught her eye and she knew it wasn’t pleasant even before she remembered.

“Yeah, I know,” the Doctor was saying to Amy. “You’re only human.”

Rose walked up behind her and grabbed her hand, getting her attention. She didn’t know what to say. Her Doctor was angry and it was for a lot more reasons than she could even begin to explain. She only hoped the gesture was enough to reassure the girl for the time being.

“What are you doing?” Liz asked, voice small for the first time, as she watched the Doctor rewire some parts and dial in settings.

“The second worst thing I’ll ever do,” he said, avoiding everyone’s eye but especially his wife’s. “I’m going to pass a massive electrical charge through the Star Whale’s brain. Should knock out all its higher functions, leave it a vegetable. The ship will still fly, but the whale won’t feel it.”

“That’ll be like killing it,” Rory spoke up for the first time since they’d entered the tower dungeon. He’d seen so many people at the hospitals he’d worked at that weren’t living anymore… just breathing.

“Look,” The Doctor said sharply. “Three options: One, I let the Star Whale continue in unendurable agony for hundreds more years. Two, I kill everyone on this ship. Three, I murder a beautiful, innocent creature as painlessly as I can… And then, I find a new name because I won’t be the Doctor anymore.”

Liz shook her head. “There must be something we can do, some other way.”

“Nobody talk to me,” The Doctor growled, his anger coming to a boiling point. “Nobody human has anything to say to me today.” He slammed his hand down on the table, and Rose came around to stand beside him.

She looked at the humans in question and nodded towards the wall, silently asking them to back off, before running her hand down her husband’s arm. “Love, look at me,” she said quietly. He threw the tools down angrily and turned to her, brows raised, but she remained unfazed. “You’re not alone.”

He sighed and ran his hands through his hair. “I’m not going to make you do this.”

“You’re not making me. I’m volunteering. Through sickness and in health and all that, yeah?” She attempted a smile.

He was about to remind her that they didn’t use the traditional human vows at their wedding but stopped himself. “Not again, not after—not after Alina.”

Rose closed her eyes. “It’s been 40 years, my love. You can’t protect me forever.”

“I can try.” He said miserably, running a thumb over the back of her hand.
“You’ll destroy yourself in the process.” She placed her hand on the side of his face, which he leaned into gratefully.

“Rose Tyler, I’d destroy myself a thousand times for you.” His eyes held so many years and yet not a single lie for her.

Rose shook her head. “That’s not what I want.”

He pulled her to his chest. “I know.”

Amy sat against the stone-cold wall, Mandy on one side, Rory on the other, as they watched the Doctor and Rose speak quietly. They’d just started working pulling wires together when a line of children came through the door. “Timmy!” Mandy yelled suddenly, standing up to run to one of the smaller boys. She stood just in front of the open-grating, the claw luring behind her, and Amy was just about to yell to her when she turned around, and it… let them pet it.

And suddenly Amy could see it.

“Come on, use your eyes. Notice Everything…. Notice everything.”

“Our children screamed… it came like a miracle.”

“It won’t eat the children.”

“The last of its kind.”

“Just me now”

“Never interfere in the affairs of other peoples or planets… unless there’s children crying”

“You’re not making me. I’m volunteering”

Those words repeated over and over in her head as she finally saw it. “Stop!” she yelled, before she could talk herself out of it. She knew she was right, she knew it. “Doctor, Rose, Stop!”

Rose turned, but the Doctor kept working.

“Amy what are you doing?” Rory called, but she ignored him.

“Sorry your majesty, I’m gonna need a hand,” she said, dragging Liz by the arm over to the polling station.

The Doctor jumped up as he realised what she was doing at those words. “Amy! Amy! No, no!” He called frantically, but it was too late. Liz’s hand came down on the ‘ABDICATE’ button. The Star Whale roared. The ship shook like an outer space earthquake, and everyone either fell to the ground or held on to the nearest bolted down object.

“Amy what have you done?” the Doctor demanded, just as the shaking stopped. Overhead the sound of systems rebooting filled the room.

“Nothing at all,” she answered, looking about wide-eyed. “Am I right?”

“We’ve increased speed!” Hawthorne answered incredulously before turning back to the monitors.
“Yeah, well, you stopped torturing the pilot! Gotta help!” she said, allowing her usual snark to come through as she finally did something right—something really really incredibly right.

“It’s still here…” The Queen said breathlessly, looking down at the exposed brain. “I don’t understand…” She looked to the Doctor on impulse but he didn’t have the answers either.

“The Star Whale didn’t come like a miracle all those years ago,” Amy said, sighing, and beside her Rory appeared. “It volunteered. You didn’t have to trap it, or torture it, that was all just you.” She spoke to them passionately, and Rose came up to hold the Doctor’s hand as they watched her walk around the room. “It came because it couldn’t stand to watch your children cry.” The Queen looked down reverently at Amy’s gaze. “What if you were really old, and really kind, and all alone? Your whole race dead? What couldn’t you do then?” At that Rose squeezed her husband’s hand tighter and he looked down as well. “If you were that old, and that kind, and the very last of your kind…” She turned to the Doctor. “You couldn’t just stand there and watch children cry.”

And the words spoken to him meant more than she could have known.

An hour later Amy and Rory came running up to the Doctor and Rose as they stood and watched the stars and the nation from the picture window. “From Her Majesty,” Amy laughed, holding the mask up to the Doctor. “She says there will be no more secrets on the Starship UK.”

He was silent though, so Rose patted his arm before taking Rory’s hand and leading him towards the TARDIS, giving their significant others a chance to talk.

“Amy you could have killed everyone on this ship,” he said, not looking at her, once Rose and Rory’s footsteps disappeared.

Amy swallowed and looked out the window, but set her jaw. “You could have killed a Star Whale.”

"And you saved it.” He sighed. “I know, I know.”

Moments or centuries passed. “Amazing though don’t you think?” Amy asked eventually, studying his profile. “The Star Whale… All that pain and misery… and loneliness… and it just made it kind.” She couldn’t keep the hopeful notes from her voice, begging for his forgiveness.

“But you couldn’t have known how it would react,” he argued.

“You couldn’t have,” she shot back, “but I’ve seen it before. Very old, and very kind, and the very very last… Sound a bit familiar?”

The Doctor could only smile at the amazing and incredible human in front of him, and pull her into a hug.

“Hey,” she said eventually, still in his arms.

“What?”

“Gotcha,” she said simply, and they both laughed, allowing the pain from the day to slip away.

Rose and Rory walked arm-in-arm towards the TARDIS, weaving through the people who were
none-the-wiser of the things that they’d done to save their lives today. “Are we just going to disappear then?” he asked as the blue box loomed over the crowd. “Is that just… you guys’ M.O.?”

Rose laughed, not picking up on the fear behind the words. “It’s easier, sometimes. Most of the time really. When you’re as old as us, and have seen as much as we have… it’s either leave and let them live, or stay and watch them die. I guess it’s become habit to leave as soon as we’re not needed anymore. Besides! There’s a whole big infinite universe left to see!”

Rory studied her as they walked and decided he wasn’t going to question that as he couldn’t begin to understand it. “Are you okay?” he asked eventually, just as they were coming to the TARDIS doors.

Rose sighed and leaned back against her ship rather than unlock it. Of course Rory had picked up just how she’d reacted earlier. “There’s more to the story than what I said earlier… about Alina.”

Rory watched solemnly instead of replying, leaning against the TARDIS as well in order to listen.

Rose looked down at the floor rather than at him. “She developed a heart and bone disease at the end of my pregnancy. There’s not a name for it. Her heart wasn’t supplying enough blood to her brain; she was practically brain dead. And her bones were too weak; they were breaking inside my body.” She stuttered on her words and sniffed. “Three hearts between the two of us and we couldn’t even make one proper one,” she said bitterly, but shook her head immediately afterwards—they couldn’t blame themselves. “We had a choice to make. Let her live, in constant pain and/or brain dead for the rest of what was bound to be a short and horrible life… or terminate the pregnancy two weeks before I was due.”

“Oh, Rose…” Rory breathed, pulling her towards him as the tears flowed. “I’m sorry.”

Rose pulled back to wipe her tears away and smiled pitifully at him. “Today just… brought all that back. I’m not usually this emotional.” She let out a shuttering laugh.

He let out a half-hearted laugh in response. “That’s okay,” he said easily. “Let’s go make some tea, yeah?”

She nodded gratefully, and they stepped inside the TARDIS.

On the way to the ship Amy looked around and bounced on her toes. “Won’t they wonder where we’ve gone?”

“For the rest of their lives!” he answered easily, not slowing his pace. “Oh, the songs they’ll write!” He grinned maniacally at her. “Anyway, never mind them. Big day tomorrow.”

“Is it?” Amy asked, tilting her head.

He laughed merrily, going to unlock the TARDIS. “Well it’s always a big day tomorrow! We’ve got a time machine! I skip the little ones!” he exclaimed, turning to look at her again before opening the door.

Inside he found his wife and Rory, leaning against the console, cuppas in hand and two more sitting near the dematerialisation lever. Rose grinned widely at him as they entered. “All set then?”

His mouth was open to respond when behind Rose the phone rang.
“No, I’m sorry, is that a phone?” Rory asked, looking around wildly.

“Well, it’s a phone box.” the Doctor replied easily, jumping up to the platform and sending Rose a significant look. “Would you mind?” he said over his shoulder to Amy, who looked at Rory and Rose, who shrugged in turn. Rose pointed her to the phone with an indulgent smile.

She grabbed it before it could stop ringing. “Hello?” … I’m sorry, who? … No, seriously, who?” She leaned back and furrowed her brow at Rory while the Doctor and Rose smiled at each other. She put the phone to her shoulder and looked at them. “Says he’s the Prime Minister. First the Queen, now the Prime Minister? You two get about, don’t ya?”

The Doctor grinned, still going over some diagnostics. “Which Prime Minister?” he asked, pointing to the stabilising lever next to her which she pulled down while he pushed the other one up.

“Um—uh—which Prime Minister?” She asked into the phone, looking at Rose for answers which she of course didn’t give. “The British one,” she repeated the words from the man in the other end of the call.

The Doctor looked up, “Which British one?”

She repeated the question and immediately her eyes widened, handing him the phone. “Winston Churchill for you…” she said, her voice a bit higher pitched than normal, and looked over his shoulder to Rory whose mouth was agape.

“Oh, hello dear! What’s up? The wife sends her love!” he exclaimed, looking at Rose happily. “... Don’t worry about a thing, Prime Minister, we’re on our way!” He hung up the phone and immediately, the two aliens started their usual dance, spinning about the console.

“You didn’t get a time from him, love.” Rose chastised, looking at the monitor. “We’ll have to trace the call.”

“Oh, bugger.” The Doctor wrinkled his nose. “Well the humans probably need sleep anyhow.”

Rose chuckled and grinned over her shoulder at them. “Up the stairs, first corridor on your right. The TARDIS will lead you to your rooms.”

“Or you can go down the main corridor here and it’s the second turn on your left past the galley,” the Doctor offered, not unhelpfully, and Rose rolled her eyes. He was just trying to be impressive.

“So we can either go up stairs, or stay level, but either way we’ll make it to our rooms?” Rory quirked a brow, not entirely convinced.

“Yep!” Rose answered, impulsively spinning a dial to keep them stable in the Time Vortex, just as the TARDIS flashed her lights in agreement—she quite enjoyed being impressive too.

Chapter End Notes

comments keep writers writing ❤️
“We have to be careful, love,” Rose reminded the Doctor, pulling the monitor around to her to check his coordinates.

He let out a long-suffering sigh, and she raised her brows at him from across the console, for all the universe looking like the old married couple they really were. “Yes I know, dear,” he answered, setting dials more carefully than he normally did.

“Why’s that then?” Amy asked from her place on the jump seat. She’d gotten a solid twelve hours of sleep after being awake for nearly 48, and despite being in a timeless void, she felt more rested than she had in years.

“We’ve been to London during World War II before,” Rose explained, hands flying across an alien keyboard. “Multiple times actually, but one time in particular before a lot of everything else happened.”

“Rose hung from a war balloon flying over the city in the middle of the London Blitz,” the Doctor said matter of factly, and Rose squinted at him. Their new companions certainly did not need that bit of information.

Amy sputtered and said “Oh my God, Rose!” at the same time Rory asked “What? Why?”

“I was nineteen!” she defended, trying to make it sound like a dumb mistake all young-adults made.

The Doctor smirked and looked over to their companions. “She wandered off,” he said, his tone implying that this was always the sort of thing that happened to humans who wandered while time travelling. Over his shoulder Rose rolled her eyes and Amy and Rory struffles to conceal their grins.

“But World War II?” Rory asked, looking between them. “That’s sort of an… odd place to visit often isn’t it?”

Rose shrugged. “The Doctor’s run into Churchill without me plenty of times on his own before I came along. First time with me was an accident. Well… I say accident. We followed this thing through the Vortex sent by our friend Jack who happened to be there—”

“—He was trying to con time agents into buying a broken down ambulance,” the Doctor cut in, giving Amy and Rory significant looks. “And he wasn’t our friend at the time. And we had to save his life afterwards.”

“And he’s saved your arse too many times to count since,” Rose shot back easily, earning giggles...
from the humans. The Doctor only rolled his eyes and started going through the process of getting them out of the Time Vortex. “And then we ended up there again, properly on accident, and we sort of ran into Winston Churchill and one thing led to another…”

“—And you saved not only his life but the entire British nation’s and set in motion the next big turning point of the war?” Rory finished, already able to guess just how exactly the Time Lord couple led their lives.

The Doctor and Rose only laughed in response though, and the Doctor pulled the lever that sent them spiralling into the 1940’s.

When they felt the telltale bump that told them they’d landed, Rose immediately pulled the monitor towards her but didn’t look at it, instead choosing to lift up to her toes to look over it to her husband. “10 quid says we’ve got at least three guns pointed at us right now.” She grinned.

He squinted at her, considering. “No… there was only two last time… And he called… You’re on.”

She jumped up excitedly and he ran around to stand beside her as she pulled the security systems up. Amy and Rory watched on incredulously from behind them.

“I’m sorry did you say guns?” Rory asked.

“Yeah, old Winston’s a bit paranoid. Can’t blame him. Don’t worry. We’ve never been shot. Well, not by Winny anyway,” the Doctor answered quickly, and in front of him the bulb security camera loaded to reveal… three gunman were trained on the TARDIS doors.

Rose jumped up and down, and kissed him on the cheek while the Doctor protested loudly that it was rigged.

“No, love, you just forgot that last time we visited him is in his future,” Rose said cheekily, and ran for the doors before he could take the note back.

“Nope!” he yelled, running down the stairs and grabbing her by the waist before she could reach the door handle. “Me first!” And he spun them until his back was to the door. She folded her arms and pouted, but otherwise let him go on protecting her under the guise of petty rivalry.

The Doctor peeked his head out the door, and in front of him the guns cocked. His eyes widened slightly, and he took a step out carefully, leaving the door cracked because he knew he’d get yelled at if he didn’t. Rose poked her head out before he could call her name, and Amy’s and Rory’s appeared above and below hers.

“All clear, Doctor?” Rose asked, mockingly serious with a soldier impression.

He rolled his eyes. “Amy, Rory… Winston Churchill,” he introduced them, grinning widely and holding his arm out to the man in question as he came through the gunmen all still aiming at the Doctor’s head.

The three of them came out of the TARDIS. “Doctor? Is it you?” he asked, cigar smoke swirling around his head as he studied the Time Lord’s new face. “It must be. You have your Rose and your Punch and Judy Box.”

The Doctor smiled even brighter at the terms. “Oh, Winston, my old friend!” He stepped forward to shake the Prime Minister’s hand, but Churchill only held his hand out, palm up.
The Doctor pointed at him and behind him Rose laughed merrily. “Ha! Everytime!” he exclaimed, poking him in the shoulder a few times.

“What’s he after?” Amy asked breathlessly, clearly starstruck.

“TARDIS key, of course,” Rose answered on a giggle.

“Think of what I could achieve with your remarkable machine! The lives that could be saved!” he implored them, but they only shook their heads in response.

“Ah doesn’t work like that.” The Doctor smiled, turning to shut and lock the door.

“Must I take it by force?” the Prime Minister threatened, but still that jovial light glittered behind his eyes.

The Doctor and Rose smirked at each other. “I’d like to see you try,” he answered honestly.

Churchill squinted, but couldn’t conceal his own grin. “At ease,” he finally commanded his soldiers, and beside Rose, Rory drew out a slow breath she hadn’t realised he was holding. She patted his arm reassuringly.

The Doctor lifted his chin up. “You rang?"

Churchill began leading them through the Cabinet War Rooms. And through the corridors different members of staff came to the Prime Minister with business of war, and Amy and Rory hit each other excitedly each time as overhead bombs rattled the building and all around them phones rang off their hooks. “So, you’ve changed your face again?” Churchill yelled over the din of noise as they went.

“Yeah, well, had a bit of work done,” he brushed over smoothly, and Churchill puffed his cigar, unaffected as he’d seen so many of the Doctor’s faces already and has yet to receive a proper answer from any of them.

Churchill rolled his eyes and looked to the blonde on his other side. “Don’t know how you do it, love.”

Rose grinned over to her husband. “Oh, it’s not so bad. Still him.”

Winston, quite used to the couple’s flirting, just ignored them. “You’re late, by the way.” He shook his cane at the Doctor as he signed an acquisition.

“Late?” the Doctor repeated incredulously, looking at the watch Rose gave him last Christmas and he’d just now decided he felt compelled to wear.

“I rang you a month ago,” Churchill answered gruffly, though seemingly unfazed.

Rose clapped her hand to her forehead. “Oh sorry, Winnie,” she said, using the nickname he only let her use anymore. “We were so preoccupied not mixing up dates we’d already been to we forgot to cross-reference the signal from your call.”

Before he could answer her another man came with certainly more daunting news. “Excuse me, sir. Got another formation coming in, Prime Minister.” He informed him quickly, “Stukas by the look of them.”

“We shall go up top them Group Captain,” Winston replied. “We’ll give them what for!” He turned
back to the visitors. “Coming, Doctor?”

“Why?” He smirked.

Winston huffed and pulled his cane back from under the Doctor’s arm. “I have something to show you.” He said cleverly, and started marching them forwards once more.

The lift ride up was cramped, and Winston didn’t make it any easier as he blew cigar smoke directly into the Doctor’s face. “We stand at a crossroads, Doctor,” he began gravely, “quite alone, with our backs to the wall. Invasion is expected daily. So I will grasp with both hands anything that will give us an advantage over the Nazi menace.”

The Doctor squinted at his old friend as it sounded like he was defending deplorable decisions. He looked to Rose who shared an equal expression. “Such as?” he asked, and the lift came to a stop, Winston pulling the gate open and leading them out and up some stairs without answering.

“Doctor, Rose, this is professor Edwin Bracewell. Head of our Ironsides Project,” he said as they walked out into the roof, gesturing towards the man at the edge of the fort holding up a pair of binoculars. The Doctor threw a peace sign up while Rose waved politely.

Bracewell grinned down at them, and Rose found it an odd sight to see such a bright smile on roof top in the middle of the London Blitz. “How do you do?” he asked, and over the radio a man announced two-five Ju 88s approaching from the east. In the distance a bomb fell and more smoke and ash filled the air.

Beside the Doctor, Amy was lost for words as she watched the war in front of her. “It’s… Doctor… Doctor it’s…” she stuttered.

“History,” he finished sadly.

Behind them Churchill was unaffected by the atmosphere. “Ready, Bracewell?” he called.

“Aye-aye, sir!” The professor gave a thumbs up. “On my orders… fire!”

Behind him an all-too-familiar sound came, and those all-too-familiar disintegration beams appeared. The Doctor and Rose stiffened and reached for each other on impulse. Too many times has that been the noise surrounding the places trying to tear them apart.

“What was that?” Amy asked.

The Doctor stared at the place where the weapons had come from. “That wasn’t human. That was never human technology. That sounded like…” In his mind Rose whispered the word he couldn’t say out loud. “Show me, show me!” He mumbled and then yelled, running towards the ladder. “Show me what that was!”

Misunderstanding the tone, Bracewell grinned. “Advance!” he called, and behind him Winston announced that it was their ‘new secret weapon’ but the Doctor was frozen in place as in front of him, a Dalek rolled forward.

Someone behind him asked him what he thought, but he didn’t hear. Distantly he felt Rose appear beside him. He stepped towards the army-green Dalek’s eye stalk. “What are you doing here?” he demanded.

“I Am Your Soldier,” it answered in that horrible grating voice that haunted his nightmares.
“What?” Rose asked incredulously before he could.

“I Am Your Soldier,” it repeated.

“Stop this. Stop it now,” the Doctor demanded frantically. He composed himself only physically.

“You know who I am. You always know.”

“Your Identity Is Unknown,” it claimed. And the Doctor turned, frustrated, towards Rose.

Bracewell, clueless to the frantic conversation running through the Doctor’s and Rose’s minds, stepped forward. “Perhaps I could clarify some things here.” He stopped forward, gesturing between the Doctor and the Dalek. “This is one of my Ironsides.”

“Your what?” the Doctor demanded incredulously, squinting at the man.

Bracewell turned to the Dalek. “You will help the Allied cause in anyway that you can?” he asked it, hands casually in his pockets and his shoulders thrown back importantly.

“Yes,” the Dalek answered.

“Until the Germans have been utterly smashed?” Bracewell went on.

“Yes,” it agreed.

In the Doctor’s head Rose said bitterly that it would ‘utterly smash’ all of them— regardless of country of origin. The Doctor silently agreed.

“And what is your ultimate aim?”

“To Win The War!” the Dalek screeched, effectively raising gooseflesh on the Time Lords’ arms and sending frantic thoughts across their bond.

The Doctor and Rose turned on their heels and took the ladder two rungs at a time. “Your office. Now.” the Doctor bit out to Churchill, and practically ran their group back to the lift, and through the Cabinet War Rooms. He flung open the office door to find two more guns pointed at him, and he ignored them as he strode over to the desk and began pulling out all the files under ‘ironsides.’

“Oh put those down,” Rose snapped at the gunmen, sounding so much like her husband that had it been any other situation she would have mentally chastised herself.

The Doctor was flipping through the paperwork he’d strewn out on the desk when Winston came to stand on the other side in front of his chair. “They’re Daleks. They’re called Daleks.”

“They’re Bracewell’s Ironsides, Doctor! Look!” Churchill insisted. “Blueprints, statistics, field tests, photographs!” He listed off, pointing to all of the things the Doctor had thrown on his desk. “He invented them!”

“Invented them?” the Doctor repeated incredulously. “Oh, no, no. No!”

“Yes!” Churchill argued right back. “He approached one of our brass hats a few months ago. Fellow’s a genius!”

“A Scottish genius too!” Amy interrupted, and the Doctor remembered her and Rory’s presence for the first time since the Dalek had rolled around the barricade. “Maybe you should listen to—”

The Doctor held his finger up and shushed her, cutting her off. Rose didn’t even bother to correct
his rudeness. Another one of the rules. He’s allowed to ignore her under time constraints. She’s not allowed to say it at all when Daleks are around. Amy didn’t go on as she finally read the expression on his face and saw that Rose looked equally terrified and frantic.

The Doctor turned back to Churchill, speaking quietly for the first time. “He didn’t invent them,” he said seriously. “They’re alien.”

“Alien?” Churchill repeated, and behind them a Dalek rolled by menacingly, causing the Doctor to look over his shoulder and Rose to stiffen and hold her breath on impulse. Rory watched it, feeling scared himself although he didn’t know why. Amy squinted at them curiously however.

“Completely hostile.” Rose said quietly once it had passed.

“Precisely!” the Prime Minister exclaimed. “They will win me the war.” And he turned a blueprint over to reveal a propaganda poster depicting a Dalek, and the word ‘VICTORY!’ spelled out over top it. It was one of the worst things Rose had ever seen (and she’d seen a lot).

“No, no, no, no, no!” the Doctor repeated over and over again, following Churchill as he led them out of his office and down the corridor. “Why won’t you listen to me?” he demanded. “Why did you call us in if you won’t listen to me?”

Churchill took his cigar out of his mouth and spoke over his shoulder. “When I rang you a month ago, I must admit I had my doubts. The Ironsides seemed to good to be true.”

“Yes! Right! So destroy them! Exterminate them!” the Doctor exclaimed, and Rose bit her lip. ‘Exterminate? Really, Doctor?’ she teased, but couldn’t quite manage a smile, and he couldn’t either.

“But imagine what I could do with a hundred of them! A thousand!” Churchill protested.

“We are.” Rose said solemnly, and Amy and Rory squinted at her. They passed a Dalek then and it seemed to watch the Doctor singularly as they walked by. The Doctor watched back.

They stopped right before then entered what appeared to be the main war strategy room. “Amy, Rory, tell him,” the Doctor said.

Amy looked over his shoulder to the room Churchill had entered. “Tell him what?” she asked distractedly.

“About the Daleks!”

“What would we know about the Daleks?” Rory asked, looking between them.

“Everything. They invaded your world. Twice. Remember?” He rotated his shoulders. “Planets in the sky, you don’t forget that.” He looked at them like he expected them to suddenly remember what they clearly didn’t. “Amy…” he said hesitantly, at the same time Rose said Rory’s name in the same tone. “Tell me you remember the Daleks.”

Amy shook her head, looking at them like they were mad, “No, sorry.” Rory continued to stare at them incredulously though, appropriately more worried about the matter. He trusted them to know when something was important, and he didn’t like the way the Doctor and Rose were looking at them.

“That’s not possible.” The Doctor turned to follow Churchill. Rose stuck around long enough to give them an indiscernible look.
‘Doctor, the last time that happened was with—’

‘Donna. I know.’

‘Something isn’t right.’

‘We have to worry about that later,’ he finished the conversation short. Daleks were the problem at hand, they didn’t have time to worry about their companions’ memory loss. Next to him Rose crossed her arms and he figured he’d apologise later. His greatest enemy was currently rolling freely about the underground London government, after all… Though the third rule was that he isn’t to be rude to her. Amy and Rory came up next to them before he could dwell on it.

“So, they’re up to something, but what is it?” he asked their group loudly, clearly frustrated. “What are they after?” He glared at a nearby Dalek.

“Well let’s just ask them, shall we?” Amy said, and without an ounce of trepidation sauntered over to the closest Dalek.

“Amy! Amelia!” the Doctor called, trying and failing to grab her hand. Instead the three of them watched apprehensively as she tapped the Dalek on the… middle bit.

“Can I Be Of Assistance?” It asked, lights flashing with each syllable, and yeah, Amy had to admit the voice was a little… maniacal. Sort of like it was angrily sassing her. She stared at it for a second before she caught up with herself.

“Oh. Yes. See, my friends reckon you’re dangerous…” She motioned to Rose and the Doctor who were watching carefully with their hands to their mouths. “That you’re alien… is that true?”

“I Am Your Soldier,” it screeched simply.

“Yeah, got that bit. Love a squaddie. What else though?” she went on, crossing her arms.

It paused for a moment. “Please Excuse Me, I Have Duties To Perform.” And then it rolled away.

It was the first time either the Doctor or Rose had heard a Dalek say please.

The Doctor groaned inwardly and rubbed his forehead before marching over to Churchill and pulling the cigar out of his mouth—an act he was sure would have gotten him a ‘Rude’ if it wasn’t for the Daleks and Rose being cross with him. “Winston, Winston, please—” The Doctor begged.

“We are waging total war, Doctor!” the Prime Minister interrupted loudly, gesturing to the war map in front of him, and overhead another bomb shook the building. “Day after day the Luftwaffe pound this great city like an iron fist!”

“Wait till the Daleks get started,” he muttered with a significant look towards the alien.

Winston went on though, “Men, women, and children slaughtered. Families torn apart. Wren’s churches in flames—”

“Yeah, try the whole Earth in flame,” the Doctor interrupted caustically.

The Prime Minister ignored him. “I weep for my country. I weep for my empire. It is breaking my heart.”

The Doctor followed Churchill as he started moving around the table, Rose close on his heels. “But you’re resisting, Winston! The whole world knows you’re resisting!” he argued, putting his hands
on his shoulders.

“But for how long?” Winston insisted, looking up exasperated. “Millions of lives will be saved if I use these Ironsides now.”

A Dalek interrupted them then. “May I Be Of Assistance?”

The Doctor lost his cool. “Shut it!” He yelled to the Dalek, and Rose put her hand to the small of his back, momentarily forgetting her own anger. He turned back to Winston. “Listen to me. Just listen!” He bent his head to look at him seriously. “The Daleks have no conscience. No mercy. No… no pity. They are my oldest and deadliest enemy. You cannot trust them.”

Churchill didn’t budge though. “If Hitler invaded hell I’d give a favorable reference to the Devil,” he said, making The Doctor shake his head minutely. “These machines are our salvation!” The all-clear siren wailed before The Doctor could argue further, and Churchill grabbed at his chest in thanks. “We are safe, for now,” he told them sternly before turning on his heel.

The Doctor looked to the Dalek still standing next to them and clenched his jaw, squaring his shoulders. The Dalek only turned its head and rolled away. They watched it for a few more seconds before walking back around to where Amy and Rory were standing.

“Are you okay?” Amy asked, studying their faces.

The Doctor, properly upset and frustrated, asked his own question rather than answer hers. “What does hate look like, Amy?”

“Hate?” she repeated.

He nodded, and turned to the Dalek a few metres away. “It looks like a Dalek,” he said, answering his own question. In his hand he flipped the hat no one noticed he had picked up earlier. “And I’m going to prove it.” He walked off purposefully, and Amy followed him after a moment, but Rose crossed her arms and stuck next to Rory as they watched them dart around a Dalek.

“Should we go after them?” Rory asked her.

Rose shook her head. “I’ll find him in a moment,” she answered shortly.

He studied her profile. “Okay… are you alright?”

Rose wrinkled her nose. “We’ve defeated the Daleks so many times, Rory, and every time they just come back. It isn’t fair. He lost everything to the Daleks a long time ago. I lost everything to them later. I just want this to be over.” She put a hand to her head.

Rory nodded even though he didn’t understand. He did that a lot around them. “Are you cross with him?” he asked eventually, still wondering why they weren’t following.

Rose rolled her eyes. “I’m always cross with him.” she said simply, and then led Rory towards where she could feel the Doctor was through their bond.

A few turns later they heard the Doctor’s voice. “Alright, Prof? Now the PM’s been filling me in,” he said with odd vernacular Rose was sure no one really used. “Amazing things these Ironsides or yours. Amazing. You must be very proud of them.”

Rose and Rory appeared in the doorway. The Doctor had picked up a Dalek eyestalk and swung it around, and was now ruffling through some files. He was clearly more tactile this time around. He
wouldn’t stop touching things that weren’t his.

“Just doing my bit,” Bracewell replied modestly.

The Doctor plopped down in an armchair with a file as Amy picked up the eyestalk he’d lost interest in. “Hm, not bad for a Paisley boy!” She grinned over her shoulder. Rose and Rory shared a look as their respective significant others acted very predictably.

Bracewell laughed merrily. “Yes, I thought I detected a familiar cadence, my dear!”

The Doctor, predictably, ignored the conversation and interrupted. “How did you do it, come up with the idea?” he asked, looking up. And Rose’s heart swelled a little at his floppy hair—Damn him. He apparently caught that thought though as he smirked at her, throwing the file behind him and leaning cockily back in the chair with his hands folded on his stomach as Bracewell answered modestly. “Bet you get a lot of these clever notions, do you?”

“Well ideas just seem to teem from my head!” the professor exclaimed, with a descriptive motion. “Wonderful things! Like… let me show you!” He began walking across the lab, the Doctor watching him oddly, looking for signs he wasn’t human. He joined Rose and Rory as they came by to see what Bracewell had to show. “You see, some musings on the potential of hypersonic flight. Gravity bubbles that can sustain life outside of the terrestrial atmosphere—came to me in the bath.” He held up the different files as he spoke, which the Doctor took, squinted at, and then handed to Rose who studied them more carefully.

‘Doctor, these are years ahead of their time.’ Rose raised her brows at the work.

‘Some of them aren’t even human.’ He nodded. “Are these your ideas or theirs?” he asked Bracewell out loud.

Bracewell seemed to think it was a joke despite the Doctor’s serious tone. “Oh, no, no, no.” He said, holding a hand up. “These robots are entirely under my control, Doctor. They are—thank you—” he took a cup of tea from a Dalek with a tray, “the perfect servants, and the perfect warrior.”

The Doctor leaned into him. “I don’t know what you’re up to, Professor, but whatever they promised you, you cannot trust them. Call them what you like, the Daleks are death.”

“Yes, Doctor!” Churchill broke in, entering the room with another Dalek close behind him. “Death to our enemies! Death to the forces of darkness! And death to the Third Reich!”

“Gotta appreciate a man that can spin a war rally on a whim,” Rose muttered, and beside her Rory snorted.

The Doctor ignored them, stepping towards the PM. “Yes, Winston, and death to everyone else too.”

“Would You Care For Some Tea?” a Dalek interrupted with it’s grating voice.

Without warning, the Doctor flipped the tray and the cup, sending it crashing to the floor as his patience maxed out. Everyone jumped and took a step back (including the Dalek) save for Rose, who saw it coming. “STOP THIS!” he demanded. “WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHAT DO YOU WANT?”

“We Seek Only To Help You.”
The Doctor squinted. “To do what?”

“To Win The War.”

“Really? Which war?” he bit out.

“I Do Not Understand.”

“This war?” He took a step forward. “Against the Nazis? Or your war? The war against the rest of the universe, the war against all life-forms that are not Dalek!”

“I Do Not Understand. I Am Your Soldier.” It said again.

Rose felt his anger and frustration reach an all time high so she took a step forward. “Doctor, look at me.” She said quietly, and he did. Instantly she felt it drain out of him, mostly. He still had her. He’d always have her. They haven’t taken her. They won’t take her. Not Rose. Never Rose.

He took a deep breath and looked like he wanted to start again, but Rose spoke up first. “Now, you.” She turned on the Dalek. “You look at me too. I don’t know why you’re here, but I swear on the lives of every person you’ve ever stolen from me that I will find out. And I will stop you. You are not a soldier,” she bit out. “Wilfred Mott. Private in the 6th Airborne Division. He’s a soldier. And I won’t have you dishonoring him and all the men and women he’s fighting beside calling yourself that. You are the worst thing in creation. The Doctor has defeated you time and time again. He’s defeated you!” She pointed to her husband. “He sent you back into the void! He saved the whole of reality from you! He is your greatest enemy. He is the Doctor. And you are the Daleks.”

She finished with so much finality in her voice no one could have argued.

And they didn’t.

“Correct,” it screeched, turning to the other. “Review Testimony.” And Rose’s decree that ‘he is the Doctor, and they are the Daleks’ was repeated.

“Testimony? What are you talking about, testimony?” the Doctor asked frantically, grabbing Rose’s hand on impulse.

“Transmitting Testimony Now,” the deeper-voiced Dalek said, ignoring him.


“Testimony Accepted! Testimony Accepted!” the Dalek rejoiced—as much as a Dalek could do anyway.

The Doctor’s eyes widened. “Get back, all of you!” he ordered, pushing Rose behind him and holding his arms out around the group.

“Marines! Marines! Get in here!” Winston called out the door.

“No!” Rose yelled, but it was too late. As soon as the marines arrived they were shot down by the Daleks. Behind her Amy gasped.

“Stop it! Stop it! What are you doing?” Bracewell demanded, frantically waving his arms in the air. “You are my Ironsides!”

“We Are The Daleks.”
“But I created you!” he protested.

“No,” it said, and then, without preamble, shot the professor’s hand off with a spark of electricity and fire, revealing the wires underneath. “We Created You.” They turned with calls for victory, and then disappeared with a flash of light.

“What just happened, Doctor? Rose?” Amy asked, staring at the place where the Daleks had been.

He grabbed Rose’s hand again. “We wanted to know what they wanted. What their plan was,” he answered. “We were their plan.”

They ran. Their companions running after them.

“Testimony Accepted, that’s what they said,” Rose said, as they entered the room where they’d left the TARDIS. “That’s what they wanted. My testimony.”

“Don’t beat yourself up,” Rory said sincerely. “You were right.” Rose only grimaced at him. Never more had she wished she wasn’t right.

The Doctor unlocked the TARDIS and Amy cut in. “So what do we do? Is this what we do? Chase after them?” she asked quickly.

“This is what I do yeah,” he answered quickly, and Rose raised her brow. “And it’s dangerous. So you wait here.”

Rose crossed her arms and scoffed loudly. “As if.”

“Rose—” he started, pleading.

“Nu-uh, don’t ‘Rose’ me with those puppy dog eyes, Doctor. I’m coming.”

He stared at her pleadingly for a moment and had a short telepathic conversation that he lost. “Okay fine. Amy and Rory, you’re staying though.”

Rory nodded but Amy furrowed her brow. “What, so you mean we’ve got to stay safe down here in the middle of the London Blitz?”

He sighed, “Safe as it gets around me.” He grabbed Rose’s hand, pointed at each of them in turn, and disappeared into the TARDIS.

The three of them watched as the TARDIS dematerialised. “Well what’s he expect us to do now?” Amy demanded incredulously.

“KBO of course.” Winston answered easily.

“What?”

The prime minister looked at her wisely. “Keep Buggering On.”

“Stop it,” the Doctor said as the ran around the console.

“Stop what?” She asked innocently.

He looked up to her momentarily. “Blaming yourself.”
Rose squinted at him. “Wouldn’t you?”

“Not until later..,” he answered easily. “But I would never blame you.”

Rose huffed, but there was no time to continue the argument, “Bingo!” the Doctor exclaimed, as they finally locked onto the coordinates of the ship. They landed quickly before they lost it, and the Doctor strode purposely towards the door as soon as the ship stopped.

“Wait!” Rose exclaimed, getting between him and the door just before he could open it. “You don’t have a plan.”

He tilted his head. “Do we ever?” He grinned cheekily and took her by the waist, spinning them around, and getting out the door before she could stop him again. She rolled her eyes, and after a moment followed him.

He clapped his hands together as they stepped through the doorway. “How bout that cuppa now then?” He spoke loudly as they strode toward the center.

“It Is The Doctor! Exterminate!” one of the three Daleks exclaimed.

“Wait, wait, wait! I wouldn’t do that if I were you!” The Doctor stopped them quickly, reaching in his pocket for the first thing he could find which was: a jammie dodger. Well at least it wasn’t the banana. He thought quickly on his toes. “TARDIS self-destruct. And you know what that means. Our ship goes, you all go with it.”

“You Would Not Use Such A Device,” The leftmost Dalek claimed.

“Yeah? Try him.” Rose challenged, despite the fact that she wanted so badly to roll her eyes at the biscuit in her husband’s hand.

The rightmost one rolled forward, extending its plunger arm. “Ah, ah, ah!” the Doctor said, stepping back. “No scans, no nothing. One move and I’ll destroy us all, you’ve got that? TARDIS bang bang, Daleks BOOM!” he threatened, and Rose had to try really really hard not to laugh that time.

The Dalek rolled back. “Good boy...” He walked around the broken console unit of the Dalek ship. “This ship’s pretty beaten up. Running on empty I’d say, like you. When we last met you were at the end of your rope. Finished.”

“One Ship Survived,” the bronze one answered.

The Doctor took steps towards them, but Rose stayed where she was, arms crossed in front of her, and allowed her husband to speak. He was better at this than her. Had a few hundred years more practice with it. The Doctor could talk to deadly aliens for a millennium before they realized he’d completely rewired their entire ship. He went on, “And you fell back through time, yes. Crippled. Dying.”

“We Picked Up A Trace,” one of the army-green ones explained. “One Of The Progenitor Devices.”

“Progenitor?” the Doctor asked casually. “What’s that when it’s at home?”

“It Is Our Past And Our Future.”

The Doctor bounced on his toes, making an odd sound of consideration as he did. “That’s deep.
That is deep for a Dalek,” he conceded. “What does it mean though?”

Rose inwardly admired his ability to continue asking questions of their plan without letting anything on.

“It Contains Pure Dalek DNA,” the bronze one answered, shaking somewhat excitedly as it did. “Thousands Were Created. All Were Lost. Save One.” Behind it the device in question beeped rapidly.

“Okay…” He was talking to Rose in his head as they put the pieces together. “But there’s still one thing I don’t get though. If you’ve got the progenitor, why build Bracewell?” he asked, hands together, and squinting as he looked at them in turn.

“It Was… Necessary.” The Dalek answered as awkwardly as a Dalek could.

“But why?” the Doctor persisted, each word enunciated as his brow furrowed. The Daleks only stayed silent though. And then finally him and Rose put it together themselves. “I get it!” He smirked somewhat manically. “Oh, I get it! I get it! Oh! This is rich!” He clapped his hands together. “The Progenitor wouldn’t recognize you, would it? It saw you as impure,” he mocked them, grinning. “Your DNA is unrecognizable as Dalek.”

“A Solution Was Devised,” they answered easily.

“Yes, yes, yes,” the Doctor waved them off as he began pacing again. “Rose. Rose’s testimony—”

“The Female Was Unnecessary.”

The Doctor glared at it furiously and stormed forward, all of the anger of a thousand suns burning behind his eyes. “Don’t you say that. Don’t you ever say that about her. You don’t even get to say her name. Do I make myself clear?” he shouted at it, face-to-eyestalk with the Dalek and glaring daggers.

The Dalek rolled backwards a few feet.

The Doctor smirked minutely and turned back to face Rose. She only managed a small smile and a nod before her attention was diverted to one of the Daleks rolling to the nearest console—plunger arm extended. “Oi! What are you doing?” she yelled, causing her husband to turn around and hold the biscuit up threateningly.

“Withdraw Now Doctor Or The City Dies In Flames.”

“Who are you kidding? This ship is a wreck. You don’t have the power to destroy London,” he called their bluff, still holding up the jammie dodger.

“Watch As The Humans Destroy Themselves,” the Dalek answered. And Rose couldn’t help but think that was quite an eloquent—if poignant—way to describe war.

Below, the entire city of London lit up like a Christmas tree. They were a great big British target—sitting ducks for the Germans.

“Turn those lights off now,” the Doctor demanded. “Turn the lights off now or I swear I will use the TARDIS self-destruct!”

“Stalemate, Doctor. Leave Us And Return To Earth.” It retorted.
“Oh that’s it? That’s your great victory? You leave?” He said incredulously.

“Extinction Is Not An Option.” Of course it wasn’t, it never was. No matter how hard he tried they just kept coming back. “We Shall Return To Our Own Time And Begin Again.”

“No, no, no!” the Doctor interrupted on repeat again. “I won’t let you get away this time! I won’t!” But he sounded desperate. All around them a machine chimed and red lights started flashing. Rose stepped forward to grab his hand as the Progenitor started working.

“We Have Succeeded. DNA Reconstruction Is Complete.” The Daleks rejoiced as much as a Dalek—yeah you get it.

The Time Lords stood in silent horror as angry red energy pulsed around the machine. The doors opened with a cacophony of smoke and sparks, and they couldn’t help but flinch. “Observe, Doctor. A New Dalek Paradigm.”

Rose had always known her life was a sci-fi movie, but never had she felt it more than in this moment as through the fire and smoke the robots rolled forwards, coming into neat formation.

“The Progenitor Has Fulfilled Our New Destiny! Behold The Restoration Of The Daleks! The Resurrection Of The Master Race!” The Dalek screeched over the din of noise. “All Hail The New Daleks! All Hail The New Daleks!”

The Dalek Supreme, apparently, spoke for the first time. It’s grating voice deeper than any they had heard before. “Yes. You Are Inferior,” it observed.

“Yes,” they agreed.

“Then Prepare.”

“We Are Ready!”

Rose and the Doctor watched as they gave orders to kill each other. “Cleanse The Unclean. Total Obliteration. Disintegrate,” it said, and the new Daleks destroyed the old.

“Blimey,” the Doctor said in abject horror—despite his hate for the creatures. “What do you do to the ones who mess up?”

“You Are The Doctor.” The Supreme Dalek rolled forward. “You Must Be Exterminated.”

The Doctor pulled the biscuit back out of his coat pocket. “Don’t mess with me, sweetheart. TARDIS self-destruct. I hit this button we all die. So what are we going to do? Either you turn off your clever machine, or I’ll blow you and your new paradigm into eternity.”

“And Yourself,” it challenged.

“Occupational hazard!” he spit out.

“And Your Rose.”

The Doctor paused, but it was too late anyway. The other one rolled forward. “Scan Revealed Nothing. TARDIS Self-Destruct Device Is Non-Existent.”

“Alright!” he exclaimed, taking a bite of the biscuit. “It’s a jammie dodger! But I was promised tea!” He said it all with his mouth full, waving the half-eaten biscuit in their eyestalks.
An erratic beeping filled the ship and the Daleks turned towards the console. “Alert! Unidentified Projectile Approaching!” A pause. “Correction. Multiple Projectiles!”

The Doctor pulled Rose towards the broken console behind them, where only the screen was still functioning- but it was all they needed to see. “What Have The Humans Done?” The Dalek Supreme demanded.

“I don’t know,” he answered honestly.

“Explain! Explain! Explain!” they screeched.

“Danny Boy to the Doctor! Danny Boy to the Doctor!” A voice came over the loudspeaker, and the Doctor looked up wide eyed, spinning on his heel. “Are you receiving me? Over.”

The Doctor and Rose laughed despite themselves. “Oh, Winston, you beauty!” he yelled loudly.


“Loud and clear, Danny Boy!” he exclaimed, spinning again, and backing towards the TARDIS. “Big dish. Side of the ship. Blow it up! Over.”

“Exterminate The Doctor!” The Dalek Supreme ordered. The Doctor grabbed Rose’s hand and they ran they way they came, lasers firing at them from all angles.

Back in the TARDIS they pulled up the screens and radio signals to give them audio and visual. All around the Dalek’s ship, World War II fighter jets were spinning around firing lasers like a scene from straight out of *Star Wars*.

“Cover my flank. Going in close,” Danny Boy said.

And moments later, “Pull out, pull out!”

A ship went down. “We’ve lost Jubilee, sir.”

Rose bit her lip and looked to the Doctor as she watched the debris fall back to Earth. Winston sent them in again. Flintlock went down. “The dish seems to be protected, sir. Over,” Danny Boy said as he spun around more projectiles. “Danny Boy to The Doctor. Only me left now.” He said, courage and sorrow lacing his words. “Anything you can do, sir? Over.”

The Doctor and Rose shared a look before he picked up the comm unit. “The Doctor to Danny Boy, The Doctor to Danny Boy. We can disrupt the Dalek shields, but not for long. Over.”

“Good show, Doctor. Get to it. Over,” he answered quickly, and they got to work spinning dials and pulling levers, locking on to the signal and sending just enough code and electrical currents to get it down for at least a few seconds.

Danny Boy flew in and fired just as the shields fell—a direct hit. Finally, London fell back under the cover of darkness.

“Danny Boy to The Doctor. I’m going in for another attack. Over.”

“The Doctor to Danny Boy. Destroy this ship! Over!” he exclaimed.

“What about you two sir?” He asked, omitting the lingo.

The Doctor smirked over to Roses. “We’ll be okay,” he said simply, but ahead of them the port
they had as a window shifted into video mode. The Dalek Supreme stood in front of them.


“Ah, what?” He scoffed. “And let you scuttle off back to the future, no fear?” He placed his hands on the railing seriously. “This is the end for you,” he said for what was likely the 50th time. “The final end.”

“Call Off The Attack Or We Will Destroy The Earth.”

The Doctor titled his head confidently. “I’m not stupid, mate. You just played your last card.”

“Bracewell Is A Bomb,” they informed him without preamble.

His heart stopped but he didn’t. “You’re bluffing,” he challenged, but it felt like begging. “Deception’s second nature to you. There isn’t a sincere bone in your body. There isn’t a bone in your body.” He rambled, but it felt like he was trying to convince himself of his own words.

“His Power Is Derived From An Oblivion Continuum. Call Off Your Attack Or We Will Detonate The Android.”

The Doctor turned around. “No. This is my best chance ever. The last of the Daleks. I can rid the whole universe of you, once… and for all.” But he was bracing the monitor, and Rose stepped forward to place a gentle hand on his arm. There were tears on the edges of his vision.

“What?” Bracewell sputtered out.

“Sorry, Professor, but you’re a bomb! An inconceivably massive Dalek bomb!”

They were wiping tears from their eyes as they landed, running out the doors in an instant.

Without really thinking about it the Doctor ran forward and punched Bracewell into the floor. He instantly regretted it, as it felt like punching the metal shell of a Dalek, but well… it achieved something. Probably.

“Doctor!” Amy yelled.

“Choose, Doctor,” the Dalek challenged. “Destroy The Daleks, Or Save The Earth.”

And it was never really a choice.

And they knew what that meant. It was horrible and sick and everything Dalek. But it also meant the end of them. The world ends in the 1940’s? Rose Tyler is never born. Hendrick’s is never blown up. The Doctor never meets her. She never looks into the heart of the TARDIS. They never fall in love. They never get married. They never do any of it. It wasn’t just the Earth that needed saving. It was them. And likely the whole Universe after that considering how many times they’d saved it.

They were wiping tears from their eyes as they landed, running out the doors in an instant.

Without really thinking about it the Doctor ran forward and punched Bracewell into the floor. He instantly regretted it, as it felt like punching the metal shell of a Dalek, but well… it achieved something. Probably.

“Doctor!” Amy yelled.

“Sorry, Professor, but you’re a bomb! An inconceivably massive Dalek bomb!”

“Choose, Doctor,” the Dalek said. “Destroy The Daleks, Or Save The Earth.”

And it was never really a choice.

They were wiping tears from their eyes as they landed, running out the doors in an instant.

Without really thinking about it the Doctor ran forward and punched Bracewell into the floor. He instantly regretted it, as it felt like punching the metal shell of a Dalek, but well… it achieved something. Probably.

“Doctor!” Amy yelled.

“Choose, Doctor,” the Dalek said. “Destroy The Daleks, Or Save The Earth.”

And it was never really a choice.

They were wiping tears from their eyes as they landed, running out the doors in an instant.

Without really thinking about it the Doctor ran forward and punched Bracewell into the floor. He instantly regretted it, as it felt like punching the metal shell of a Dalek, but well… it achieved something. Probably.

“Doctor!” Amy yelled.

“Choose, Doctor,” the Dalek said. “Destroy The Daleks, Or Save The Earth.”

And it was never really a choice.

They were wiping tears from their eyes as they landed, running out the doors in an instant.

Without really thinking about it the Doctor ran forward and punched Bracewell into the floor. He instantly regretted it, as it felt like punching the metal shell of a Dalek, but well… it achieved something. Probably.

“Doctor!” Amy yelled.

“Sorry, Professor, but you’re a bomb! An inconceivably massive Dalek bomb!”

“Choose, Doctor,” the Dalek said. “Destroy The Daleks, Or Save The Earth.”

And it was never really a choice.

They were wiping tears from their eyes as they landed, running out the doors in an instant.

Without really thinking about it the Doctor ran forward and punched Bracewell into the floor. He instantly regretted it, as it felt like punching the metal shell of a Dalek, but well… it achieved something. Probably.

“Doctor!” Amy yelled.

“Choose, Doctor,” the Dalek said. “Destroy The Daleks, Or Save The Earth.”

And it was never really a choice.
dimension.” She left out the *and kill us all* part, and based on the already horrified looks from the surrounding humans she was glad she did.

The Doctor came beside her and pulled out his sonic, tearing the professor’s shirt apart as he did. He opened the artificial-flesh layer to reveal the hard metal underneath, and scanned him quickly with the screwdriver. “Well?” Amy asked.

“I don’t know, I don’t know, I don’t know,” he stuttered as he always did in situations like this one. “I’ve never seen one up close before.” He flicked the sonic to see the readings and Rose looked over his shoulder, raising her brows at the sheer amount of *power* inside the man in front of her. They wouldn’t have to refuel in Cardiff for *ages* with a power source like that.

“So what, they’ve wired him up to detonate?” she asked incredulously.

“Oh no, no, no, not wired. He is a bomb. A big, walking, talking Pow!” He made a bomb noise, complete with motion, and Rose shot him a look he didn’t see but definitely felt. “Exploding. The moment that flashes red.”

“There’s a blue wire or something you have to cut isn’t there?” Amy said unhelpfully, and the Doctor stood up to point at her at the same time Rory came to kneel at Bracewell’s head across from Rose. “...Or a red one,” she finished lamely.

“You’re not helping,” the Doctor said shortly.

“It’s incredible!” Winston interrupted. “He talked to us about his memories! About the Great War!”


“Love,” Rose interrupted, simultaneously calling his attention and listing the most important thing it means to be her race. They may have lost to the Daleks again, but they hadn’t lost everything. They still had each other. They still had their love. He still had his Rose. His human that he stole away and poured all of his love into for safe keeping. He was positive he’d go insane without her.

“Yes, love!” he said, kneeling down beside her again. Amy followed suit coming next to Rory. The countdown was already two-fifths gone. “Edwin… You ever fancied someone you knew you shouldn’t?” he prompted, thinking of when he first realized he had feelings for Rose—back when he was grumpier and wore leather.

“Hurts, doesn’t it?” Rose said, reading her husband’s thoughts.

Bracewell hesitated for a moment and looked to Amy. “Hey, Paisley,” she said with a smile, grabbing his hand.

“I really shouldn’t talk about her.” he answered eventually.

“Oh so there’s a her then?” Amy teased—the red lights of the bomb were fading back to yellow.

“What was her name?” Rory asked, looking between Amy and Bracewell.

Bracewell got a sort of dreamy far away look in his eyes, “Dorabella…”

“Dorabella!” The Doctor snorted, earning a *Rude* from Rose and glares from Amy and Rory. “It’s a lovely name. It’s a beautiful name.” He corrected quickly with a look to his wife.
“What was she like, Edwin?” Amy pressed.

He described her reverently. “Such a smile… And her eyes… her eyes were so blue… almost violet… like the last touch of sunset at the edge of the world… Dorabella…”

The Doctor’s hearts clenched as he empathised—knowing a girl himself who could still bring that same look to his face so many years later. Rory did as well. And finally the last light faded back to yellow and the Oblivion Continuum became inactive.

“Welcome to the human race, Professor.” Rose grinned.

“Now!” the Doctor jumped up. “Gotta stop them, gotta stop the Daleks!”

He was halfway out the door before Bracewell sat up. “Wait, wait, Doctor! It’s too late!” he called after him. “They’re gone. They’re gone,” he said quietly.

“No! NO!” the Doctor screamed spinning in a tight circle. “They can’t! They can’t have got away from me again!”

“No, I can feel it.” The Professor reaffirmed, adjusting his glasses. “My mind is clear. The Daleks have gone.”

Everyone in the room looked to the Doctor warily. Rose stood up to take his hand. Amy took a step forward. “Doctor? Doctor, it’s okay,” she said. “You did it, you stopped the bomb. You won.”

“No, Amy, they got away again. They know my weaknesses. The Daleks have won. They beat me. They won.” He muttered.

“But you saved the Earth.” Amy reiterated with more ferocity, grabbing his shoulder. “That’s not too shabby is it?” The Doctor looked around to Winston and everyone standing behind him, to Rose and Amy and Rory, and a hint of a smile came back. “Is it?” Amy asked again.

“No,” he said finally, standing up and clapping his hands together. “It’s not too shabby.” He pulled Rose close to him and placed a kiss to the top of her head. In turn she wrapped her arm around his waist.

“It’s a brilliant achievement my dear friend!” Winston laughed. “Here, have a cigar!” He offered from his coat pocket.

The Doctor just wrinkled his nose at the Prime Minister. “No,” he said simply until Rose chastised him and he added, “thank you.”

“Where’s the Doctor?” Amy asked Churchill just as the man in question was rounding the corner.

“Tying up loose ends!” he exclaimed, taking long strides towards the two. “I’ve taken out all the alien tech Bracewell had put in. Rose and Rory are in the TARDIS finishing up.”

“Won’t you reconsider, Doctor?” Winston moaned. “Those Spitfires would win me the war in 24 hours!”

“Exactly.” The Doctor smirked, raising his half-finished cup of tea.

“But why can’t we put an end to all this misery?” He persisted.
“Oh, it doesn’t work like that Winston. It’s gonna be tough,” the Doctor said knowingly. “There are terrible days to come—the darkest days. But you can do it. You know you can.”

“Stay with us and help us win through!” Winston tried. “The world needs you!”

The Doctor shook his head, another war hovering just behind his eyes. “No, the world doesn’t need me.”

“No?” Churchill asked, tilting his head disbelievingly.

“The world’s got Winston Spencer Churchill!” the Doctor declared, holding his hand out to him before throwing up a peace sign.

Churchill laughed, “It’s been a pleasure, Doctor. As always.” They embraced, exchanging farewell words and pats of good fortune, before the Prime Minister turned to Amy. “Goodbye, Ms. Pond.”

Amy chuckled, and put her hands to her face. “It’s… it’s been amazing meeting you,” she told him honestly.

“I’m sure it has,” Winston replied, a twinkle in his eye as Amy kissed his cheek goodbye, and he began walking away.

But Amy interrupted his get away. “Oi! Churchill!” She held her hand out, “TARDIS key,” she said simply, causing the Doctor to choke on his tea and pat his pockets. “The one you just took from the Doctor?”

Winston chuckled, “Oh! She’s good, Doctor!” He handed her back the key. “She’s sharp as a pin—almost as sharp as me,” he teased, before lighting up another cigar with his now free hands. “KBO,” he said in ending, and turned away again.

Rose and Rory leaned against the TARDIS as they waited for Amy and the Doctor to give their farewells. “You didn’t want to say goodbye?” Rose asked him.

Rory shrugged, “You didn’t.”

Rose shook her head. “I don’t like goodbyes.”

Rory nodded, that seemed like an understandable thing for someone who was likely to live for millennia. He wondered what made her reach that conclusion already. He decided not to ask. “What of Bracewell, then?” he asked instead. “What does he do now? Just go and live a normal life?”

Rose furrowed her brow. “I don’t know,” she said, standing up straight. “Let’s go ask him.” And with that they were making their way towards the lab. She told the Doctor through their bond on the way.

“I’ve been expecting you,” Bracewell said as they entered, keeping his back turned. “I knew this moment had to come.”

Rose and Rory shared a look. “Moment?” Rory asked.

“It’s time to deactivate me.” Bracewell said solemnly, and it surprised Rose so much she couldn’t hold back her snort.
“What?” she asked incredulously.

“I’m Dalek technology,” he said. “You can’t allow me to go pottering about down here where I have no business.”

Rose stared at him for a second before she realised he was being serious. “Who says anybody but you gets decide where you do and don’t have business?” she challenged. He stayed silent, staring at her with disbelief. “Do you want to be deactivated?” she asked eventually.

“Well, I… no.” He sputtered.

She laughed and stepped forward to put a hand on his shoulder. “Well alright then, mate! Go on, live your life, find that girl…” She gave him a tongue touched smile, and a slow grin spread across his face as he realised what she was giving him: a life. A real one.

“Thank you! Thank you, Rose!” He exclaimed, hugging her quickly before turning to gather his things together frantically.

“Come on, Rory,” she mumbled, and they turned to make their way back to the TARDIS.

“I wonder what would have happened had we not shown up then,” Rory pondered aloud as they went.

Rose only shrugged. “The Doctor would have gone down there and the same thing would have happened.”

Rory studied her set profile carefully and realised something was still weighing on her. “What is it, Rose?”

Rose shrugged noncommittally, but Rory bumped his elbow with hers in prompt, so she sighed. “I am unnecessary.”

“Says who?” Rory challenged.

“The Daleks.” Rose answered bitterly.

To her surprise Rory snorted, causing her to look up to him. “Yeah, and I’m sure all great sentences start with ‘The Daleks said’”

Rose smirked. “It’s just hard sometimes, standing next to him,” she admitted. “Don’t get me wrong I love him with every fiber of my being and I always will. It’s just that he’s so bloody brilliant sometimes y’know?”

Rory nodded, “Yeah, I know. On a much smaller level, but yeah.”

“It just feels like every alien we meet feels the need to tell me how insignificant I am,” she said sadly.

“Well maybe that’s true,” Rory conceded. “But have you see the way he looks at you, Rose? You’d think you painted the universe and built the TARDIS yourself with the eyes he gives you.”

Rose looked up to him then, “Yeah?” she asked, voice small, but with a smile playing at the edges of her lips.

“Oh yeah.” He answered sincerely, surprised she didn’t know. Maybe sometimes she just needed reminding. Maybe that’s why they kept humans around. For reminding.
When they got back to the TARDIS it was to find their respective other halves leaning against it. “You’re worried about the Daleks,” Amy was saying.

“He’s always worried about the Daleks,” Rose answered for him, earning a smirk from her husband at her arrival and her cheek. “That’s not what he’s worrying about right now though,” she said, squinting at him as his thoughts finally reached her.

“What is it then?” Amy asked, looking between them.

“You’ve forgotten, Amy” the Doctor said seriously. “You both have. The Daleks. You didn’t know them. You’d never seen them before. And you should have done.” He unlocked the TARDIS and walked through without explaining further. Amy and Rory shared a fearful albeit confused look, and Rose only threw them a regretful glance before following her husband into the ship, the humans close behind.

An hour later they were drifting through the time vortex. Amy and Rory had already disappeared into their rooms, and Rose was leaning against the console while the Doctor fiddled with something underneath. “You didn’t have to scare them, y’know,” she said.

“They should be scared,” he answered shortly, only to get sparked by the TARDIS.

Rose smirked and stroked the console. “I think she’s tired of you messing with her, love. Come up here.”

The Doctor sighed but did as he was asked told. He came to wrap his arms around her waist where she rested against the TARDIS, and she reached up to clasp her hands behind his neck.

“Something’s bothering you.” he observed.

Rose shrugged. “I just forget who exactly I’m married too sometimes.” He quirked his brow at her though so she went on. “I always feel useless when it comes to the Daleks.”

“Oh, Rose. I’d go mad without you. You keep me grounded. Remind me of what’s important. And you’re bloody brilliant.” Rose rolled her eyes though so he insisted. “No, I mean it, you are. You see all the things I can’t. I’d be lost without you.”

Rose smiled up at him and pulled him down for a kiss.

Chapter End Notes

BIG CHANGES AHEAD! I'm so so so excited for what's in store with this AU and you're getting the first real proper hints of it next episode!

-comments keep writer's writing ❤
What Up Gramps

Chapter Summary

The Time of Angels

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The TARDIS landed them in a museum.

It wasn’t exactly uncommon. The Doctor loved critiquing all the things the archaeologists of Earth and other planets got wrong, and occasionally it would inspire them to visit some place and see the old thing when it was new.

“Wrong, wrong, wrong… bit right, mostly wrong,” the Doctor called off as they practically ran through the museum. Amy and Rory attempted to ask questions, but the Doctor moved so quickly on to the next thing he rarely answered.

“Yeah great,” Amy replied sarcastically, already losing interest. “Can we go to a planet now?”

“Amy, this isn’t any old asteroid—it’s the Delerium Archive,” the Doctor reprimanded her, “the final resting place of the headless monks, the biggest museum ever.”

Rose rolled her eyes. “Yeah we’ve been here six times already since I was nineteen.” Next to her Rory snorted and she smirked knowingly at him.

“You’ve got a time machine, what do you need museums for?” Amy continued, but the Doctor cut her off by pointing and yelling ‘WRONG!’ very loudly at another bit of space junk.

Rose laughed and came up to her as he found things that he deemed ‘his.’ “Why don’t you ask the time machine. She brought us here,” Rose answered.

Amy furrowed her brow. “The ship can fly itself?” she asked incredulously.

Rose’s brow furrowed. “Our ship is telepathic. You think she couldn’t fly herself?”

Amy’s eyes widened, and Rory sputtered, “Wait what? The TARDIS is telepathic? Are you?”

Rose stared at them, not in disbelief, but rather in horror at herself. “Oh my God, I’m him,” she muttered, and the Doctor laughed at her.

“See! It slips your mind eventually doesn’t it!”

Rose shook her head and went to stand beside him as he came upon something that interested him—something that wasn’t there the last time. Behind them Amy and Rory continued to ask questions, but Rose wasn’t listening anymore. Old High Gallifreyan was inscribed on the top, and therefore the TARDIS didn’t translate, but Rose and the Doctor could. They shared a look over the display.
“It’s from one of the old Starliners: a Home Box,” the Doctor finally answered Amy, looking up.

“What’s a home box?” Amy leaned forward, resting her elbow on the glass and putting her hand to her chin.

“Like a black box on a plane, except it homes.”

Amy blinked slowly at him.

“If anything happens to the ship the Home Box flies home with all the flight data,” Rose explained.

Amy groaned, immediately losing interest again. “So?”

“The graffiti,” the Doctor answered seriously, running his hand along the glass to bring her attention back to the box. “That’s Old High Gallifreyan. The lost language of the Time Lords. There were days, there were many days, when these words could burn stars and raise up empires—could topple gods.”

He’d finally gained their interest. “What does it say?” Rory asked.

He stared at them and opened and closed his mouth a few times. Beside him Rose smirked.

“‘What up, Gramps,’” he finally admitted reluctantly, rolling his eyes while Amy and Rory stared at them incredulously.

Rose sighed, and lifted up the glass. Immediately alarms started blaring and footsteps were heard coming quickly from somewhere down the corridor. The Doctor grabbed the box, and yelled “RUN!” and so they did, slamming the TARDIS doors behind them just in time.

“Who is it? What are we doing?” Amy asked the couple as they danced around the console, mashing buttons, spinning dials, and hitting levers frantically with the box wired up for coordinates.

“Depends what day it is,” Rose answered distractedly. “Sometimes she says her name is Will, sometimes River... once someone called her Mel—Go open the doors,” she said, cutting herself off to look at Rory who immediately did as he was told despite them being midflight.

“Did the TARDIS move the pool and open all the doors?” Rose asked.

“Yes!” the Doctor answered, just in time for a body to come falling past them in a blur of color. Amy screamed.

“All right, close the doors!” Rose called to Rory again as she held onto a gravitational stabiliser for dear life. Rory did as instructed, slamming the police box shut against an odd force he couldn’t place, and turned back to the Time Lords as finally the TARDIS seemed to calm down herself.

“What was that?” he asked breathlessly.

Rose sighed and leaned against the console. “River Song—maybe. She’s from our future—apparently. Young girl who somehow got her hands on a vortex manipulator and likes to jump out of spaceships and off of buildings for the fun of it.”

A tinkling laugh came from the corridor, and the girl in question appeared. She was rather short, with her dress dragging the floor without her heels on. She was soaking wet from her dive into the
pool, leaving a trail of little wet footprints behind her. She was using a quick-drying towel to ring out her long straight brown hair, and she ruffled her fingers through the bangs covering her freckled round face as she climbed the stairs. “Gramps, Ro,” she greeted Time Lords with a bright smile.

“Who’s that then?” Amy asked her, brow furrowed at the unfamiliar names.

The Doctor rolled his eyes. “She’s called us that since we met her in the Library and refuses to explain why.” His eyes lit up suddenly though, pointing at her. “It’s because I wear braces now isn’t it? You were making fun of me before I even knew what for!” He pulled on his suspenders for emphasis and rocked back on his heels excitedly.

She let out another laugh and grinned, her wide green eyes twinkling. “Yep!” she said, popping the ‘p’. And if anyone thought she wasn’t telling the whole truth, they didn’t mention it as the Doctor’s face lit up at being told he was right.

“So what should we call you this time?” Rose asked.

“Well since Amy and Rory are looking at me like they’ve never seen me before in their lives I’m going to go with River Song,” she answered with a small shrug. A part of her wished she’d never done the whole ‘River Song’ thing, but a much larger part of her liked how it made her feel like a secret agent.

“Wait, hold on, you know who we are?” Rory asked.

“She knows everything about our lives, apparently,” Rose commented

River shook her head. “Just some of the future bits!”

The Doctor rolled his eyes. “Teenager with a Vortex Manipulator.” He scoffed. “If you’re really from our future why do you use that sad excuse for time travel?”

River’s eyes danced with mirth at the opportunity to tease him. “First off Gramps, I’m twenty—not technically a teenager anymore—and either way I’m a genius so what’s it matter my age? And secondly, because it annoys you.”

The Doctor rolled his eyes again and Amy snorted at the young girl’s cheek. “Oh I like her!” She grinned. “A child after my own heart!”

Rose smiled at her companion before looking back to their guest. “So where to, River?”

The Doctor made an indignant noise. “We are not her outer space taxi service!”

“Oh, yes you are.” River grinned, going over to type in commands. “We need to follow that ship I just jumped. It’s about to crash land.”

Rory stared at her as she moved about the ship’s console with familiar ease. “How come you can fly the TARDIS?”

“They taught me,” she replied simply, nodding her head to Rose and the Doctor who shrugged. “Well they will anyway.” They landed with a dull thud. “I did call by the way. You just didn’t answer. And I was on a timer. Had to resort to more extreme measures.”

“You didn’t call!” Rose protested, pulling her mobile out.

“Well not yet. But I will. And you won’t answer,” she argued right back, pulling the monitor
towards her and pulling up the environment checks. “Alright, Gramps. Ten quid says you can’t tell us where we are,” she challenged, green eyes twinkling with mischief in a way that said she did this often.

He smirked. “Alfava Metraxis, the seventh planet of the Dundra System in the Gan Belt,” he answered cockily, not missing a beat, and went on when Amy and Rory stepped behind River to check him. “Oxygen-rich atmosphere, all toxins in the soft-band, 11-hour day…” He ran to stick his head out the door (as he’d already proven his point) and called back towards them, “Chances of rain later!”

River shook her head. “I give up,” she said, and pulled the red heels she’d hung on the monitor back off. She used Rory’s shoulders as supports as she put them back on, he allowed it, not really knowing what else to do, and then went out the door, pushing a note into the Doctor’s chest as she did.

“This is Clom money!” he protested, but she only laughed mercilessly in response, continuing on her path up the rocky beach.

“Are we going to follow her then?” Rory asked Rose who looked at the Doctor who looked at Amy.

“You did promise us a planet...” Amy said, smirking, and earning an eye roll from the Time Lord.

“Fine. Five minutes,” he relented, and Amy squealed, pulling Rory by the hand and running to follow the other younger woman.

Rose shook her head at him with a smile. “You’ve gone soft, love,” she said, and kissed him on the cheek before pulling him to follow their companions.

The massive starship had crashed into the structure on the side of the cliff face and smoke billowed from it’s engine. “The warp engines had a phase-shift,” the Doctor observed. “Home Box said there were no survivors.”

River nodded sagely, “That’d be sabotage. I did warn them.”

It seemed odd seeing a girl so young speak so seriously. “About what?” Rose asked curiously. River didn’t answer however. “At least that building is empty. Aplan Temple. Unoccupied for centuries.” She pulled a communicator out of her bag. “There is one survivor though... there’s a thing in the belly of that ship that can’t ever die,” she told them casually, throwing a knowing glance over her shoulder to the Doctor and Rose, before answering a beep on her comm unit. “You lot in orbit yet? … Yeah I’m at the crash site. Try and home in on my signal.” She walked off as she talked but turned back after a moment. “Gramps, could you sonic me? I need to boost the signal to use as a beacon.”

He huffed, but did as he was asked, and River gave a little mock-curtsey in thanks.

Moments later four armed men in military camouflage materialised on the beach. One of them looked to River and tilted his head. “You promised me an army, P-”

“Ah!” River interrupted, raising her chin. She was tying her hair in up so she merely inclined her head towards her guests. “River Song today, Bishop.”

He rolled his eyes. “Okay, you promised me an army, Song.”
She rolled her eyes, unfazed by his tone. “No, I promised you the equivalent of an army. This is the Doctor and Rose Tyler.”

His eyes widened as he turned to them and they gave little mock-salutes. He approached to introduce himself, “Father Octavian, sir, ma’am. Bishop, first class. Twenty clerics at my command” He held his hand out for each of them as he explained. “The troops are already in the drop ship and landing shortly. River Song here is helping us with a covert investigation.” Rose was the only one who heard that bit as the Doctor was staring at the ship. “Has she explained what we’re dealing with?” he asked to the two of them after observing the Doctor’s obvious confusion. He gave his young charge a significant look that she didn’t notice.

River perked up. “Oh! Right! Gramps, Ro… what do you know of the Weeping Angels?”

Hours later, (despite the fact that Rose and the Doctor had continually told them that they shouldn’t wait until sunset), the military unit had completely set up base and the bishop was finally explaining to them fully what they were dealing with as they leant over a table which was mostly covered with maps and readouts.

“The Angel, as far as we know, is still trapped on the ship,” he said. “Our mission is to get inside and neutralise it. We can’t get in through up top—we’d be too close to the drives.” He paused and pulled out his communicator to show them a diagram. “According to this, behind the cliff face there’s a network of catacombs leading right up to the temple. We can blow through the base of the cliffs, get into the entrance chamber, and work our way up.”

“Oh good,” the Doctor replied sarcastically.

“Good sir?” the bishop asked.

“Catacombs. Probably dark ones. Dark catacombs, great,” he continued without explanation, and for once Rose didn’t feel compelled to give one either.

“Technically I think it’s called a Maze of the Dead,” the bishop went on.

The Doctor didn’t look at him as his annoyance grew. “You can stop anytime you like.”

The bishop opened his mouth, but right on cue, someone called him, and he excused himself. Rose put her hand on the small of the Doctor’s back in an effort to calm him.

Amy walked around them to lift herself up on the table, and Rory came next to her to rest his hand on her knee. Rose noticed this and filed it away for later—the two had come a lot closer and more comfortable together in the last few weeks since they’d started travelling with them.

“You’re letting people call you sir,” Amy observed, squinting at him, “You never do that.” And Rose had to give her credit for how easily she’s come to be able to read the Time Lord.

The Doctor, predictably, ignored her. “What part of wait in the TARDIS until I come tell you it’s safe don’t you understand?” He sounded so much like her father it was surprising he didn’t have red hair himself.

Amy squinted and, predictably, ignored him right back. “Is River Song your granddaughter? Can you have a granddaughter? Have you got kids?”

The Doctor exhaled deeply, and Rory shot Rose an apologetic look that she just smirked at—
Amy went on, “Cause she’s someone from your future and she acts like she knows you so well… and she calls you *Gramps*. Not exactly a normal nickname.”

She looked to Rose when he didn’t answer, but all she could do was shrug. “We honestly don’t know. We can’t ask about our future, and even if we could she wouldn’t answer. Always just says ‘spoilers’ if we ask questions that will reveal too much.”

“But have you got kids?” Amy pushed.

Rose stiffened on impulse, but was thankfully saved from answering when behind them, River, who had changed into a military uniform, called for them, “Gramps! Ro!” The Doctor rolled his eyes and hung his head in exasperation and Rose laughed. “Father Octavian?” she added more quietly (though not much), before disappearing back into the cruiser.

They made their way towards her. “Why do they call him Father?” Rory asked, changing the subject for Rose’s sake—something she didn’t miss and smiled gratefully at him for.

“He’s their bishop. They’re his clerics. It’s the 51st century. The Church has moved on,” he answered quickly and boredly before they went indoors.

Inside the cruiser, security camera footage was playing on the screen at the back. “What do you think?” River asked as they came in. “It’s from the security cameras in the Byzantium Vault. I ripped it when I was on board. Sorry about the quality. It’s only four seconds. I’ve put it on a loop,” she explained quickly and in short sentences—not unlike the Doctor.

“Yep… it’s an Angel,” he answered, looking to Rose who was biting her lip. “Hands covering its face.”

“You’ve encountered the Angels before?” the bishop asked from his place at the back of the room.

“Once,” Rose answered, “on Earth a very long time ago. And those were scavengers and barely surviving. Even then they were… tricky.” She didn’t feel the need to go into just how long they were stuck in 1969 last time they saw the Weeping Angels.

“But it’s just a statue,” Amy said incredulously.

River shook her head. “It’s a statue when you’re looking at it. “ Her arms were crossed in front of her, and the light from the screen made her freckles stand out starkly against her pale skin. Amy imagined she looked much the same way.

“What’s that mean then?” Rory asked, brow furrowed.

River turned around to look at him, pony tail flipping around in the Doctor’s face who sputtered and batted it away. “The Weeping Angels can only move if they’re unseen. *So legend has it.*”

“It’s not legend,” Rose said quietly. She took a deep breath. “It’s called a quantum lock. In the sight of any living creature the Angels literally cease to exist.”

“The ultimate defense mechanism,” the Doctor summed up.

Amy wrinkled her nose. “What, being a stone?”

“Being a stone, until you turn your back,” he corrected ominously.
He allowed a moment of eerie silence to pass over them before he shoved passed them all and back into the open. “The hyperdrive would have split open on impact,” he explained quickly as the group followed him. “That whole ship is going to be flooded with drive burn radiation, cracked electrons, gravity storms—deadly to almost any living thing.”

“Deadly to an Angel?” the bishop interrupted hopefully.

“Dinner to an Angel!” the Doctor corrected over his shoulder. “The longer we leave it there the stronger it will grow.” He clapped his hands together. “Who built that temple? Are they still around?”

River spoke up quickly, the answer on the top of her head. “The Aplans. Indigenous lifeform. Died out 400 years ago.”

“Two hundred years later the planet was terraformed,” the bishop added and the Doctor turned to him. “Currently there are six billion human colonists.”

“Ohh you lot!” He exclaimed, turning again. “You’re everywhere! You’re like rabbits!” He gave a significant look to Rose. “I’ll never get done saving you.” She rolled her eyes.

“Sir if there is a clear and present danger to the local population—” the bishop started.

“Oh there is,” the Doctor interrupted. “Bad as it gets, Bishop, lock and load!” Rose gave him a look at the term he never used but he didn’t notice.

The bishop asked someone how the explosives were coming, and called River Song to him, but she asked for two minutes, and called over her shoulder for the Doctor and Rose as she ran off.

They joined her at what appeared to be her work station. “I found this,” she said, handing him a book. “Definitive work on the Angels. Well, the only one. Written by a madman. It’s barely legible, but I’ve marked a few passages.”

He flipped through it quickly, speed reading, before handing it off to Rose so she could do the same. “Hmm. Not bad. Bit slow in the middle. Didn’t you hate his girlfriend. Wait—no, hang on.” He took the book from Rose when she was only halfway through so he could sniff it.

Behind them, Amy called from the cruiser to ask if River had had more than the one clip of the Angel and got a negative. Distantly Rose wondered where Rory was before taking the book back from her husband.

“This book is wrong. What’s wrong with this book. It’s wrong,” he said as she did.

“Well maybe I could tell you if you’d stop being rude and let me read it,” she answered shortly, before finishing flipping through it herself. She furrowed her brow at him as she found the answer immediately. This new regeneration of his had quicker thought processing, but it meant he missed a lot more details.

“There’s not pictures. Whole book warning us about the Angels but he doesn’t show us what they look like,” she told him and he kissed her head.

“There was that bit about images, what was that?” River offered.

“Yes Hang on!” He took the book back again, but this time Rose let him. “That which holds the image of an angel becomes itself an angel,” he read aloud when he found it.
“What does that mean then?” River asked, and Rose squinted as she thought she heard a hint of a Scottish accent from the young girl.

They heard the yelling behind them though and Rose didn’t have time to question River’s patois. “DOCTOR! ROSE!” Amy was calling from the cruiser, the door had shut and apparently locked her in.

“Amy! Amy, are you all right? What’s happening?” the Doctor called back frantically, running and pressing himself up against the door.

“It’s coming out of the television,” she answered, clearly afraid.

“Don’t take your eyes off of it! Keep looking!” he demanded, going over to sonic the lock. “It can’t move if you’re looking!” He stopped and looked up. “Deadlocked,” he said, going over to the control panel River and Rose were working on.

“There is no deadlock,” River said.

“Don’t blink, Amy, don’t even blink!” the Doctor yelled.

River was bouncing anxiously up and down trying to see over the Doctor's shoulder as he sonicked the controls. ”What are you doing?”

“I’m cutting the power. She’s looking at the screen, I turn off the screen—No good the whole system is deadlocked.”

“There is no deadlock,” River insisted.

“Well there is now!” he snapped, and went back over to the door. “Amy, can you turn off the screen?”

“I tried. I can’t.”

He ran his hands through his hair and suppressed the urge to scream. “Don’t take your eyes off of it! Don’t even blink!”

“I’m not blinking!” she yelled back. “Have you ever tried not blinking?” A few moments passed. “It just keeps switching back on!”

“Yeah it’s the Angel.”

“But it’s just a recording,” she argued.

“No, Amy.” Rose was pressed against the door now, like maybe she could faze through it if she just tried hard enough. “Anything that takes the image of an angel becomes an angel.”

“Rose… what’s it going to do to me?” she asked quietly, afraid of the answer.

The Doctor interrupted whatever Rose was about to say. “Just don’t stop looking at it!” he yelled, running off again.

“Just tell me,” Amy muttered, and Rose pressed her head against the door, feeling wholly useless.

The Doctor returned with the book. “Don’t look at the eyes,” he added. “Keep looking at it, but not in the eyes.”
“Why?” Amy asked, and Rose knew that tone; she groaned inwardly.

“The eyes are not the window to the soul, they are the doors,” Rose quoted, squeezing her eyes shut in frustration as she continued to lean against the door. “Beware what may enter.”

Seconds later though the door finally came open, and they were able to run in. “I froze it!” Amy exclaimed, just as the static-angel disappeared back into the switched off television. “There was a sort of blip on the tape and I froze it on the blip.” She explained breathlessly.

Before she could really process what was happening, River Song was flinging her arms around her and Amy didn’t know how to react to this proper stranger in her arms, so she just sort of stood there awkwardly while the girl hugged her. River seemed to notice quickly through and took a step back, clearing her throat. “Sorry. You don’t—you don’t know me yet.”

River went to stand next to Rose, who put her arm around her comfortingly (because that was the sort of thing Rose did), and River (even though she knew Rose didn’t know her well yet either) leaned into the blonde gratefully. “I hate time travel,” she muttered, and Rose snorted in understanding.

“Sorry I won’t answer the phone,” Rose whispered back, earning a small laugh from the young girl.

An explosion interrupted whatever the Doctor was saying to Amy and they all ran out, running right into Rory. “Where the hell have you been?” Rose demanded.

Rory held up a small pen light awkwardly. “I went back to the TARDIS to get this...” He trailed off as he read their expressions. “Did I miss anything?”

The girls just rolled their eyes and followed the Doctor, and after a moment Rory ran to catch up with them with calls of “What? What is it?”

As they descended down the precarious rope ladder into the catacombs, Amy couldn’t help but regret the skirt and tights she’d chosen that morning. She landed with a thud on the dusty and dim floor of the caves and looked longingly at Rose’s denims. At least she’d gone with the trainers over the heeled-boots she’d considered.

“Do we have a gravity globe?” the Doctor asked, pulling Amy out of her dwellings on her wardrobe as an odd ball was passed around to him.

“Where are we? What is this?” she asked River as they shone their torches around, not seeing much of anything.

“It’s an Aplan Montarium,” she answered, “sometimes called a maze of the dead.”

“What’s that then?”

River was halfway to answering before the Doctor interrupted. “Well if you’re a creature of living stone…” He cut himself off to drop kick the gravity globe impressively, and illuminate the entire cavern, revealing the hundreds of thousands of humanoid statues. “It’s the perfect hiding place.”

“I guess this makes it a bit trickier.” Octavian observed.

Rose snorted. “A bit, yeah.”
“A stone angel on the loose amongst stone statues- a lot harder than I prayed for,” he went on.

“A needle in a haystack,” River breathed.

“A needle that looks like hay. A haylike needle. Of death,” the Doctor rambled. “A haylike needle of death in a haystack of statues.” He sniffed and adjusted his jacket. “No, yours was fine.”

River just rolled her eyes and shared a knowing look with Rose.

Octavian gave orders to the clerics to inspect all of the statues, and turned back to the Doctor as they began breaking up. “Right, one question,” he said, “how do we fight it?”

“Well we find it—” the Doctor started.

“And we hope.” Rose finished, and they grabbed each other's hands and walked off. Amy, Rory, River, and eventually Octavian followed close behind.

A few metres down one of the tunnels, Amy paused to look around them. It was terrifying—being in dim underground tunnels while an incredibly dangerous alien that blended right in was on the loose—but it was also kinda beautiful. It was obvious that whatever civilization that came before them and built the temple truly honoured their dead.

Amy blinked rapidly; there was something in her eye. She rubbed at it, and felt like she flicked a pebble off of her finger. Brow furrowed, she rubbed some more and suddenly it felt like an avalanche of dirt was falling down her hand.

“Are you alright?” River asked, coming up behind her and Amy started, wiping her hand on her jumper.

She nodded and lied, “Yeah, I’m fine.” She looked up before River could read it in her eyes. “So what’s a maze of the dead?” she asked casually, shining her torch around.

“Ah it’s not as bad as it sounds.” River smiled. “It’s just a labyrinth with dead people buried in the walls…” She drifted off as her words caught up with her, and her and Amy shared a similar look. “Okay, yeah, that’s fairly bad.” She pulled Amy’s arm up. “Right give me your arm… this won’t hurt a bit.” She held a syringe up and plunged the needle in before Amy had time to protest.

Amy hissed and yanked her arm back, glaring at her.

“There you see, I lied,” River teased, smiling. “My mum taught me that. Used to say it every time I got vaccinations…” She drifted off again, and then seemed to shake herself out of it. “It’s a viro-stabiliser,” she explained. “Stabilises your metabolism against radiation, drive burn—anything. You’re going to need it when we get up to that ship.”

Amy didn’t miss how she’d changed the subject though, and she wasn't willing to let the subject drop so easily now that it had been brought up again. She squinted at her suspiciously, unapologetically prying. “Who was your mum then? Cause you’re twenty you said, and she can’t be gone yet…”

River only smirked in response though. “Spoilers,” she chastised, before walking ahead to find Rory, other syringe in hand. Amy chased after her.

“So how do you know Rose and the Doctor?” Rory asked her after she’d given him the stabiliser. Unlike Amy though he wasn't being nosey—just trying to make conversation.
“Spoilers,” Amy and River said at the same time, in the same tone, and looked at each other afterwards to smirk.

“That’s not our future though, is it?” Rory protested.

River shrugged noncommittally. “Spoilers. Point is, I know them well enough that they’ve instilled the fear of God into me about messing with timelines—” She cut herself off to look up to the Time Lords in question as they lurked behind them. “And yes we are talking about you.”

Rose bit her lip to hide her grin at being caught, but they were both saved from answering when the sound of a machine gun firing from somewhere else in the catacombs came ringing through and they ran to find it’s source.

They all flooded the area at the same time. “Sorry… sorry.” A young cleric was saying as the Doctor and Rose stepped forward to inspect the completely motionless statue. “I thought… I thought it looked at me.”

Octavian came up to him. “We know what the Angel looks like. Is that the Angel?” he demanded gruffly.

“No, sir,” he answered, voice small.

“No, sir. It is not.” Octavian spoke over him. “According to the Doctor we are facing an enemy of unknown power and infinite evil. So it would be good, it would be very good, if we could all remain calm in the presence of decor.”

“What’s your name?” the Doctor interrupted Octavian’s reprimand, stepping forward to come between the bishop and the cleric.

“Bob, sir.”

The Doctor’s eyes widened excitedly and he grinned widely at Bob. “Ah that’s a great name! I love Bob!” he enthused, and Amy was hit with a sudden rush of deja-vu.

“It’s a Sacred Name,” Octavian explained. “We all have sacred names. They’re given to us in the service of the Church.”

The Doctor didn’t look at the bishop, keeping his attention focused on Bob. “Sacred Bob… more like Scared Bob now, eh?” He said, with a comforting smile to the young man.

Bob looked at Octavian hesitantly for a second before deciding to answer honestly. “Yes, sir.”

“Ah Good!” the Doctor exclaimed, clapping him on the arm and holding his hand there to lean forwards seriously. “Scared keeps you fast. Anyone in this room who isn’t scared is a moron.” He looked to Octavian and patted him as well. “Carry on.”

“He would have been such a good Dad,” Rose muttered to Rory but more to herself. He grimaced and put his hand on her shoulder comfortingly.

“Would have been?” Amy asked, turning to her quickly. Rory gave her a warning look over Rose’s head though so she didn’t press it when Rose didn’t answer. River looked sideways at them, pressing her lips together.

The Doctor, sensing Rose’s thoughts, came over to grab her hand and start leading them back up through the catacombs. The humans decided not to comment as they followed.
“Is there a chance this lot’s just going to collapse?” Amy asked eventually, breaking the silence as she shone her torch about the tunnel for emphasis. “There’s a whole ship up there…”

It was River who answered. “The Aplans were incredible builders—”

“We had dinner with the chief architect once,” the Doctor interrupted, looking to Rose. “Two heads are better than one.”

“What, you mean you helped him?” Amy asked, brow furrowed. The Doctor to her seemed better at breaking things than building them—clumsy as he was.

“No he means they had two heads, the Aplans,” Rose explained, and then squinted at the Doctor as they both seemed to realise something but couldn’t figure out what it was.

The Doctor looked over his shoulder to River. “That book, at the very end, what did it say? Read it to me.”

River pulled the book out of her bag and found the last passage quickly. “‘What if we had ideas that could think for themselves?’” She read. “‘What if one day our dreams no longer needed us? … When these things occur and are held to be true, the time will be upon us. The Time of Angels.’”

They started walking again without explanation as the Doctor and Rose had their silent conversation.

‘We noticed something. What was it?’ he asked her, straightening his bowtie anxiously.

‘I don’t know,’ Rose groaned, and they both cast their torches about frantically for answers as they moved on.

“Are we there yet?” Amy complained from behind them. “It’s a hell of a climb.”

Again it was River who answered. “The maze is on six levels representing the ascent of the soul. Only two levels to go.” She smiled over her shoulder to Amy who wrinkled her nose.

“Lovely species, the Aplans,” the Doctor said to her and Rory, attempting to give them something to look forward to after this rather strenuous adventure. “We should visit them sometime.”

“Aren’t they all dead?” Rory asked.

Rose snorted. “So is Virginia Woolf but we’re on her bowling team.” She grinned cheekily over her shoulder to her friend.

“Right, time machine,” he said, looking up as he reminded himself that this was his life now.

The Doctor was thinking out loud again though instead of just at Rose. “Very relaxed, sort of cheerful—that’s having two heads. You’re never short of a snog with an extra head!”

“Gramps there’s something wrong. I don’t know what it is but…” River wrinkled her nose and furrowed her brow, clearly unused to the feeling of not knowing.

“Yes we’ve been trying to figure that out,” he replied, tilting his head to Rose. “Haven’t yet.” He continued rambling, hoping the answer would tumble out, “Course then they started having laws about marrying yourself, course, that’s the church for you.” He turned the corner as he made that slight jab, running right into Octavian. “Oh, no offense, Bishop,” he added awkwardly.

Over the bishop's shoulder, River shook her head at the Doctor.
“Quite a lot taken if that’s alright Doctor.” Octavian barely concealed his glare before he shoved passed them. “Lowest point of the wreckage should only be about 50 feet up from here,” he said after a moment of walking silently.

“The Church had a point if you think about it,” Amy said warmly to him. “The divorces must have been messy.” And she earned a smile from the bishop for her effort to clean up her friend’s mistake.

“Oh!” the Doctor and Rose exclaimed suddenly, both shining their light in the face of the nearest statue.

“What’s wrong?” Amy asked, turning at the same time Rory asked, “What is it?”

They just looked at each other though. “How could we not have noticed that?” Rose asked him, wide eyed.

“Low-level perception filter,” he answered, looking around frantically. “Or maybe we’re thick.”

“What’s wrong, sir, ma’am?” the bishop demanded more than asked.

“Nobody move, nobody move! Everyone stay right where they are!” the Doctor ordered instead of answering, stopping people in their tracks. “I am truly sorry. I have made a mistake and we’re all in terrible danger.”

“What danger?” the bishop asked, looking around for immediate threats and not seeing any of them.

River gasped as she finally got it. “The Aplans!” she exclaimed, and Rose nodded to her.

“The Aplans?” Octavian squinted at the young cleric.

“They’ve got two heads,” Rose answered instead, her voice ominous.

Octavian was apparently incredibly thick however, as he continued to question it even as everyone else seemed to get it. “Yeah, I got that, so?”

Rose rolled her eyes and the Doctor sighed. He was really starting to hate this man, so River answered for them again. “So why haven’t the statues?”

Finally, understanding started to dawn on the bishop’s face as the Doctor started giving orders again. “Everyone, over there. Just move, don’t ask questions, don’t speak.” He herded them all into the corner, him and Rose staying in front of them. “Okay, I want you all to switch off your torches.” He requested once they’d all stopped.

Octavian broke the rule. “Sir?” he asked.

“Just do it,” Rose bit out, and one by one the torches went out until it was just hers and the Doctor’s. She looked to him for a moment longer, and then clicked hers off as well.

“Okay,” he said. “I’m going to turn this one off two. Just for a moment.”

“Are you sure about this?” River asked anxiously.

“No,” he answered honestly, and then flicked the switch off and back on again.

All the statues had turned to face them.
Rose and the Doctor ran.

“They’re Angels. All of them,” Rose said, as they came to one reaching for them in the middle of the path.

“Clerics, keep watching them,” the Doctor commanded, not taking his eyes off the ones in front of him as they maneuvered around them. “Every statue in this maze, every single one, is a Weeping Angel,” he whispered. “And they’re coming after us.”

They all gathered together again, the clerics making a loose circle around the civilians. “There was only one Angel on the ship,” River said, “just the one I swear.”

“Could they have been here already?” Amy asked, looking to the Time Lords.

“The Aplans, what happened to them?” the Doctor asked instead of answering.

“Nobody knows,” River said.

“We know.” Rose mumbled, looking pointedly to the statues.

“They don’t look like Angels,” Octavian said.

“And they’re not fast,” Amy added. “You said they were fast. They should have had us by now.” And if Rose hadn’t already known things were bad she would know by the tone of Amy’s voice. She was scared; Amy was never scared until things were as worse as they could get.

“Look at them. They’re dying, losing their form,” the Doctor answered quickly. “They must have been down here for centuries, starving.”

“Losing their image,” Rose summed.

“And their image is their power...” he straightened up and looked to Rose who was wide-eyed as they reached the same conclusion. “Power!” they yelled together.

“Doctor?” “Rose?” Amy and Rory asked respectively.

“Ah don’t you see?” The Doctor spun around. “All that radiation spilling out, the drive burn! The crash of the Byzantium wasn’t an accident—”

“It was a rescue mission,” Rose finished, bringing the tone back down from her husband’s frantic excitable ranting. “We’re in the middle of an army, and it’s waking up.”

“We need to get out of here,” Rory said, looking around for perhaps an easily accessible, Angel-free, escape route.

The bishop picked up his comm unit. “Bob, Angelo, Christian, come in please,” he said, calling on the clerics that weren’t with them. “Any of you, come in!”

“It’s Bob sir, sorry sir,” Bob finally came in.

“Bob, are Angelo and Christian with you? All the statues are active. I repeat, all the statues are active!” Octavian answered frantically.

“I know, sir.” Bob said solemnly. “Angelo and Christian are dead, sir. The Angels killed them,
sir.”

Rose tilted her head. Something was wrong. But the Doctor still hadn’t noticed as he pulled the comm unit from the bishop (she would have chastised him if she wasn’t trying to figure out what was making her skin tingle). “Bob, Sacred Bob,” he said quickly. “It’s me, the Doctor. Where are you now?”

“I’m talking to my—” Octavian started to protest, but the Doctor held his finger up.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Shut up.”

“I’m on my way up to you, sir. I’m homing in on your signal,” Bob answered.

“Ah well done Bob! Scared keeps you fast. Told you didn’t I?” He smiled.

“Doctor…” Rose started, zeroing in on her suspicion. He didn’t hear her.

“Your friends, Bob, what did the Angel do to them?” he asked.

“Doctor…”

“Snapped their necks, sir,” Bob answered rather flippantly, and finally Rose knew she was right. That wasn’t like the Angels they wouldn’t do that unless-

“Doctor.”

The Doctor continued to ignore his wife as he paced and talked to Bob, but he did say out loud one of all the thoughts she was attempting to send him. “See that’s odd. That’s not how the Angels kill you, they displace you in time, unless they need the bodies for something—”

Octavian took the radio back from him. “Bob, did you check their data packs for vital signs?” he asked, and the Doctor sighed. “We may be able to initiate a rescue plan—”

The Doctor took the radio back from him. “Oh, don’t be an idiot! The Angels don’t need you alive,” he bit out, then spoke into the radio, “Bob, keep running, but tell me, how did you escape?”

Rose winced. “Doctor,” she said more forcefully, but Bob spoke over her.

“I didn’t escape, sir,” he answered ominously. “The Angel killed me too.”

Rose sighed, closing her eyes. She really really hated being right sometimes.

“What do you mean the Angels killed you too?” the Doctor asked even though he knew. He was good at that. Keeping the enemy talking. It’s what he did best—it certainly wasn’t listening, anyway.

“Snapped my neck, sir. Wasn’t as painless as I expected, but it was pretty quick, so that was something.”

“If you’re dead then how can I be talking to you?”

“You’re not talking to me, sir,” Bob (or rather, not-Bob) answered. “The Angel has no voice. It stripped my cerebral cortex from my body and reanimated a version of my consciousness to communicate with you.” He spoke of his own mutilation so calmly it was almost worse than had it been sorrowful. “Sorry about the confusion.”
“So when you say you’re on your way up to us…”

“It’s the Angel that’s coming, sir, yes.”

The Doctor spun around, turning the communicator off. “No way out.”

“Then we get out through the wreckage!” the bishop commanded, and together they started calling orders to the group to go and run.

The Doctor, Rose, and the bishop hung back for a moment. ‘You were rude,’ Rose reminded him, so he turned to apologize to Octavian, “Yeah, called you an idiot. Sorry, but there’s no way we could have rescued your men.”

Rose came up beside him, hoping maybe her presence would lessen that blow.

Clearly it didn’t. “I know that, sir,” the bishop answered tersely, and Rose saw all the contempt behind his eyes. This was a conversation between a man who fought for the word of God, and a man who was his own god. It was never meant to end well. “And when you’ve flown away in your little blue box, I’ll explain that to their families,” he finished coldly, summing up how he saw they two of them, before turning on his heel to follow his men.

They watched him go silently for a moment, but things were too dire to dwell. “Angel Bob,” the Doctor said, flipping on the radio again. “Which Angel am I talking to? The one from the ship?”

“Yes, sir,” he answered, and Rose had to give him credit. Of all the aliens they’d dealt with (including humans), the Angels appeared to be the most helpful with how forthcoming they were with the information. “And the other Angels are still restoring.” he added, sounding like it was just an extra bit of information, but really it was more of a threat.

“Ah. So the Angel is not in the wreckage. Thank you.” The Doctor clicked off the communicator again, grabbing Rose by the hand, and running towards the rest of the group.

The ran right into Amy and Rory. “Don’t wait for us! Go! Run!” the Doctor said, running past them even as Rose stopped.

“I can’t,” Amy said, and finally he turned. Rory was looking to Rose helplessly, and Amy was staring at her hand where it was gripping a stone for dear life. The Doctor tugged on her arm but she didn’t budge.

“Why not?” He asked.

“Look at it! Look at my hand!” Amy shouted incredulously. “It’s stone!”

The Doctor looked up to Rory who just shrugged and shook his head. His wife likewise offered little to no help. “You looked into the eyes of an Angel, didn’t you?” he said, shining his torch into her eyes.

She pouted. “I couldn’t stop myself. I tried.”

“Listen to me. It’s messing with your head. Your hand is not made of stone.” He shook his head slightly as he looked into her eyes.

“It is, look at it!” she argued as she was wont to do. Behind her Rory rolled his eyes. She was so Scottish—even in the worse situations for it.
“It’s in your mind. I promise you. You can move that hand. You can let go.” Rose came forward to place her hand at the small of Amy’s back, and she took comfort in the small gesture even given the circumstances. She was so thankful for Rose. How would the Doctor manage anything without her?

“I can’t,” she said miserably, but this time to Rose. “I’ve tried, and I can’t.” The lights flickered. “You guys have to go. You can’t die here. You know you can’t. You have to meet River—”

“Time can be rewritten, dear,” Rose whispered. “If you move your hand though, it doesn’t have to.”

Amy looked at her, eyes pleading. “Please go,” she begged.

“See, we’re not going,” Rory said. “We’re not leaving you here.”

“I don’t need you to die for me Rory, do I look that clingy?” she snapped and Rory rolled his eyes. She looked back to the Doctor. “You’ve got to go. Those people up there will die without you and Rose. And take Rory with you. He deserves better than to die here with the girl made of stone.”

“It’s not stone!” he yelled.

“It is!” she continued to argue, and Rose put her forehead against the young woman's shoulder in frustration.

“Amy, I’m sorry,” the Doctor said, keeping his eyes on the approaching Angels.

“It’s okay, I understand. You’ve got to leave me,” she answered bravely.

“Oh, I’m not leaving you! Never! I’m sorry about this!” he exclaimed, and then leaned down to bite her (completely human flesh) hand.

“Ow!” she screamed, pulling her hand back.

“Ah! See! Not stone! Now run!” he yelled, grabbing her by the arm to pull her behind him and doing the same to Rory. Rose came beside him, trying not to laugh.

“You bit me!” she cried indignantly.

“Yeah and you’re alive,” he threw over his shoulder.

“Gah, I’ve got a mark! Look at my hand!” she complained, and Rose got that familiar sense of watching a tennis match as they argued.

“Yeah, and you’re alive, did I mention?”

“Blimey, your teeth! Have you got space teeth?”

“Yeah. Alive. All I’m saying,” he said shortly, finally pushing them all through the tunnel, and they broke out into a dead sprint.

They were talking about the lights flickering as they reached army.

“Yeah, it’s the Angels,” the Doctor said, entering the cavern to see that the shipwreck was more than thirty feet above their heads. “They’re coming. And they’re draining the power for
themselves.”

“Which means we won’t be able to see them,” Octavian stated the obvious.

“Which means we can’t stay here,” the Doctor replied (or more rather corrected).

“Any suggestions?” River asked, stepping forward. “There’s no way up, no way back, no way out. No pressure, but this is usually when you have a really good idea.”

The Doctor and Rose looked to each other at that. “There’s always a way out,” they said together.


“Hello Angels. What’s your problem?” he asked with a smirk to his wife.

“Your power will not last much longer, and the Angels will be with you shortly,” Bob threatened politely, and Rose thought it sounded like something that belonged in an evangelist sci-fi horror movie. “Sorry, sir.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“There’s something the Angels are very keen you should know before the end.”

“Which is?”

“I died in fear,” Bob said simply, and Rose grabbed his hand. “You told me my fear would keep me alive, but I died afraid, in pain, and alone,” he accused. “You made me trust you, and when it mattered you let me down.”

Tears hovered on the edges of his vision for Bob, and for Alina, and Rose squeezed his hand tighter as she felt the sharp reminder of their child over the bond.

“What are they doing?” Amy whispered behind them to River.

“They’re trying to make them angry,” River muttered, and watched as Rose buried her head in his chest and he pulled her closer for comfort.

“Sorry, sir,” Angel Bob repeated. “The Angels were very keen for you to know that.”

“Well then,” the Doctor answered, voice shaking slightly. “The Angels have made their second mistake, because I’m not going to let that pass. I’m sorry you’re dead Bob, but I swear to whatever is left of you, they will be sorrier.” He hugged Bob tighter before letting her go, and she looked up to him to make sure it was okay she took a step back before she did.

“But you’re trapped, sir. And about to die,” the Angel protested doubtfully.

Rose looked up and the Doctor followed suit, following her train of thought as the ship’s buzzing got louder and echoed around the cavern.

“Yeah. I’m trapped.” He spun around. “And you know what, speaking of traps. This one has got a great, big mistake in it! A great, big, whopping, mistake!” he shouted angrily into the communicator.

“What mistake, sir?” Bob asked, but the Doctor didn’t answer.

“Trust us?” he asked Amy and Rory.
“Yeah,” they nodded together.

Rose looked to River and squeezed the young girl’s shoulder. “Trust us?” she asked.

“My whole life,” she answered without hesitation. Rose filed that away for later.

The Doctor turned to the clerics and the bishop. “You lot, trust us?”

The bishop looked around before nodding to him. “We have faith, sir,” he answered.

The Doctor grinned. “Then give me your gun,” he said, pointing, and earning looks from all the people who knew him (other than Rose of course) as he took it. “I’m about to do something incredibly stupid and dangerous. When I do, jump,” he ordered, jumping to illustrate his point.

“Jump where?” the bishop asked.

“Just jump. High as you like. Come on, leap of faith, Bishop. On my signal.” He turned, head raising back towards the ceiling.

“What signal?”

“You won’t miss it!” he yelled, aiming his weapon—and not very many people knew it but he knew how to use a gun quite well, and he never missed.

“Sorry, can I ask again?” Angel Bob interrupted, sounding just slightly more anxious now in the face of the Doctor's confidence. “You mentioned a mistake we made.”

“A big, big mistake. Really huge,” Rose answered, watching her husband. “Didn’t anyone ever tell you there’s one thing you never put in a trap? If you’re smart, if you value your continued existence, if you have any plans about seeing tomorrow, there’s one thing you never ever put in a trap.”

“And what would that be?”

Everyone looked to the Doctor. “Me,” he answered, and with a bang he fired the gun directly at the gravity globe.

Chapter End Notes

Hello friends, it's the holidays and I now have significantly less time to write. So while I will be writing everyday it will just take me longer. I've been posting pretty much every other day since I published this, but that's gonna have to chill out for at least a bit. Good news is though next semester is less hours and I'm getting a promotion at work that gives me more time! So just a small lapse in activity for the holidays but I'll be back with more stuff more often!

If you're also reading Stella Traiecit Tempus the update should be posted tomorrow! Sorry about the wait there loves. I had to make you sweat ;)

-comments keep writers writing ❤
(honestly though I check my inbox so often it's almost sad, your feedback always puts the biggest smile on my face!)

(I'm also still looking for a Beta Reader so if you fancy yourself an editor hmu)
“Up! Look up!” the Doctor ordered, coming to his feet and shuffling over to help Rose to hers.

They’d all jumped, and immediately lost any vestibular sense whatsoever as they were splayed out on an unfamiliar ground after what felt like an unprotected journey through the time vortex. “What happened?” Amy asked, looking around and rubbing her head. Next to her Rory held his hand out for and she took it gratefully.

“We jumped,” River answered, smirking as she looked around.

“Up, up! Look up!” the Doctor said by way of explanation as he came over to her. “Move your feet,” he ordered, and she stepped away from what appeared to be a sort of escape hatch.

“But where are we?” Rory asked.

“Oh come on, think!” the Doctor exclaimed. “The ship crashed with the power still on, yeah? So what else is still on?” Amy looked up wide-eyed as she started to understand, Rory following her lead. Above their heads was where they had just been standing mere seconds ago. “The artificial gravity. One good jump, and up we fell!” He grinned, jumping a bit for emphasis and it was almost nauseating now knowing they were on the ceiling. “Shot out the grav-globe to give us an updraft and here we are!”

The clerics still had their weapons pointing up at the statues. “They look more like Angels now,” the bishop said fearfully—nodding his head towards them with their now half-formed wings and faces.

“They’re feeding on the radiation from the wreckage,” Rose explained, arms crossed over her chest as she scanned the cavern floor above her. “Draining all the power from the ship and restoring themselves.”

“Within and hour they’ll be an army,” the Doctor finished, and finally he got the hatch open, looking down into a ship’s corridor running parallel to them. “Everyone into the ship, now!” he said, jumping down without preamble.

Amy was looking at the Angels. “But how?” she asked, and then started when she saw his floppy hair disappear through the hatch. “Doctor!”

He grinned at her. To her he looked like he was standing sideways. To him she appeared to be leaning around the door in front of him. “It’s just a corridor!” he laughed. “The gravity orientates to the floor.” Rose plopped herself down next to him and he took her hand. “Now, in here, all of you. Don’t take your eyes off the Angels. Move, move, move!”
He ran over to the switch on the wall, and got to work quickly, shutting the door behind them just as the last cleric entered the ship. “The Angels, I’m presuming they can jump up too?” the bishop asked, coming to stop next to them.

“They’re here now,” the Doctor answered ominously. “In the dark we’re finished.” Behind them the alarm started blaring as the door closed. “Run!” He tried to get through before it closed, but it slammed shut in his face.

“This whole place is a death trap!” Octavian yelled over the noise.

“No, it’s a time bomb. Well, it’s a death trap and a time bomb.” He turned around as the rest of their group came up to him. “And now it’s a dead end. Nobody panic.”

At the other end a loud banging went up as the Angels attempted entry into the ship. ‘Everyone’s panicking,’ Rose told him.

“Oh just me then,” he said in response. “What’s through there?” He motioned to the door he’d been trying to get through earlier.

“Secondary Flight Deck,” River answered as she had been the only one the ship before it crashed.

“Okay, so we’ve basically run up the inside of a chimney, yeah?” Amy commented unhelpfully, and the door keeping the Angels out opened.

“River keep your eyes on that door,” Rose said, putting her hands on the young girl’s shoulders and turning to the power hatch on the wall to override the security protocols. The lights flickered, and suddenly four Angels stood opposite them in the corridor- the door closed behind them.

“Clerics, keep watching them,” Octavian ordered.

“And don’t look at their eyes. Anywhere but their eyes,” the Doctor added, running over to another power box to isolate the grid. “There’s only one way to open this door,” he said. “We’ll have to route all the power through the door control. We’ll have to turn out the lights.”

There was a pause as everyone took that in. They’d lost the torches in the jump. They’d be in total darkness. “For how long?” the bishop asked.

“Fraction of a second, maybe longer,” the Doctor answered.

“How much longer?”

“Perhaps quite a bit. I don’t know! I’m guessing! We’re being attacked by statues in a crashed ship! There isn’t a manual for this!” The Doctor was pacing frantically. In his mind Rose sent him the image of a supernova and her point was clear—he didn’t need a manual.

The bishop turned to River Song. “Mel- River,” he started, “I’ve lost good clerics today, do you trust these people?” he asked her, sounding doubtful.

“I absolutely trust them,” she answered quickly and with more confidence than the Time Lords had really been expecting.

“He’s not some kind of madman then?”

River’s eyes flicked over to the Time Lord. “I absolutely trust him,” she repeated, avoiding the question.
The Doctor grinned and Rose snorted despite the situation. Octavian sighed. “Okay, Doctor. We’ve got your back.”

“Bless you, Bishop,” he said over his shoulder, not missing the irony.

The Bishop started giving orders to his men and the Doctor to his friends. “Okay, Amy. When the lights go down the wheel should release. Spin it clockwise, four turns.” He said, and stepped away.

“Ten.” Amy noffed.

“No, four.” Rose corrected her seriously.

“Yeah four I heard you.” She furrowed her brow like she didn’t understand. Rose and the Doctor shared a look over her shoulder but they didn’t have time to dwell on it. Rose looked to Rory who went over to help Amy, while she herself went to stand next to the Doctor at the power box.

“Ready!” the Doctor called, and stuck the sonic into the port.

“On my count then,” Octavian said. “God be with us all… Three, two, one—”

Rose flipped the switch and they were plunged into darkness as gunfire started ringing all throughout the corridor. Amy, Rory, and River worked getting the door open through all of it. Flashes of light from the guns revealed the quickly approaching aliens as the Doctor and the bishop shouted orders.

Finally the door came open, and they fell back into the flight deck, slamming it behind them. They ran ahead, a few clerics going backwards in order to keep an eye on the door, and finally they found the control area. The Doctor sonicked it open and held it there as everyone came through, eventually pulling back and slipping through right before it slammed shut on his coat tails.

He, Rose, Amy, Rory, and River all gathered at the controls while the clerics and Bishop kept their weapons trained on the door the Angels were pounding on. “Doctor!” Amy yelled frantically as the wheel started spinning.

The Bishop slammed a device down and instantly the spinning stopped. “Magnetised the door. Nothing could open that now.” He was clearly patting himself on the back.

“Yeah?” the Doctor challenged, and right on cue the wheel clicked again. It was slow, but it shouldn’t have been possible at all.

“Dear God.” Octavian breathed.

“Now you’re getting it,” Rose there over her shoulder as she pulled up the ship’s core network.

“Bought us time though,” the Doctor gave him. “That’s good. I am good with time.” The other three entrances to the room then started opening, and were quickly sealed—less time. “Okay, five minutes max.” He typed in more commands.

“Nine,” Amy muttered, like she wasn’t realising she was speaking at all, and Rose’s head snapped around to see her, Rory’s doing the same.

“Five,” the Doctor corrected, squinting at her.

“Five, right, five.” She turned to look at him.

“Why’d you say nine?” He asked. She argued that she didn’t, but he couldn’t devote enough brain
energy to it to keep the tennis match going.

“We need another way out of here,” River said anxiously as the doors clicked faster.

“There isn’t one,” the bishop replied, distraught.

The Doctor looked up as dawning realisation crossed his features. “Yeah there is. ‘Course there is. This is a galaxy class ship, goes for years between planet falls so! What do they need?” he asked, spinning around to address the group.

River gasped, “Of course!”

“Of course what? What do they need?” Rory asked, but it seemed him and Amy were the only ones who were still confused. The rest of the room had far more prior knowledge on galaxy class ships.

Rose dropped what she was trying to get done at the control panel to press herself up against the far wall. “It’s a sealed unit but they must have installed it somehow…” she said.

“Clamps! There’s clamps! Release the clamps!” the Doctor ordered, moving things aside with the clerics help in order to reach the clamps.

Amy and Rory stood to the side, watching the two aliens work while River Song still attempted to connect frayed wires on the console. “What’s through there? What do they need?” Amy asked.

“They need to breathe.” River answered over her shoulder, and the clamps popped open. Amy’s eyes widened as the wall slid open to reveal it.

“But it’s… that’s a…” she stuttered.

River smirked. “It’s an oxygen factory.”

“It’s a forest,” Amy said.

River nodded. “Yeah it’s a forest: an oxygen factory.”

“And if we’re lucky: an escape route,” the Doctor added.

Amy let out a breathless laugh, “Eight.”

“What did you say?” River asked, at the same time Rory did, and the Doctor and Rose spun around to look at her.

“Nothing,” Amy answered incredulously, confused by the sudden onslaught of concerned attention, and as Rose and Rory squinted at her again.

‘Doctor-’ Rose started.

‘I know. I don’t know. We have until she reaches zero, yeah? Let’s get safe as we can first.’

She bit her lip, unconvinced, but nodded anyway.

He clapped his hands together. “Is there another exit? Scan the architecture, we don’t have time to get lost in there!” The Bishop walked through and ordered the rest of them to stay until he’d checked the radiation levels.

The Doctor walked through anyway as Amy asked incredulously, “But trees? On a spaceship?”
“Oh more than trees, way better than trees! You’re going to love this!” He exclaimed, pulling open a hidden panel in the moss of one of the nearby trunks to reveal the wires underneath. “Tree borgs! Trees plus technology! Branches become cables, become sensors on the hull—a forest sucking in starlight, breathing out air. I knew a girl who did that once.” He tossed a wink to Rose who smirked as images of Bad Wolf flooded her mind.

He continued his rhapsody, “It even rains! There’s a whole mini climate in here! This whole vault is an ecopod running through the heart of the ship!” He jumped down and walked towards Amy again. “A forest in a bottle on a spaceship in a maze, have I impressed you yet Amy Pond?” He grinned, and behind them Rose rolled her eyes and shared a look with Rory.

Amy was just awe-struck though. “Seven,” she said, breathlessly on a laugh.

The smile wiped off his face. “Seven?” He asked, marching forwards to look in her eyes—maybe he’d get an answer.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“You said seven.”

She laughed like he was joking. “No, I didn’t.”

River, who had been smiling as she watched the Doctor talk about trees, tilted her head. “Yes you did.”

The Bishop started telling him how they could get out, and the Doctor answered distractedly as he continued to study Amy, but he was pulled away from that when Angel Bob came on the radio. “Doctor? Excuse me? Hello, Doctor? An-Angel Bob here, sir.”

The Doctor turned on his heel to sit in the captain’s chair. Rose came to stand next to him, but he pulled her into his lap, more for her comfort than anything. He tickled her ribs on impulse and she giggled, hitting his chest. He relished in the small solace that beautiful noise could bring him even in this situation. He looked into her eyes as he answered the Angel. “Ah, there you are, Angel Bob. How’s life? —Sorry, bad subject,” he said quickly, and Rose bit her lip as she listened.

“The Angels were wondering what you hoped to achieve,” Angel Bob told him.

Behind them Amy, Rory, and River were watching and listening carefully as the conversation unfolded.

“Achieve? We’re not achieving anything,” the Doctor answered flippantly. “We’re just hanging. It’s nice in here: consoles, comfy chairs, pretty girls, a forest.” He pulled Rose closer to him with a wink. “How’s things with you?” he asked like he was on the phone with Jack Harkness rather than a deadly alien assassin intent on killing him and everyone he cared for (or will care for).

“The Angels are feasting sir,” Bob answered ominously. “Soon we’ll have enough power to be able to consume this vessel, this world, and all the stars and worlds beyond.”

Rose adjusted her husband’s bowtie idly as his breathing increased. She spoke up, “Well, we’ve got comfy chairs did he mention?”

“We have no need of comfy chairs,” Angel Bob answered seriously.

Rose giggled, “I made him say ‘comfy chairs’! Did you hear that?” She said happily, earning a laugh from her husband which is what she was aiming for.
Amy laughed as well as she watched the cute couple poke fun at the scary aliens. “Six.”

Rose and the Doctor lost their playful expressions as soon as she said that. Rose took the communicator from him and stood up, walking forward. “Okay Bob, here’s what I want to know. What have you done to Amy?” she demanded angrily, sounding a lot like her mum.

“There’s something in her eye.” The Angel answered simply. Clearly being vague to get under their skin.

“What’s in her eye?” Rose grolled, and over their shoulders Amy furrowed her brow, confused on what the issue was.

“We are,” Bob answered.

They turned around to face her.

“What’s he talking about?” Amy asked, stepping forward, Rory on her heels. “Doctor, I’m five.” She cut herself off and looked over to River as she finally heard it. “I- I mean five.” She shook her head, and Rory put his hand on her shoulder. “Fine! I’m fine!” she got out finally, putting emphasis on the n, and biting her lip. The Doctor continued to study her eyes.

“You’re counting,” River observed, looking terrified for her despite not knowing what it was.

“Counting?” Amy asked, voice small—something that didn’t happen often.

The Doctor answered her seriously. “You were counting down. From ten. You have been for a couple of minutes.”

“Why?” she asked, and her voice wavered, Rose reached her hand out and she took it even though she didn’t know why she needed the comfort—only that she did.

“I don’t know.”

“Well then counting down to what?” she tried.

“I don’t know.” He studied her eyes.

“We shall take her,” Angel Bob interrupted from the radio still in Rose’s hand. “We shall take all of you. We shall have dominion over all of time and space.”

He sat down again, but Rose didn’t follow, choosing to stick with Amy. “Well only one person’s ever done that and it nearly killed her. Something tells me you lot couldn’t manage it.” He said flippantly as he looked at his wonderful beautiful fantastic and incredible wife. She smirked at him over her shoulder, and the small interaction made their companions wonder what exactly the Doctor was referring to.

He went on to the Angels, “There’s power on this ship but nowhere near that much.” The galaxy ship’s power source hardly compared to the heart of the TARDIS.

“With respect sir, there’s more power on this ship than you yet understand.”

Loud shrieking filled the ship and everyone had to refrain from covering their ears as the sound like nails on a chalkboard echoed through the metal walls.

“What is that?” River screamed, grimacing and looking around.
“It’s hard to put it in your terms, Melody,” Bob said, using her real name, but no one seemed to notice over the din of noise. “But as best I understand it, the Angels are laughing.”

“Laughing?” the Doctor asked.

“Because you haven’t noticed yet. The Doctor and Rose in the TARDIS haven’t noticed yet,” he mocked, much like Prisoner Zero had.

“Doctor—” the bishop started.

“No, wait!” he interrupted, holding his hand up and looking to Rose as they spoke to each other telepathically. “There’s something…” He drifted off as behind them the metal sounded as though it was being forcefully ripped apart, and they turned slowly to see the wall splitting. A crack, a crack in space and time was forming, the light of the vortex spilling through and the void seeping over.

“That’s… that’s like the crack from my bedroom wall.” Amy said, wide-eyed, and grabbing Rory’s hand as the thing from her nightmares came back to haunt her.

The room shook violently and they all grabbed on to the nearest object to stay upright. “Okay, we’re moving out,” the Bishop demanded.


He huffed, and ran his hands through his hair. “Yeah. Fine.” He stood up on the door ledge to get his screwdriver close enough to the crack “Right with you.”

“We’re not leaving without you!” Amy yelled, still holding on.

“Oh yes you are,” Rose said. “Rory?” she called, and he nodded, pulling Amy and River into the forest.

“So what are you?” the Doctor muttered, and then pulled the sonic’s readings towards him. “Oh that’s bad… that’s extremely very not good.”

Angels entered the room then though and he hopped down to stand back-to-back with Rose. “Do. Not. Blink.” he said, more to himself than to her, and they circled around until finally they were around the console and all of the debris. They were halfway to turning towards the forest when and Angel grabbed both of them by the backs of their jackets.

Amy felt nauseous as they walked through the forest. She leaned heavily on Rory and started to feel the world shifting around her. “Amy?” River asked, turning to see her swaying on her feet and staring straight ahead.

“Amy what’s wrong?” Rory asked frantically.

“Four,” she mumbled, and then sat down on the nearest rock, suddenly too ill to stand, she held her head and ran her fingers through her hair before laying down.

“Med-scanner!” River requested and a cleric brought her his, but she looked at it cluelessly.

To Rory’s relief it seemed to be close enough to the equipment they had at the hospital in Leadworth. “Here, let me,” he said, taking it and wrapping it around her arm like he would to check her blood pressure. He found the command for vitals easily.
“We need to keep moving,” the bishop said from behind them.

“We wait for the Doctor and Rose,” River said, crossing her arms and seeming to step in between the bishop and the two civilians.

“Our mission is to make this wreckage safe, and neutralise the Angels,” he growled. “Until that is achieved—”

“Father Octavian,” River interrupted. “When The Doctor and Rose are in the room your one and only mission is to keep them alive long enough to get everyone else home safely.”

Rory looked up to the young girl, unable to curb his own curiosity as she spoke of the Time Lords with so much familiarity and trust in her voice. *How did she know them? How did she know him and Amy? Why did she seem to care so much for all four of them?*

The Doctor and Rose themselves interrupted his thoughts. He squinted at them. “Where are your jackets?” He asked, momentarily forgetting his ill girlfriend.

“Angels got them, but got distracted by the crack before they could get the rest of us,” Rose answered quickly. “It’s not a power source like they think it is,” she half-way explained as they came to kneel beside Amy.

“What was it?” Amy asked, still staring straight ahead, not blinking.

“The end of the universe,” the Doctor answered seriously. “Let’s have a look then.” He pulled the scanner from Rory’s hands.

“So what’s wrong with me?” Amy asked miserably, leaning into Rose’s fingers as she ran them through her hair.

“Nothing, you’re fine,” River said comfortingly even though she didn’t know.

“Everything, you’re dying,” the Doctor corrected as he read the scanner.

“Doctor!” Rory protested angrily—that wasn’t what they teach you to say in nursing school.

“Yes you’re right if we lie to her she’ll get better!” he bit back. “Right.” He threw down the scanner and started pacing as he rambled. “Amy, Amy, Amy, Amelia. Something is wrong with Amelia. Something’s in her eye but what does that mean?”

“Doctor… Rose… I’m scared,” Amy mumbled, breath shuddering.

“Course you’re scared you’re dying! Shut up!” he replied flippantly and Rose glared at him, but he didn’t notice as he was trying to fix it. “What happened? She stared into the eyes of Angel for too long—”

“The eyes are the doors to the soul,” Rose interrupted, quoting. “Whatever holds the image of an Angel—”

“—Becomes the Angel.” he finished, eyes widening. *There’s an Angel in her mind.* “Amy!”

“Three,” she answered and in her eyes the face of an Angel stared back. “Doctor it’s coming I can feel it. I’m going to die.” She whispered, and Rory grabbed her hand while River rubbed her back and Rose brushed her hair from her face.

“Please just shut up I’m thinking,” he said frantically, and Rose closed her eyes to calm herself.
“Close your eyes,” she whispered to Amy while behind her her husband asked Angel Bob about the counting. He threw the communicator angrily, and in front of her Amy shook her head.

“No, I don’t want to,” she moaned.

The Doctor came up then as he finally put it together and realised his wife was about eight steps ahead of him. “Good, that’s good. That’s not you. That’s the Angel inside you, it’s scared.”

Rory was holding the monitor again and watching her bpm drop. “Amy, Amy please just do it,” he begged.

Amy looked around her at all their faces until finally, against every will she had, she snapped her eyes closed. The beeping went rapid and then normalised. They all let out simultaneous sighs of relief and the Doctor placed a kiss to Rose’s head. “You’re brilliant,” he said.

“Yeah you could be too if you weren’t so busy being rude,” Rose answered and he grinned. She pulled Amy to sitting.

“She’s still weak,” Rory said, going over her vitals. “It’d be too dangerous to move her.”

“So can I open my eyes now?” she asked, louder and more Amy-sounding now that death wasn’t quite as imminent.

The Doctor crouched down in front of her, taking her hands. “Amy, listen to me. If you open your eyes now for more than a second, you will die. The Angel is still inside you. We haven’t stopped it, we’ve just sort of… paused it. You’ve close to used up your countdown now. You cannot open your eyes.”

Rose scooted herself to sit closer to her on the rock and wrapped her arm around her while Rory held his hand at her knee. River kept her hand firmly on Amy’s shoulder, though for whose benefit that was for no one could say for sure.

“Doctor, we’re too exposed here we have to move,” the bishop interrupted.

He straightened up. “We’re too exposed everywhere, and Amy can’t move. And anyway that’s not the plan.” He liked the man less and less with every word he said.

“There’s a plan?” River asked, raising an unconvinced brow.

“Don’t know yet, Rose hasn’t told me one, and I haven’t finished talking.” He listed off the two ways he ever came up with a plan (if he ever did) and began to pace again. “Right! Father, you and your men are going to stay here and look after Amy. If anything happens to her, I’ll hold every single one of you personally responsible, twice,” he told them, looking around, and again sounding like a protective father. “Rose, River, Rory, and I are going to go find the primary flight deck…” He broke them up, really wanting to get away from all the church/army men. He licked the tip of his finger and held it up until he located the direction they needed to go. “That way, quarter of a mile, straight ahead. And from there we’re going to stabilise the wreckage, stop the Angel and cure Amy.” He pointed and nothing and no one in particular and then jumped down from the rock he didn’t remember climbing onto.

“How?” River asked.

“I’ll do a thing,” he answered flippanly.
“What thing?” she asked, shaking her head.

“I don’t know. It’s a thing in process. Respect the thing. Moving out!”

“Doctor,” Rose interrupted. “I’m staying here with Amy.”

His shoulders deflated and he looked at her with wide-eyes. “What am I going to do without you?” he let out without thinking.

Rose smirked. “What you did for the nine hundred years before you met me.” She shrugged. “And if not, I’m in your head love.”

He studied her seriously for a moment before accepting that she wasn’t going to change her mind. He clapped his hands together, “Right, okay, Rory—”

Rory opened his mouth to protest as well, but caught Rose’s eye; she wanted someone she trusted to be with her husband, and he knew Amy would be safer with her than him—at least in this situation. He nodded to her and closed his mouth before the Doctor could notice.

“—And River with me, come on,” the Doctor finished, and they came beside him, but were stopped again, this time by the bishop.

“I’m coming with you,” he said. “My clerics will stay here and protect Miss Pond.”

“I don’t need you.” The Doctor shook his head. He really didn’t like this man.

“I don’t care,” he persisted. “My mission is to stabilise this ship and protect this planet’s population from the Angels. Not to watch over some—”

“Watch it,” River growled, stepping forward before the Doctor, Rose, or Rory could. The Bishop swallowed.

“Doctor, can’t I come with you?” Amy asked hopefully, and he sat down again, taking up the side Rose wasn’t.

“You’ll just slow us down, Miss Pond,” Octavian called over his shoulder already walking away (in the wrong direction). The Doctor glared at him.

“I don’t want to sound selfish, but you’d really speed me up,” Amy called back, and Rose smirked at the girl’s cheek.

“You’ll be safer here,” the Doctor said, pointedly neglecting to correct the bishop’s incorrect course as he attempted to get ahead of him. “We can’t protect you on the move. And look, Rose is staying. Just like the first time I left, yeah? I’ll be back for you two as soon as I can, I promise.”

“You always say that.” She pouted, but didn’t mean it quite as much as she probably would have had Rose not been with her, she grabbed Rose’s hand for good measure though.

“I always come back.” He mock-pouted right back, bumping her shoulder, and standing to place a kiss on each of the girl’s foreheads. “Good luck. Behave.”

He turned to the clerics. “Keep watch on the forest, keep those Angels from advancing!” he ordered, and then pulled Rory and River by the hands, calling to the bishop as they ran in the right direction towards the primary deck.
The Doctor’s pocket started beeping when they were halfway through the forest.

“What’s that?” River asked, looking around and then to him up and down.

“Readings from a crack in a wall,” he answered, and River bit her lip, looking down before walking off again. He squinted at her back curiously, but Rory spoke up next.

“So how can the crack in Amy’s bedroom wall be the end of the universe?”

The Doctor studied him. Last him and Rose were sat in their study she’d said how much she liked Rory. He was clever, she said, and good with people. Good at understanding her while Amy was good at understanding him. Martha was more like a friend, and Donna sort of like a sister-in-law to Rose, but she trusted Rory- and that meant a lot to the Doctor. Rose didn’t often do that anymore.

“I don’t know,” he decided to answer, “but here’s what I think: One day, there’s going to be a very big bang, so big every moment in history, past and future, will crack.”

“Someday soon?” Rory asked, but then shook his head. “Is that even possible for you? Doesn’t everything just sort of happen all at once?”

The Doctor shook his head at the young man. Rory didn’t question that time could break, but rather when it would. “Time doesn’t work like that. It’s constantly being rewritten, especially where I’m involved.”

“So if you died today, and never meet River in your future and her past, wouldn’t that create a paradox?”

The Doctor nodded his head appreciatively—maybe he’d underestimated Rory.

“Yes,” he popped the ‘p,’ the impending paradox in question creating a budding migraine in the back of his head. And the way it pulsed told him it was anything but as simple as Rory had said it. Usually time could manage to sort itself out around paradoxes, but it was apparently impossible in this case.

“And then what?” Rory looked around for any immediate dangers, like he was about to get his answer in the way he’d really rather not. Rose would kill him if anything happened to the Doctor.

“Don’t know,” the Doctor lied, studying River’s back. She’d stiffened when Rory had mentioned her past and their future. “River, what are you thinking?” he asked.

She looked over her shoulder, but was saved from answering when his device started beeping again. “What is that?”

“The date, the date of the explosion. Where the crack begins.”

“And for those of us who can’t read the basecode of the universe?” she asked, and he hit a button on the side, switching it to English. On the screen it read 26-06-2010.

“Amy’s time…” the Doctor whispered.

Amy sighed and shifted to place her head in Rose’s lap, wanting her to play with her hair again, and Rose obliged. “Tell me a story,” she requested. “You’re a time travelling alien. You must have plenty of stories.”
Rose laughed. “What do you want to know?”

Amy wrinkled her nose. It was like asking what her three wishes would be except she only got one. “How did you and him meet?” she settled on eventually, looking for an outerspace love story.

Rose snorted. “He blew up my work, and then told me to forget about him.”

Amy grinned and wished she could see the other woman’s face. Of course that’s how she met the Doctor; how else? “And you were only nineteen?” she pressed for more.

“Mmhm…” Rose answered, passing her fingers through the girl’s hair absently. “That feels like ages ago now…”

That reminded Amy just how old Rose was again. It was funny how easily she forgot. “The Doctor said earlier that only one person had ever controlled time and space…” she started hesitantly, sure she only could because she couldn’t see her face. “He was talking about you wasn’t he?”

Rose froze, but after a moment continued, nodding, before remembering Amy couldn’t see her. “Yeah,” she said, voice scratchy. “He tried to save my life by sending me away, so instead I looked into the heart of the TARDIS and flew her back to the Dalek ship he was attempting to explode and killed them all myself while I was a goddess.”

It took everything in Amy not to open her eyes and stare at her after she said that. “And it nearly killed you?” she asked quietly.

“Nearly. And it did kill him.” Amy coughed in surprise and Rose laughed and went on. “This is the Doctor’s third face since I met ‘im,” she explained. “Time Lords can sort of… cheat death by regenerating—”

“I remember.” Amy interrupted as the memories came flooding back. “When I was seven you two were… talking about that.” She scrunched up her face as she tried to recall exactly what was said. “He said you were still cooking… Can you regenerate too then? Is that why you were all golden?”

Rose laughed. “Was I? I didn’ notice. I guess that’s what that whole ‘Golden Rose’ thing was about, yeah?” she teased, and Amy blushed and nodded. “Yeah… after the Doctor took the Vortex out of me, a bit got left behind. Made me sort of… part Time Lord ‘s I guess the best way to put it.”

“What face are you on then?” Amy asked, furrowing her brow.

“Just this one. I don’t regenerate the same way. We don’t really know why. It has something to do with the human part of me.” Rose shrugged.

Amy nodded again, processing. “When did you get married?” she asked eventually.

Rose let out a breath, thinking back. “A bit after we found out I was telepathic… that sort of brought up a lot of questions which led to him explaining to me about telepathic marriage bonds. Eventually he admitted he loved me and then we tied our timelines together in the light of the Medusa Cascade… without my mum—oh she slapped him so hard when she found out!” Rose giggled.

Amy snorted at the image. “Where is she now, your mum?” she asked.

Rose stiffened, but didn’t all together freeze this time. “She’s gone now,” she whispered eventually, and Amy heard the stutter in her voice.
“Mine too,” Amy answered quietly, and Rose moved one of her hands down to hold hers.

All around them the lights started flickering.

“It doesn’t look like it opens from here,” Octavian said as they finally came to the steel wall separating them from the primary flight deck. “But this has gotta be a service hatch or something here.”

River stood guard with her weapon pointed out, watching their backs, and Rory wandered over to her. “If you’re friends with the Doctor and Rose then why did you join the military?” he asked curiously, knowing already how the couple felt about guns and war.

River smirked. “I’m not. I’m a student in university. This lot brought me along because of my ‘more advanced knowledge of alien life.’ I got in because I knew them.” She threw a glance over to The Doctor who was still going over the readings from the crack.

“Well I’m sure that’s not true. You’re clearly brilliant,” Rory said, not meaning to be encouraging but more of just a voicing general observation. She smiled brightly up at him in response. He smirked awkwardly and looked over his shoulder to the bishop who was still working on getting the hatch open. “Could you hurry it up mate? Time’s running out.”

The Doctor’s head snapped up. “What? What did you say?” he asked frantically, more anxious than angry.

“I just meant that—” Rory started on defense

The Doctor interrupted him, shaking his head, “No, I know what you meant. But what if it could?”

“What is it? What’s happening?” Amy asked, standing up as Rose did.

“We’re surrounded ma’am, Angels advancing on all sides, their taking out the tree-borgs,” one of the clerics answered over his shoulder before shouting orders to his men.

Suddenly though, a blinding light reached them through the woods from which they came, and the Angels started retreating. “The ship’s not on fire is it?” one of the men asked.

“Couldn’t be,” the other one answered. “The compressors would have taken care of it. Any ideas, Rose?”

Rose had her lip jutted out slightly as she observed the light, squinting through the brightness. “It’s the end of time,” she whispered ominously, though not purposefully. “The Angels are running. They’re afraid.”

They all stared for a moment and then finally, the one who appeared to be the leader of them spoke up. “Phillip, Crispin- need to get a closer look at that.”

Immediately the two clerics jumped down from their respective perches to do as ordered.

“No wait!-” Rose started, grabbing for Phillip’s arm, but coming up empty and ignored. “Don’t go near it!” she yelled, but the men kept going.

Amy spun around in exasperation. “What are you all looking at? What’s there?” she demanded
angrily, and Rose put a hand to her arm.

“It’s the crack in your wall,” Rose muttered quickly. "It’s here and I don’t know how or why but it isn’t good whatever the reason.” Her head snapped up as the remaining clerics came to stand beside them and she ignored them in order to focus on warning her husband.

“Cracks, cracks in time, time running out. No it couldn’t be, couldn’t be. But how is a duck pond a duck pond if there aren’t any ducks?” He rambled while Rory and River stared at him and behind him Octavian worked on getting them onto the primary flight deck. “And she didn’t recognize the Daleks… okay. Time can shift. Time can change. Time can be rewritten—”

He cut himself off as Rose spoke to him frantically, getting to the point quicker than he could. “It’s swallowing time. It’s taking it and it’s destroying it. Please, love, the Angels are coming now. Be safe.”

Behind him the hatch clicked open.

“But what could scare those things?” Pedro asked Rose, not taking his eyes off the light.

“But how can it be following me?” Amy demanded of her.

“What is it ma’am?” Marco insisted.

Rose huffed. ‘Just shut up, all of you. Okay? We need to get out of here.” She looked to Amy, wondering if she could even make it dying and blind in a forest full of Angels.

Pedro shook his head. “I’m going to get a closer look,” he said firmly, but Rose grabbed his bicep tightly before he could take even half a step, and she stared deep into the man’s eyes as her suspicions gained evidence.

“Why not just wait for the other two to come back?” Amy asked before Rose could.

“What other two, ma’am?” Marco asked, squinting at her.

Amy wanted for all the world to open her eyes and see if he was joking. “The other two… the ones you sent before. Phillip and Crispin,” she clarified, and Rose looked over her shoulder to see the man’s blank face—her worst fears confirmed.

‘It’s unwriting time… It’s completely erasing people from history, please get everyone to safety,’ Rose begged just as the Doctor was following Octavian, Rory, and River through the maintenance hatch.

‘Don’t worry, love. I’ll get you here in a second,’ he promised as he took in the teleportation devices in front of him that River had already started working on.

Rose was hauling Pedro and Marco through the forest and away from the light while Amy gripped the back of her jumper for dear life. “Ma’am I need to stay on defense,” Pedro argued, raising his gun in the arm Rose didn’t have a death grip on.
“You really think that silly gun is going to do anything against the Angels?” she snapped, and immediately the young cleric’s jaw snapped shut.

“Rose…” Amy started hesitantly, and Rose looked over to the young girl, eyes considerably softer for her. “What did it do to them? What did it do to Crispin and Phillip?”

“There is no Crispin and Phillip!” Marco protested, and Amy somehow managed to glare at him with her eyes closed (even if her aim was slightly off).

Rose sighed, and looked to Amy. “That. It erased them from every moment of existence.”

“Then how come we can remember them?” Amy asked, her face scrunching up as she attempted to understand.

“We’re time travellers. We exist outside of temporal shifts,” Rose answered quickly, looking around and attempting to focus on giving her husband their location.

“Does that mean we’re safe then? From the crack?” Amy asked hopefully, and Rose looked over her shoulder sharply.

“Not in the slightest,” she said seriously. Then finally their was a pulling sensation in her gut as they were teleported to the flight deck- she let go of the men quickly to grab Amy by the waist before she could fall and open her eyes on impulse.

She grinned up at the Doctor as they landed. “Took you long enough.”

He smirked, but wasn’t given the opportunity to respond as a loud banging surrounded them. “What’s that?” Octavian whispered.

“The Angels,” the Doctor and Rose answered together, but she allowed him to go on. “They’re running from the fire. They came here to feed on the time energy and now the time energy is going to feed on them.”

“Well how do we stop it?” River looked between the two Time Lords.

Neither of them answered, looking at each other instead as they had a silent conversation. Rose looked angry and the Doctor looked desperate until they were interrupted by a louder bang, just outside the entrance to the forest- the Angels had arrived.

All around them alarms started blaring and lights flashing, Rory pulled Amy closer as she spun around desperately and River crossed her arms protectively in front of herself. “What’s is it?” she asked.

The Doctor finally looked away from his wife, and they both seemed to have finally reached an agreement. “The Angels are draining the last of the power, which means—” he spun around to the entrance to the forest, Rose close to follow, “the shield’s going to release,” he finished, and right on cue the wall slid open to reveal the entire colony of Weeping Angels standing in front of them. He took a step forward, trying to step in front of Rose on impulse, but she rolled her eyes and came to stand beside him. “Angel Bob, I presume,” he said.

“The time field is coming,” the voice of Bob came from the unmoving Angel. “It will destroy our reality.”

“Yeah, and look at you lot, running away,” Rose antagonized, a glimmer in her eye. “Come begging us for help now?”
“There is a rupture in time,” the Angel went on, unfazed. “The Angels calculate that if you throw yourself into it, it will close and they will be saved.” It was unclear which Time Lord the Angels wanted to sacrifice themselves, and who exactly would be saved. It seemed they didn’t care which scenario played out.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, could do that,” the Doctor said quickly. “But why?”

“Your friends would also be saved,” Angel Bob answered simply, but something told Rose it was an empty promise even as the Doctor recognised it.

River stepped forward though. “I’ve traveled in time too. Throw me in,” she begged, tugging on their arms, and Rose suddenly got the feeling that she wasn’t just being noble. There was something else there. Something she was trying to protect. She needed them to have a future, it was important to her. But why?

“Oh be serious,” the Doctor waved her off, not taking his eyes of the Angels.

“Doctor,” River started to protest, but Rose grabbed her hands.

“No, seriously, get a grip.” She placed the girl’s hands on the nearest railing, and motioned from Rory and Amy to do the same, with Octavian and the clerics following their lead as River finally got it and gushed over how clever they were.

“Sir, the Angels need you to sacrifice yourself now,” Angel Bob said, like it was the only answer.

The Doctor smirked. “Thing is, Bob, the Angels are draining all of the power from this ship, every last bit of it, and you know what?” He rocked from side to side a bit, as he often did when he did anything exceptionally clever. “I think they’ve forgotten where they’re standing. I think they’ve forgotten the gravity of the situation.” He smirked at his own play-on-words and checked with Rose that everyone was holding on as the alarms started blaring about gravity failure. “Or to put it another way Angels… Night-night.” And he fell over casually to grab the railing next to his wife just as the ground fell out from under them and the Angels tumbled into the light of the crack in space and time—closing it behind them.

Hours later, after they’d scrambled their way out of the wrecked ship and down the cliff face, they gathered on the beach. Amy and Rory wrapped themselves in blankets River had pulled from the TARDIS while behind them the three remaining militants prepared for their own take off.

“Why do we remember it all then? Those guys back there, they knew those men better than all of us and they don’t think they ever existed.” Rory looked the Doctor and Rose.

The Doctor smirked. “Because we’re time travellers- you now too- it changes the way you see the universe, forever… Good, isn’t it?” he added, gaining small chuckles from the other time travellers.

“And the crack? Is that gone too?” Amy asked, trying not to sound as worried as she was.

He paused. “Yeah… for now. But the explosion that caused it is still happening.” He and Rose looked out over the water at the same time.

“Somewhere out there…” Rose said quietly, “somewhere in time.” She took a deep breath and finally looked over to River. “What about you then? You need a ride?”
River shook her head. “No, these guys will take me back to school… And then I think I’ll call my parents,” she added, almost as an afterthought.

Rose nodded understandingly, but Amy’s head snapped around to look at the young girl. “Your parents?” she asked, nosing for more information, but River only laughed in response to a joke no one else got.

She shook her head again. “It’s a long story, Amy. One that can’t be told—has to be lived.” She set the redhead and Rory with a hard, sad look before finally sighing and setting her shoulders. “We’ll see each other again quite soon though, I think… when the Pandorica opens.” She smirked up at The Doctor.

He laughed incredulously. “The Pandorica!” he exclaimed, like it was a joke. “That’s a fairy tale.”

River only gave them that knowing laugh again, a twinkle in her eye as she responded. “Oh Gramps, aren’t we all?” And with that she turned on her heel to join the Bishop and the clerics, the group watching after her curiously as she went.

The Doctor looked to Rose and grabbed her hand. “Back home then, yeah?”

She smiled, “Yeah.” And they all filed back into the TARDIS, Amy and Rory retreating immediately up the stairs to their rooms, not bothering to stick around for the process of flying back into the time vortex.

Amy followed Rory into his room, as she was wont to do, and collapsed onto his bed, him following shortly after. She looked around, noticing the small changes the ship had provided since they’d come on board. The walls were now his favorite shade of green, the pillows behind her were more comfortable, and she was sure the bed was slowly getting wider as well. “I nearly died,” she said quietly after a moment. “I was alone, in the dark, and I nearly died… And it made me think… about what I want.”

Beside her Rory stiffened, always terrified that the girl of his dreams, the girl he pined after nearly his entire life since she’d waltzed into Leadworth, was going to realize she could do so much better than him.

Amy hit him as she read his thoughts. “Stop worrying, stupid,” she said, and grabbed his hand, leaning forward to whisper seriously before kissing him. “It’s you. It’s always been you.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all had a Happy Thanksgiving! And if you aren’t American: hope you had a lovely Thursday!
Leaving the cabin tomorrow and back on my normal writing schedule with decent wifi!

- comments keep writers writing ❤
Daughters

Chapter Summary

The Vampires of Venice

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As soon as they were safely drifting through the time vortex The Doctor leant heavily against the console, stretching his arms out for Rose to join him.

She complied, coming to stand between his legs and place her hands over his hearts as his came down to rest easily on her hips. Rose squinted and began absentmindedly fiddling with a button on his shirt while she tried to sort through his racing thoughts. “What are you thinking?” She asked eventually, giving up and biting her lip.

The Doctor sighed. “Everything revolves around Amy somehow. But I can’t figure it out. The crack in her wall. The duck pond without any ducks. Her too big house. She didn’t even remember the Daleks.” He listed off his reasons quickly, getting more frustrated with the red-headed riddle currently residing in their guest bedroom with every word that fell from his lips.

Rose tilted her head up to look at him and reached out to smooth the furrow in her husband’s brow, jutting her lip out slightly as she did. “We’ll figure it out.” She said calmly, “we always do.”

He smiled down at her and shook his head as her brilliance from the day came back to him. “Rose Tyler, what would I do without you?” He asked, meaning it.

Rose gave him that lovely tongue touched smile and shrugged cheekily. “Be miserable I guess.”

He smirked, and then, without warning, grabbed her by the waist and threw her over his shoulder- a small squeak of surprise escaping her as he did. “Oh you’re going to pay for that, love.” He said, carrying her to the adjacent railed-off stairs that only led to a small platform and a single door that was their bedroom.

Rose let out a shriek of laughter when he squeezed her bum as they walked up the stairs. Hitting his in return, and earning a chuckle from him, they disappeared into their room.

The TARDIS dimmed the main lights as all her passengers turned in.

After the Weeping Angels, weeks passed without the slightest hint of danger. Rory was convinced they were just getting lucky, but Amy was starting to think the Time Lords were purposefully avoiding trouble- giving far more thought to their locations than usual, never letting the TARDIS pick their destination, and checking and re-checking the coordinates before disembarking.

This morning though Amy had found herself particularly bored with their routine of planet hopping with shopping, lounging, and dinner, so she plopped herself down in the jump seat with a dramatic
huff that was sure to get The Doctor’s attention. “What, what is it?” He asked, right on cue, brow furrowed in concern.

Amy raised her eyebrows, arms crossed in front of her. “Are you two trying to protect us from something?” She accused, squinting as her eyes flitted in between them. “Because it’s been awfully dull around here lately.”

The Doctor scoffed, “dull!” and Rose failed to hold back her giggle at her husband’s put-off expression towards the use of such a word in regards to their lifestyle.

“Yeah, dull!” Amy, predictably, didn’t back down- actually seeming to enjoy to familiar back-and-forth with the Time Lord. “We’re just outerspace tourists now!”

He scoffed again and started flitting around the console- flying the ship himself even though he hadn’t but a few times since he married Rose- hitting buttons, spinning dials, and pulling levers as he mumbled to himself. “Dull, I’ll show her dull. I’m not a bloody tourist. I’m a Time Lord and I’ll do whatever I please.” He cut himself off to grin excitedly and grab onto the console as the TARDIS started spinning wildly through the time vortex on the randomiser. Amy laughed happily and looked to Rory just in time to see him roll his eyes at her and share a knowing look with Rose just before they landed with a particularly hard thud.

Rose chuckled and patted the TARDIS console, looking to Amy meaningfully. “She did that on purpose.” Rose informed her. “She didn’t much care for you calling her dull either.”

Amy giggled and looked up to the ceiling on impulse. “Oh you know I didn’t mean it,” she said with a wink to the ship. And Rose and The Doctor shared indulgent looks- they loved it as much as the TARDIS did when their companions spoke to the ship.

“Alright where are we then?” The Doctor exclaimed, pulling the monitor around to him. “Oh Venice! When’s the last time we went to Italy and didn’t have to save the world, Rose?”

Rose laughed and shook her head. “Don’t think there’s ever been a time, love.”

He gave a pointed look to Amy. “See? Not dull.” He said, and then strode purposefully out the doors, Rose in tow. A goat walked past just as Amy and Rory came behind them. “Venezia! La Serenissima!” He exclaimed, arms thrown wide as he spoke the Italian phrase, Rose giggling behind him at his childlike delight. “Impossible city! Preposterous city! Founded by refugees running from Attila and the Hun! I was just a collection of little wooden huts in the middle of the marsh,” he rhapsodised as he spun on his heel to lead them through what appeared to be a market, “but it became one of the most powerful cities in the world! Constantly being invaded, constantly flooding, constantly just -beautiful!” He stuttered on the last word, throwing his arms out again and grabbing Rose’s hand to swing between them. “Ah, you’ve got to love Venice… And so many people did! Byron, Napoleon, Casanova-” He gasped suddenly, stopping, and pulled his wrist up to look at his watch. “That reminds me- 1580, that’s all right then. Casanova doesn’t get born for 145 years- that’s good. Don’t want to run into him. I owe him a chicken.” He began walking again and Rose laughed indulgently at her husband. She would have been happy to let him go on all day like that, but Rory interrupted then.

“You owe Casanova a chicken?” He asked incredulously.

“Long story, we had a bet!” He called over his shoulder, and Rose looked around to give their companions the ‘I’ll-fill-you-in-later’ look that she was often having to give them.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa!” A man dressed in period- well, modern clothing, technically- stopped
them just before they could turn the bend leading them further into the city. “Papers, if you please!”

The Doctor smirked and pulled out the psychic paper as the man continued to list of the precise papers he was looking for (proof of residency, current bill of medical inspection). The Doctor flipped open the small wallet and held the seemingly-blank paper up to him. “There you go, sir. All to your satisfaction, I think you’ll find.” He said seriously, not exactly sure what it was going to say he was.

The man rather forcefully pulled the item from his hand before doing a double take and looking around their small group with wide eyes. “I am so sorry, Your Grace.” He apologised, tone changing immediately with a low bow. “I- I didn’t realise.”

The Doctor waved him off and pulled the psychic paper back from him, Rory snatching it for inspection himself immediately after (he didn’t trust them after that one time the paper had deemed Rory a eunuch. Apparently today they were a duke and duchess accompanied by their family members- a viscount and viscountess). “No worries, you were just doing your job.” The Doctor said with a grin, and then squinted. “Sorry, what exactly is your job?” He asked, as some things weren’t exactly lining up with what he knew of the time period.

“Checking for aliens-” The man exclaimed with a vague motion, and Amy and Rory made odd sounds as they held back their snorts- giving their definitely alien friends significant looks that they ignored as they tried to keep up with what he was saying. “-visitors from foreign lands- what might bring the plague with them!” The man went on matter of factly.

The Doctor and Rose furrowed their brows further at him as that explanation made even less sense, but Amy didn’t seem to notice as she reprimanded them “Ohh that’s nice. See where you bring me? The plague!” She bit out and jumped forward to give him a smack on the arm.

“Don’t worry, Viscountess.” The man said, with another low bow to Amy, who made a sort of graceful sigh and gave a royal-esque head tilt in return- apparently unfazed and loving the idea of being considered royalty- and earning an eye roll from Rory beside her. “No, we’re under quarantine here. No one comes in, no one goes out.” He explained, as Rory scoffed at Amy’s lifted chin and elegant nods. “And all because the grace and wisdom of our patron Signora Rosanna Calvierri!” He finished praisingly with a motion towards the insignia on his board.

“How interesting…” Rose started, squinting at the unfamiliar mark. “I heard the plague died out years ago.”

The man’s eyes widened in misunderstanding. “Not out there, Your Grace!” He exclaimed to the presumed-duchess in denims and trainers, pointing over their heads to offshore. “No, Signora Calvierri has seen it with her own eyes! Streets are piled high with bodies, she said!”

The Doctor stared at him as he tried to form a full picture with the few pieces he’d been given. “Did she now?” He said, grabbing Rose’s hand to guide them past the man curiously- their companions following close behind.

They came to a balcony overlooking the canals, and across the water some veiled women dressed all in white were passing through a courtyard, each held parasols to protect them from what was a rather overcast day. A man came running up to them, and The Doctor and Rose were able to hear the hissing from across the water as he flipped up the veils of each of the women. “Isabella!” He exclaimed, over and over again, until apparently he found her. “It’s me!” He begged, but was knocked onto his backside as another woman came forward, hissing loudly before they were called into the building once more. Another man, dressed more nobly than him, came and stood over the
man, saying something presumably daunting, before turning on his heel and following the girls. “Isabella! It’s me!” The man yelled again, as he was hauled off by guards.

Without a second thought, The Doctor and Rose ran to find the man before he could get too far.

They ran through the cobbled streets and The Doctor managed to get up two steps before Rose hauled him back- spotting the man. “Who were those girls?” He asked quickly, causing him to turn around and look the couple up and down.

“I thought everyone knew about the Calvierri school.” He said.

“It’s our first day here.” The Doctor answered quickly from where he was leant against the wall before jumping off to come up to him. “It’s okay. Parents do all sorts of things to get their children into good schools.” He said comfortingly- like he’d know. “They move house, they change religion…” He drifted off as someone walked passed, and Rose came up to them. “So why are you trying to get her out?” He asked- him and Rose had decided while they were running that he was Isabella’s father- no other pleas would be that desperate.

“Something happens in there.” The man said, apparently desperate enough to trust the strange couple in stranger clothing. “Something magical. Something evil. My own daughter didn’t even recognize me!” He paused and looked to Rose. “And the girl who pushed me away- her face, like an animal.” He whispered the last words, absolute fear in his eyes, and Rose ached for him. She couldn’t imagine what that would feel like- to have had her daughter get to grow up would have been a wish come true, but for her daughter to forget about her would be another level of hell.

The Doctor put his arm around the man. “I think it’s time I met this Signora Calvierri.” He said, giving a meaningful look to Rose as he read her thoughts.

Rose looped her arm through the man’s as they walked. “I’m Rose, by the way. That’s my husband, The Doctor. Our friends will probably find us soon. What’s your name?” She asked, attempting light-hearted introductions after such an ominous conversation.

He looked at her, studying the strange woman. “Guido,” he answered eventually, “and my daughter- her name is Isabella.” He added, not wanting to draw attention away from the reasons he was talking to them. Rose nodded understandingly.

Amy and Rory wandered through the unfamiliar streets of Venice looking for Rose and The Doctor, in a comfortable silence until finally Rory broke it. “We’ve been travelling with them for three months you know.” He said suddenly, like he’d been thinking about saying it for a while.

Amy’s head whipped around to look at him, wide-eyed. “You’ve been counting?” She asked.

Rory shrugged and shook his head. “Don’t get me wrong. I love it- I do. I just started to feel like time wasn’t really passing at all around them. It felt weird. Knowing we’d just run away from our lives- our jobs… our families, and we hadn’t even noticed how long it’d been. So I counted. Just now.”

Amy laughed somewhat incredulously as she let that sink in, and she bumped her shoulder against his. “You hated my job though,” she joked.

She shook her head after a moment. “She was never really family- not proper family like The Doctor and Rose. Just someone who took me in–”

She broke off as a blood-curdling scream echoed through the cobbled streets. The two of them only spared a moment to look at each other wide-eyed before running in the direction of the noise.

They turned a corner to find the nobleman from earlier across the canal leant over a young peddler woman. His head snapped up to them to reveal the hideous set of fangs beneath his lips- blood dripped down his chin. He stood up and shoved passed them quickly with a hiss.

Rory ran to check on the girl, and Amy spun around to chase after the man as he ran away, cape billowing out menacingly behind him. “Amy, Amy come back!” Rory called to no avail, as Amy turned a corner in pursuit of the likely-killer creature.

She ran quickly, avoiding stray chickens and people, following his cape as he turned corner after cobbled corner. Finally though the street ahead of her dead-ended. She expected to find him, and then… do something clever she supposes, but instead she only came to a stone archway in the building’s wall, ending immediately at the water’s edge. She looked around the empty canal and down to the shifting water, confused, but Rory appeared behind her before she could question it further.

They stopped just before they could turn the corner leading to the courtyard in front of the school. “Alright,” Rose started, going over the plan with Guido that her and The Doctor had formed as they’d walked. “You’re going to go and distract the guards- call for Isabella again, it doesn’t seem like they think you’re any sort of threat so it should be okay, but I’ll be right here to pull you away from them if they seem to get aggressive.”

“Right,” The Doctor said, “and I’m going to go around the side here and sneak in. Find Isabella, or at the very least information.” He promised Guido, with a nod towards the side gate he was referring to.

Guido, to his credit, seemed unfazed by his part as bait. He only nodded shortly, and wished them all luck with short hand-shakes before running up to the guards with his daughter’s name on his lips.

The Doctor, not expecting it to go that easily- underestimating the lengths to which a desperate father will go for his one and only daughter, spun around quickly to kiss Rose quick as he could before running off stealthily (or as stealthily as a man in a tweed jacket and bowtie in 16th century Italy could be) in the direction of the gate. He unlocked it easily with the sonic and slipped through, giving a short nod to Guido as he was pushed away.

After a bit of aimless wandering around he found the steps leading down (he’s found that when looking for secrets it’s always best to start below ground) and descended them quickly, coming to a small alcove of sorts with doors on one side and a singular mirror on the other. He spun around before spotting the mirror, and admittedly became distracted by his appearance- still not used to the new face. He turned from side to side and smirked, “hello, handsome” he said cheekily, coming closer to the looking glass to adjust his bowtie and inspect the new teeth that still felt a bit odd in his mouth.

Behind him a chorus of girls spoke together. “Who are you?” They said ominously, and the Doctor spun around to find four women, all in white simple dresses gathered round and looking at him seriously. *Wait but hold on-* he turned back to look in the mirror again- where the girls did not show
up, instead he could see straight through to the doors they stood in front of.

He spun back and forth a few times, sputtering. “How are you doing that? I- am- loving it!” He exclaimed eventually, holding his hands out. “You’re like Houdini, only five slightly scary girls, and he was shorter- will be shorter. I’m rambling.” He cut himself off as he felt a sort of telepathic-ting in the back of his mind as Rose apparently picked up on his confused rant. He clapped his hands together and smiled at the girls.

The spoke together creepily again. “I’ll ask you again, signor. Who are you?” All of their heads were slightly bowed menacingly as they looked up at him through their lashes.

“You don’t check this out?” He said, and with a flourish pulled a wallet out of his coat pocket, the girls only tilted their heads in response though, so he flipped it around to check out himself only to see his ancient library card and first face staring back at him. “Library card, of course it’s with…” he muttered, and made a vague gesture of a nose in reference to Rory. “He’s… I need the spare.” He thought out loud, tucking his library card back in his coat, shaking his head and thinking Rose probably still had their other psychic paper.

He squinted at the girls again, putting the pieces together. “Pale, slightly creepy girls who don’t like sunlight… and can’t be seen in…” He turned slowly to the mirror where still their reflections were not. “Aha! Am I thinking what I think I’m thinking?” He paused as another thought occurred. “But the city… why shut down the city? Unless-”

“Leave now, signor, or we shall call for the steward.” The cut him off, and then grinned wickedly. “If you’re lucky…” Their eyebrows raised suggestively and The Doctor titled his head- it wasn’t the first time a group of aliens had stood in front of him and suggested-

“No, I’m married.” He said on impulse, flashing the wedding band on his finger, as the girls moved closer to him, but they hissed and their fangs were revealed- effectively squashing his original assumption. He cleared his throat and spun away, but turned back just as quickly. “Tell me the whole plan!” He shouted- rather hopefully, but the girls only moved in closer, fangs bared as they hissed. “One day that will work…” He muttered. “Listen, I’d love to stay here- this whole thing…” He pointed randomly at them as his excitement boiled over- he had quite missed the thrill of alien invasions the past few weeks. The girls kept coming in hissing. “I’m thrilled! Oh this is Christmas!” He got out before finally spinning on his heel and running up the stairs.

He didn’t stop running until he reached the balcony they’d been at earlier and Amy crashed right into him. “Doctor! We just saw a vampire!” She exclaimed, just as he said the same thing. Behind them Rory rolled his eyes despite the indulgent smirk that graced his features as the two friends talked over one another excitedly about vampires- eventually just getting too caught up in it for words and just held each other by the arms and shook wildly.

“Where’s Rose?” He spoke over their noises eventually.

“Oh! With our friend! Come and meet him!” He said, grabbing them each by the hand and hauling them in the direction of Guido’s home.

The sun had begun setting as they finally reached the home, Rose pulling The Doctor into a sweeping hug immediately. (A series of unfortunate events had led to both of them hating to be apart too long- the likes of which Rory and Amy didn’t know the half of, but accepted the couple’s dependency gracefully nonetheless). The Doctor explained quickly to Guido what he had discovered, as Rose had apparently decided that revealing they were telepathic would have been
too much for the witchcraft-fearing man.

Guido pulled out a map of Venice, and pointed at the school. “As you saw, there’s no clear way in. The House of Calvierri is like a fortress, but there’s a tunnel underneath it, with a ladder and shaft that leads up into the house.” He explained, running his finger along the map where the tunnel supposedly ran. He looked up to the four of them gathered around his table. “I tried to get in once myself, but I hit a trapdoor.” He finished, and Rose winced as what seemed too good to be true became so.

“So you need someone on the inside.” Amy said conspiratorially.

“No.” The Doctor and Rose said together, before she could go on. The Doctor not taking his eyes off the map and Rose looking up to give Amy a warning look.

Her head whipped around to squint at them. “You don’t even know what I was going to say!” She argued.

“That we pretend you’re an applicant for the school to get you inside,” The Doctor answered distractedly. “And tonight you come down and open the trapdoor to let us in.” He finally looked up to give her a knowing look, and across the table Rose and Rory shared a similar one.

“Oh,” Amy admonished, “so you do know what I was going to say.” But she didn’t sound enough like her idea was put completely down for Rose’s liking.

Rose folded her arms in front of her. “Yeah, it’s not happening.”

“We don’t have any other options, Mum.” She argued, hoping to get under her skin.

Rose seemed unfazed by the title though. “We said no, Amelia-listen.” She said, using her full name because hell-if Amy was going to make her be her mum she damn well would. Amy rolled her eyes like a proper teenager.

“There is another option.” Guido interrupted, looking between the two women and trying to decide if Rose was old enough to be her mum- and The Doctor her father. He pointed to the far side of the room where something like a dozen large barrels were stacked against the wall. The Doctor went over to sniff around them as Guido went on. “I work at the Arsenale; we build the warships for the navy.”

The Doctor took a step back. “Gunpowder,” he announced, and looked over to Guido who grinned. “Most people just knick stationary from where they work.” He mused, and then wandered over to Rose who was wrinkling her nose at the barrels. “Look, we have a thing about… guns and- huge quantities of explosives…”

Guido hit the table in frustration at the couple. “What do you suggest then?” He demanded. “We wait until they turn her into an animal?”

Amy looked around haughtily and folded her hands in front of her as she put her tongue to her teeth. “I’ll be there three, four hours tops…” She said, drifting off purposefully.

The Doctor smirked, and next to him Rose’s eyes widened. She crossed her arms again and glared up at him as she felt him start to slip. He shook his head finally though, “no, no, no, no, no.” He said, word stuck on repeat as Rose was saying it in his head angrily at him.

“It can’t keep happening like this- this is how they go.” Rose muttered to him, and Rory was the only other one in the room who noticed- he tilted his head curiously at her but she was too angry to
The Doctor sat down frustrated and massaged his forehead. “But I have to know.” He said to Rose who let out an indignant noise and spun away from him as he went on to Amy. “We go together. Say you’re my daughter.” He offered.

“What?” Rose argued, but he only shot an apologetic look to her in response.

Amy was undaunted as the plan of her being offered up to vampires was laid out. Sitting on the table with her legs crossed and hands folded together on her knees, she was only bothered by the roles. “Your daughter? You look about nine.”

“Brother, then.” He said quickly.

Rose made another noise of protest and stepped forward. “No, it won’t work they’ve already seen you.” She said, playing her last card to keep this plan from happening - at this point much rather just blowing up half of Venice with the gunpowder. Rory put a hand on her shoulder comfortingly - he was beginning to see that Rose saw him and Amy somewhat like her kids, and she couldn’t lose another one of those.

“No, you’re right.” Amy said, standing up and walking towards Rory. “You go. Say you’re my fiance.” She suggested, completely missing Rose’s dismay - she shoved her face into her hands and went to sit down next to her husband despite how cross she was with him.

Rory meanwhile had an internal debate between listening to Rose and doing whatever Amy told him to. His eyes flitted back and forth between the two women and he caught The Doctor’s knowing and completely understanding look towards him in the middle of them. How twisted up had his life become that he was now relating to The Doctor?

He was saved from having to pick a side however as finally Rose looked up. “Fine. Yeah. Whatever. I trust you.” She said, not sounding like she believed a word of it - but rather saying it to help Rory out. The Doctor put his arm around her shoulders, and despite still being upset with him she leaned into him - needing some form of comfort.

Night had fully fallen once Amy and Rory entered the school. The candlelight flickered around them as they stood in front of Signora Calvierri on her throne and her son where he leaned casually against it.

Rory rambled - hardly a theatre major - as he gripped the Italian hat for dear life and sweat profusely through Guido’s nephew’s clothes. “So, basically, her parents… died from the plague… before they could pay her dowry… and I’m a… gondolier… driver… so money’s a bit tight… so… having my- fiance- go to your school for… special people… would be brilliant.” He nodded as Signora Rosanna blinked slowly at him. “Cheers.” He added awkwardly, and swallowed through the resulting silence.

Her son stepped forward slowly. “Have we met?” He asked, and Rory froze.

“I’ve just got one of those faces.” He said, pointing at his face for awkward emphasis. How did The Doctor improvise all the time so seamlessly?

“I wasn’t talking to you.” The man said, making a circle around them as he stared only at Amy.

“Oh- well- she- she does too!” He laughed brokenly, suddenly wishing they’d said she was his
Rosanna’s head snapped around to look at her servants. “Carlo, explain yourself! Why have you brought me these imbeciles?” She demanded, with a scorching look towards Rory.

“Signora they have references from His Majesty the King of Sweden.” He explained.

She looked back over to them with new interest. “What? Let me see.” She said, holding her hand out, and Rory walked forward stiffly as her son continued to sniff around Amy. She smirked as she held the psychic paper up. “Well now I see what got my Steward so excited.” She said, a kinder smile than before painting her face. “What say you, Francesco, do you like her?” She asked her son, handing the paper back to Rory.

“Oh I do, Mother, I do.” He answered, voice low as he studied Amy who shook on the spot. Rory had to hold himself back from punching the man away.

“Then we’d be delighted to accept her.” Rosanna said, like she’d just given Rory the best news in his life rather than the worst. “Say goodbye to your fiance.” She said with so much finality it took everything Rory had left not to grab Amy and run- the only thing stopping him from doing just that in the end being the steward pushing him out the door.

Amy followed the torch-bearing steward through the intricately decorated candlelit corridors towards the bedchambers. He was seemingly unbothered by all the young girls leaning out windows and walking past them baring their fangs and hissing menacingly, but Amy turned around slowly to count them all, swallowing fearfully when she caught one’s eye and hurrying along the stairs to catch up with Carlo.

In the dormitory, a series of twin-sized bed lined the circular wall, and a number of girls sat around, looking for all the world like bored and blood-thirsty nobles. “There are clothes on the bed.” Carlo said, nodding towards a white gown like the ones the rest of the girls wore. “Get changed and wait here.” He ordered her and then motioned for the girls now gathering around her to follow him out the door- leaving only Amy and one other fear-stricken girl alone.

“Hey- Hello.” Amy said, clearing her throat a bit and taking a deep breath. “I’m Amy. What’s your name?” She asked, leaning around a bit to get a better look at the girl who stared off into the distance, thinking this must be Guido’s daughter.

“I-Isabella.” She answered distractedly without turning to look at her.

Amy looked behind her to check that the steward and the other girls have gone before joining Isabella on the bed. “Soon, we’re going to get you out of here, but I need you to tell me what’s going on.” She whispered frantically, finally getting the other girl to turn to her. “What is this place? What are they doing?”

Isabella swallowed fearfully, closing her eyes. “They um… They come at night… They gather around my bed and they- they take me to a room- with this green light and a chair with- with straps-” She opened her eyes to look around at Amy so that she could see the full extend of the fear in her. “-as if for a surgeon.”

“What happens in there?” Amy asks, eyes searching hers.

Isabella shakes her head, “I wake up here.” She said, and turns away again, “and the sunlight burns my skin like candle wax…”
Amy swallowed fearfully.

Less than an hour later she carried a lantern down the damp stone stairs towards the direction of the trapdoor, stepping quietly and holding the white dress up carefully around her bare feet so as not to trip and reveal herself.

Amy found the courtyard in which the trapdoor resided in the middle- like a gated off wishing well. Looking around, and stepping sideways a bit to check her surroundings, she ran the last few steps. She set the candle down on the side and looked down the grating, hoping to see her friends waiting for her but having no such luck. Sighing, she pulled on the rusted iron lock, and it clicked open after a moment of struggle. With another huff for good measure she spun on her heel-running right into the steward.

He grabbed her forcefully by the shoulder and started hauling her down the stairs without preamble. Amy struggled as she tripped down the stairs in his wake and he grunted in annoyance. “Control yourself child.” He demanded, not slowing down as he pushed her in front of him and into another room.

“Get your hands off me!” Amy yelled, only for him to grab both her arms and hold her to his chest.

“Psychic Paper!” Another voice exclaimed, a green light coming on over head to reveal the face of Signora Rosanna Calvierri. “Did you really think that would work on me?” She asked mockingly, but Amy only struggled further in response, looking around wildly. “Where are you from?” Rosanna demanded, circling the terrified girl. “Did you fall through the chasm?”

Her son stepped forward boredly. “Mother, this is pointless. Let’s just start the process.” He complained.

“Hold your tongue Francesco!” She yelled angrily. “I need to know what this girl is doing in a world of savages with a psychic paper. Who are you with?” She demanded of Amy again, as behind her two girls brought forward the chair with straps that Isabella had described earlier. “I scarcely believe your idiot fiance sent you.” Amy struggled against Carlo, and Francesco hooked a bag of some sort of fluid above the chair.

“Okay, I’ll tell you,” Amy huffed, attempting to hide the panic in her voice. “I’m from Ofsted.” She wasn’t exactly sure why she decided to deem herself a government official for an agency that wouldn’t be established for another 412 years, but it was worth a shot- earned a laugh from Rosanna anyhow.

“Put her in the chair!” She ordered Carlo, and Amy screamed and protested as the man and a few of the girls shoved her into the chair and strapped her down. “Oh, make sport of me will you? Tease me as if I were your dog?” Rosanna sneered, walking away slowly as her son pulled Amy’s hair from her neck. “Well this dog has a bite girl!” She finished, turning on the spot to reveal her own fangs matching the many sets surrounding them.

Amy screamed as the woman came down upon her neck.

When they finally made it to the end of the tunnel and looked up to see the trapdoor had been unlocked, Rose sighed in relief- at least that’s one good thing. She spun around, looking for a ladder, but finding nothing put slick stone, and looked to her husband. “Give me a boost, Doctor.”
She said, and he bent down and clasped his hands together for her dutifully. Rose put her foot up and he pushed while she jumped- like a well oiled machine. She got the grating aside and hauled herself up without much more help, and began walking about the courtyard stage-whispering for Amy before The Doctor could ask her for her assistance. She turned around to see him struggling up the edge- apparently on Rory’s shoulders. He leant over, legs in the air and only his hips for leverage on the stone and hauled Rory up by the shirt- a series of grunts surrounding their efforts.

Rose crossed her arms once they were both standing. “She’s not here.” She said, somewhat accusingly, to The Doctor.

“Well where is she?” He asked, spinning around like maybe Rose had missed her- causing his wife to huff in annoyance. He smirked sheepishly at her once he realized and Rory looked down to his feet- getting the distinct feeling that usually came when mummy and daddy were fighting.

“I can’t see a thing out here.” Rory said, hoping to deflect attention from The Doctor’s screw up, and pulled out the small torch he’d used in the catacombs on Alfava Metraxis.

The Doctor however pulled out a two foot long purple-glowing light from his bigger-on-the-inside coat pocket. “Ultraviolet. Portable sunlight.” He said, flipping it in his hands, and killing two birds with one stone by illuminating their surroundings and providing them with a defense against the vampires.

Rory’s eyes flicked in between their two torches- his dwarfed by comparison. “Yours is bigger than mine.” He muttered, mostly by accident.

“Oh let’s not go there.” The Doctor grinned, teasing. But the remark that usually would have earned him a giggle from his wife only served to make her roll her eyes and cross her arms before turning away to better inspect where they’d ended up.

“Yeah you’re in deep, mate.” Rory said, giving the Time Lord a sympathetic look before hopping off the door’s ledge and going to join Rose. She opened a nearby chest, and Rory jumped back immediately with a frightened noise.

Rose knelt down though, holding her arm out behind her for the light, and The Doctor joined her, handing her the portable sunlight- in the chest two dried-out corpses lay- fangs still distinguishable. “What happened to them?” Rory whispered from behind them.

Rose’s hand hovered at the edge of one of the bodies. “They’ve had all the moisture taken out of them.” She muttered distractedly.

“That’s what vampires do, right? They… drink your blood and replace it with their own…” Rory asked, still not daring to step closer to the chest.

“Yeah, except these people haven’t just had their blood taken, but all the water in their entire bodies.” Rose answered, running the light down the person to scan just the twenty-five percent of them that was remaining.

Dawning realization crossed Rory’s features then. “They aren’t like the girls in the school, though. They didn’t survive the process.” He said, paling.

Rose stiffened and stood up, shoving the torch forcefully into the Doctor’s chest and walking around them, arms crossed. “We keep losing everyone!” Rose yelled, too loud. Everything in her fighting against the instinct to blame him.

He stared after her, mouth half-open in an attempt at a response, but he couldn’t even begin to form
the first words to an apology before suddenly, all around them the girls in white stepped from each of the stone archways surrounding the courtyard. “Who are you?” They said together.

The Doctor ran to Rose and Rory stepped behind them on impulse as The Doctor held the portable sunlight torch to the girls as they hissed. “We should run… run!” He ordered, and they took off sprinting, the fanged females following.

“This is how it works,” Rosanna began, and Amy’s vision blinked in and out as her head lolled. “First, we drink you till you’re dry. Then, we fill you with our blood…” She leant over Amy menacingly. “It rages through you like a fire, changing you. Until one morning you awake, and your humanity is a dream, now faded.” She spoke quietly, as though she was informing Amy of a childhood story rather than a curse.

Francesco walked around the chair and ran her finger along her jaw. “Or you die,” he said, not a hint of remorse coloring the words. He let out a small laugh, “that can happen.”

Amy blinked and tried to get the room into focus once more. “And if I survive?” She bit out.

Rosanna smiled, and answered her like it was a gift. “Then there are 10,000 husbands waiting for you in the water.” She said, looking up somewhat dreamily at the thought.

Amy stared at her. “Yeah, sorry.” She said, “I’m taken.” And with that she shifted her body weight, leaning back to kick Rosanna in the hip. Francesco wrapped an arm around her neck, fangs visible once more as a static sound filled the room from where Amy had struck the woman. Rosanna pulled her dress back to reveal a cloaking device- a now malfunctioning cloaking device. Momentarily, Amy could see the woman for what she really was: an alien, and more alien than she’d seen on any of the planets Rose and The Doctor had taken her too- even more so than Prisoner Zero. Her head, fanged and fish-like with glowing yellow eyes glared down at her, while her spindling fingers and multiple legs- like bugs- reached down to fix the machine.

As quick as she’d gone, Rosanna was back, and behind them glass shattered and that oh-so-familiar noise The Doctor made whenever he was particularly clumsy reached Amy’s ears. As scared as she was- strapped to a chair, bite neck on the neck currently being held by a creepy vampire alien and his psychopath mother- she couldn’t be more relieved to hear The Doctor’s arrival.

Rosanna, Francesco, and Carlo all ran from the room to meet the new arrivals, and Amy struggled against her bindings, screaming when a girl came down upon her- but it was only Isabella, come to help. “She bit me.” Amy told her, but Isabella only looked at her fearfully, getting the last strap and pulling Amy to her feet as they ran.

After only a few turns she saw him at the end of the corridor, “Rory!” She yelled, and beside him Rose appeared as well, looking as relieved to see her as Amy had felt earlier when she heard The Doctor.

“Quickly, through here!” Isabella said, running up and grabbing Rory by the sleeve to drag him into an adjacent door, the rest of them following suit, filing one after the other into the dark stairwell, and The Doctor slamming the door behind them.

“They’re not vampires!” Amy said over her shoulder as they descended the stairs.

“What?” He asked, quickly, sonicking the door.
“I saw them. I saw her. They’re not vampires. They’re aliens!” She exclaimed, and then laughed merrily as they turned a corner, The Doctor joining her.

“Classic!” He chuckled, “That’s good news!” He turned to find Rory staring at him incredulously, the girls already having gone ahead.

“What is wrong with you people?” He muttered (good-naturedly), only loud enough for The Doctor to hear, who turned around to smirk knowingly.

“You love it.” He said cheekily.

“Yeah, well…” Rory tilted his head and the Doctor let out another laugh as they made their way through another ancient looking corridor, vampire-aliens on their heels. He pushed Rory in front of him and held the torch up to their faces, earning hisses and steps back for his efforts.

Finally, they reached the door leading into the morning light, and Rose, who somehow ended up leading their group, stopped to push them all out ahead of her, The Doctor included. Isabella ran out and immediately took a step back in, squinting at the light as it obviously hurt her, but Rose wouldn’t have it. “Oh no you don’t” She said, putting her arm around the girl, forcing her to duck down and slamming the door behind them and in the faces of the hissing girls.

“Doctor, jacket, sonic, now.” She demanded, one arm shielding Isabella from the sun while her other kept a firm hold on the rattling door. He immediately complied- handing her the tweed jacket that she draped over Isabella’s head, and sonicking the door locked himself as the girls descended the steps to the waiting father and get-away-gondolier below.

Rose watched to make sure they all got on the boat safely, and then took a step back. “We’ll meet you back at the house.” She said, and immediately held up her hand at Amy’s and Rory’s protests. “We need to talk to Signora Rosanna. They should be at home, we need to know why they aren’t.” She said shortly, and turned on her heel, pointedly not grabbing The Doctor’s hand- just because Amy was safe this time didn’t mean the discussion was over. He sighed and gave their companions a sorrowful look before following her.

“Rose…” He started as soon as they turned a corner, and Rose turned around, taking him by surprise. “I’m sorry.” He said, once he’d composed himself.

Rose let out a long breath in response, and blinked back a few tears- he fought every instinct in him not to pull her into his arms at that. “It’s not… it’s not your fault.” She said eventually. “I’m just so scared, Doctor. All the time. We’ve lost so much already… I don’t think I can do it again.”

And he knew what she meant. Losing her Mum and Dad at Torchwood was hard, harder than it is for everyone else. She never got to see them again- but at the same time she was young and in love and had a whole new life ahead of her and knew they would be happy and safe together in the other world. So it was okay. Then Martha- she’d just left, but it was okay too because it was like having a close friend that moved away. They still saw her often, just not everyday. With Donna it was harder, she was more like family, but still more like a sister than a child, and she called and they visited, so that was okay too. But even still, they needed a break. They couldn’t stand the idea of having more people walk out…

And then Alina happened. An accident sure, but a happy one- until it wasn’t. Now, every little loss felt like another rock on top of the massive boulder already sitting on their chests- even the clerics on Alfava Metraxis that they’d barely known felt personal. Now, the idea of losing Amy and Rory,
these amazing people they already see as family and sometimes like their own kids (neither one of them having fantastic childhoods under their belt). Losing them so soon after Alina would destroy them.

“I know.” He said eventually, and so much regret and sadness and fear soaked the words that Rose had to step forward into his arms. She knew what he was thinking. That he’d done this to her. That he’d broken her and made her miserable.

It couldn’t be farther from the truth. “I love you so much.” She said eventually, shuddering a bit and he hugged her tighter so she spoke into his chest. “If I had it all to do over again I wouldn’t change a thing- unless I could save Alina. I chose this and I chose you and not a single bit of me regrets that or anything that has come with it.” She looked up to see tears in his sea-green eyes and she wiped them away despite her own. “We just have to be more careful.” She whispered, begging, and he nodded in response- pulling her in for a rather wet kiss that ended on a laugh. “Let’s go talk to the fish lady now.” She said, smiling and wiping the stray tears away as she pulled back.

He nodded again and stepped forward, holding his hand out for her which she took gratefully.

They found the throne room easily after that, and Rose happily skipped over to the ornate chair and plopped herself down. The Doctor grinned down at her cheeky smile and came to lean against the throne casually- just in time for Signora Rosanna to come around the corner, pulling her gloves on distractedly, but stopping short when she spotted the couple.

“Long way from Saturnyne, aren’t you? Sister of the Water.” Rose said, eyes glinting as she named the species, and The Doctor beamed down at her- he hadn’t even told her that.

She stood regally in front of them, with her body at an angle, as she appraised them. “No let me guess,” she said, holding her hand up. “The owners of the psychic paper.” Rose shrugged her shoulders and leaned back, while the Doctor held his hands up in a similar gesture, leaning forward. Rosanna looked around, smiling. “Then I take it you’re refugees, like me?”

Rose bit her lip, considering their options, and The Doctor walked forward. “We’ll make you a deal. An answer for an answer.” He offered, and Rose sat back in the chair, while Rosanna smirked and nodded- both of them allowing him to go on. “You’re using a perception filter,” he said. “It doesn’t change your features, but manipulates the brainwaves of the person looking at you. But seeing one of you for the first time in say… a mirror, the brain doesn’t know what to fill the gap with, so leaves it blank.” He let out a small laugh as he put it all together. “Hence no reflection.”

She’d nodded minutely along as she paced while he talked- inadvertently confirming what he said. “Your question?” She asked.

“Why can we see your big teeth?” He smiled, coming up to his toes in amusement of his own mocking.

Rosanna laughed, surprised, but answered quickly. “Self preservation overrides the mirage. The subconscious perceives the threat and tries to alert the conscious brain.”

“Why are you here?” Rose asked casually, still leant back, as soon as Signora took a breath.

“My turn!” She interrupted, smirking, and Rose rolled her eyes but allowed her to go on. “Where are you from?” She asked, tilting her head.

“Gallifrey.” The Doctor answered before Rose could- he couldn’t remember if the Brothers and
Sisters of the Water held prejudices against the human race as many other species did (including Time Lords), and decided it best not to risk it.

Her eyes widened. “You should be in a museum.” She said, eyes flicking between the two of them as she assumed he’d meant them both. “Or a mausoleum.” She added, and Rose felt that knife almost as sharply as The Doctor did- but he didn’t show it.

“Why are you here?” He asked again, repeating his wife’s question.

The smile she’d had throughout the conversation faded slightly and she swallowed. “We ran from the silence… Why are you here?”

“Amy called me dull.” He answered quickly, as alarm bells went off in his and Rose’s head at the word- Silence- it’s like it was following them. “The silence?” He asked out loud, inclining his head.

Her voice was broken as she spoke. “There were cracks,” she said. “Some were tiny…” She drifted off and looked down as she remembered. “Some were as big as they sky… Through some we saw worlds and people… and through others we saw silence, and the end of all things.” She looked up finally. “We fled to an ocean like ours, and the crack snapped shut behind us. Saturnyne was lost.”

He tilted his head, refusing to let his empathy distract him. “So Earth will become Saturnyne Mark II?”

Her eyes flicked to his quickly. “And you can help me. We can build a new society here, as others have.” She grinned brightly again. “What do you say?” She asked hopefully.

The Doctor made a noncommittal noise and Rose could sense the impending rejection. She stood up, her own empathy getting to her, and stepped forward before he could speak. “We have to think about it.” Rose said, and in her mind The Doctor made the telepathic equivalent of a disbelieving scoff that she ignored. “A few hours, please.” She said to Rosanna, who squinted down at her.

“And how do I know you won’t just leave and betray me now?” She asked, clearly a war general.

Rose looked back to her meaningfully as her husband stood behind her. “Because we know what it feels like to lose a child.” She said, addressing the familiar sorrow she’d seen in Rosanna when she spoke of losing Saturnyne, and effectively getting The Doctor to stand down in her mind as he understood where she was coming from.

Finally, Rosanna nodded.

Back in Guido’s home The Doctor attended to the bite on Amy’s neck quickly before moving on to Isabella who was laid on the bed underneath the window- a series of canvases blocking out the sun. “What of me, Doctor?” She asked, looking between him and Rose.

He scanned her with the sonic and read the readings, breathing a sigh of relief as they came up. “There’s an antidote in our… home- should reverse the effects and get you back to full human-health in no time.” He answered, putting his hand on the top of her head comfortingly while behind him Guido blessed them.

Rose grimaced as she realized they would still need to go all the way back to the TARDIS to get and make the medicine, but just as soon as the thought crossed her mind something burned in her jeans pocket, and she pulled it out to find a syringe of orange-ish fluid. “Actually, I have it right here- apparently.” She said, looking to The Doctor who smirked at their eavesdropping (but
“Hold out your arm,” he said to Isabella. “This won’t hurt a bit.”

She hesitated though. “Will it burn? Like with the Calvierri?” She asked, unable to mask the fear behind her eyes.

Rose reached forward and grabbed her hand. “Not at all. They were giving you a disease… we’re curing it.” She said, using the simplest terms she could think of to explain trans-mutant, cross species hybridization and its reversal process.

Isabella nodded, and squeezed Rose’s hand tighter as she pulled the sleeve of her dress up. She winced as the needle went in, but gained comfort through Rose, and eventually sighed as it felt as though a cold bucket of water was finally dousing the fire that had been coursing through her for so long. She sat up carefully, with Rose’s help, and pulled the other woman to her as she began to return to normal. Rose nodded to The Doctor, and he went to pace the end of the table where the rest had taken seats.

“Rose wants to help Rosanna.” He said, not to anyone but himself, but all heads turned to her incredulously, and she had to defend herself anyway.

“I didn’t say that. I said I want to think about helping her.”

“She’s insane!” Amy protested, but to everyone’s surprise it was Isabella who shook her head.

“No, she’s in pain.” She said, looking at the floor. “She’s scared. I could see it, in her eyes. I don’t think she properly knows she’s hurting anyone. She thinks she’s doing the right thing.”

“They hurt you!” Guido protested angrily, but The Doctor shushed him before he could go on or anyone could respond.

“We need to know her entire plan. She wouldn’t give it to us unless we first agreed to help. I need to think. Come on brain, think, think, think!” He exclaimed, not unlike winnie-the-pooh, until finally sitting down at the head of the table frustrated.

Amy spoke around the candy he’d placed in her mouth earlier after healing the bite. “If they’re fish people it explains why they hate the sun.” She said, words muddled.

He put his hand over her mouth. “Stop talking. Brain thinking. Hush.” He said quickly, and Rose rolled her eyes at his rudeness but decided not to correct him because it was Amy.

“It’s the school thing that I don’t understand.” Rory said.

Rose knew before he did it that The Doctor was going to put his other hand over Rory’s mouth as well. “Stop talking. Brain thinking. Hush.” He repeated.

Guido spoke then, and it was Isabella’s turn to roll her eyes. “I say we take the fight to them—” he started.

“Ah, ah, ah.” The Doctor interrupted with a significant look.

“What?”

“Ah!” He looked to Rory and nodded towards Guido pointedly. Rory put his hand over Guido’s mouth obediently, sending Rose a look that she only shrugged at. The Doctor went on talking
through the problem, hands still on his companion’s mouths. “Her planet dies, so they flee through a crack in space and time, and she closes off the city, and one-by-one starts changing the people into creatures like her- to start a new gene pool. Got it.” He concluded, closing his eyes as the pieces fell together via his tried-and-true method in this body of talking until the answer spilled out. “Then what? They come from the sea- they can’t survive forever on land, so what’s she going to do?” He paused longer than before and Rose interrupted as she realized. “She’s going to sink Venice!” She gasped.

The Doctor’s eyes widened and he pulled his hands back to point at her. “She’s going to sink Venice!” Guido looked at him incredulously. “She’s going to sink Venice?” He asked.

“And repopulate it with the girls she’s transformed.” He answered, realizing it himself as he did.

Rory tilted his head and leaned forward. “But you can’t repopulate somewhere with just girls…” He said, and technically he was wrong- Rose and The Doctor had met more than a few non-binary races, but in this case he wasn’t so they didn’t point that out. “You need… blokes.” He finished awkwardly.

“She’s got blokes!” Amy said suddenly, closing her eyes with dawning comprehension.

The Doctor’s head snapped up. “Where?”

“In the canal.” Amy answered. “She said to me ‘there are 10,000 husbands waiting in the water.’” And behind her Isabella nodded.

“Only the male offspring survived the journey here!” He said, looking around as it all made sense. “She’s got 10,000 children swimming around in the canals, waiting for Mum to make them some compatible girlfriends.” He stopped and furrowed his brow. “Urgh…” He said as he thought that through. “I mean I’ve been around a bit, but, really, that’s- that’s… ew.” Loud rumbling cut off his disgust. “The people upstairs are very noisy.” He said to Guido.

“There are no people upstairs.” Guido answered ominously.

“I knew you were going to say that! Did anyone else no he was going to say that?” The Doctor, as always, stayed the epitome of unfazed in the face of danger.

“Is it the vampires?” Rory whispered, looking up to the ceiling with the rest of them.

“Like I said, not vampires.” The Doctor answered, pulling the portable sunlight from his pocket and flicking it on. “Fish from space.”

“Francesco must have sent them when he heard. Doesn’t have as much faith in us as Mummy then.” Rose muttered, and right on cue and explosion ripped through the door and window- sending Rose and Isabella to the floor as everyone else ducked and The Doctor stood up, waving the light in the appearing girls faces.

At the remaining window four more girls appeared, fangs bared and hissing. Guido made the sign of the cross in prayer. “Aren’t we on the second floor?” Rory asked, and then the girls punched through that glass as well. The Doctor stepped forward to shine the light at them and they retreated back as with his spare hand he pulled the sonic out- showing it at them to reveal their true fishy forms.
“What’s happened to them?” Guido asked.

“There’s nothing left of them. They’ve been fully converted.” He answered quickly, realizing this meant he couldn’t save them. Their options were running thin. Instead of voicing this out loud though he joked. “Blimey fish from space have never been so… buxom.” Behind him Rose scoffed and he sent her a sort of apologetic shrug.

“They’re her daughters…” Rose muttered- because it was true. They weren’t human anymore-they were hers. And with that statement she felt timelines shift as she pushed Guido in front of her towards the door. “Come on! Move! Out!” She ordered.

They ran through the streets of Venice, the vampire-fish-aliens close to their heels, and Rose yelled to her husband over their heads. “We need to get to Rosanna! We won’t let her sink Venice, but we can help! More than 10,000 people and an entire race don’t need to die just because Venice can’t either!”

“And what do you suggest, Rose?” He asked sarcastically, waving the lamp behind him as another girl attempted to grab for him.

“Aiguatoltema!” Rose yelled back, not missing a beat as she jumped over a stray chicken. It was an uninhabited planet they’d stumbled upon once upon a time. It’s seas were similar to Earth’s but covered more that 99 percent of the entire planet, the only land being the occasional small island-incredibly similar to the terrain of Saturnyne- far more so than either Earth or Venice.

“Rose Tyler you are brilliant!” He yelled, jumping a goat. “Someone follow me!” He ordered, as he took a sharp left towards the direction of the TARDIS right as they were coming upon the school. Isabella went, not wanting to step foot in the school again, and Guido followed, not wanting to lose Isabella again. Amy and Rory stuck with Rose as the guards flung the gates open for her upon orders from Rosanna, and the two women ran right into each other.

“Call off the girls!” Rose said frantically, and Rosanna looked up to see her girls sprinting towards them, surprise colored her features, and she held her hands up immediately bringing them to a halt.

“What is going on?” She asked, looking around.

Amy wheezed and held a stitch in her side. She’d gotten much better at running traveling with Rose and The Doctor, but apparently not quite well enough yet to run through the majority of Venice. “Your son… didn’t trust us.” She got out, and Rosanna nodded understandingly.

“He’s always been a bit protective of me.” She smirked, and Rose decided she really did not want to further question the family dynamics of this species. They were all called Brothers and Sisters after all- even the married ones- yeah no, ew.

“We’ll help.” Rose said. “But not here.” Rosanna opened her mouth to argue, but Rose went on. “There’s a planet, just on the outskirts of Messier 87, it’s nearly exactly like Saturnyne and you can have it all to yourselves. There’s no one else there. We can take you.”

“But that’ll take millennia!” Rosanna protested.

Rose shook her head. “Our ship travels through wormholes,” she simplified. “We can get you all there in a second.”

Rosanna looked behind Rose to the girls now gathered obediently on the courtyard, waiting for
their mother to give them orders. “The human girls as well?” She asked, raising her eyebrow disbelievingly- Francesco had spoke earlier on the legends of The Doctor and Rose Tyler while they argued over her decision to let them go- from what he said this seemed out of character.

Rose sighed. “They aren’t human anymore. They’ll be safer with you.” She explained, and Rosanna nodded understandingly.

Behind them the TARDIS materialized. “Well at least he wasn’t twelve years late this time.” Amy muttered, and Rory snorted.

Rosanna raised her eyebrow however. “You think you can fit all of us in that box?” She asked, and Rose grinned.

They landed on Aiguatoltema a few hours later, and leaned against the side of the TARDIS as they waited patiently for 10,000 and however many fish-aliens to leave the ship. Finally, as the last one left with a bow to them, Amy sighed.

“Nice one! Not dull at all!” She said happily, walking around to open the TARDIS door. “Look at this, Rose! Got our spaceship! Got our boys! Our work here is done.” With a dramatic flounce, and pulling Rose after her, they disappeared into the box, Rose’s heart full at Amy calling the ship hers.

“Pfft. Uh...” Rory scoffed, attempting to seem cool but, much like The Doctor, his innate personality getting the better of him. “We are not their boys.” He protested somewhat dorkishly.

The Doctor smirked and clapped him on the shoulder. “Yeah, we are.” He said easily.

Rory nodded, knowing it was true even as he argued it. “Yeah, we are.” He said, and they followed the girls dutifully into the TARDIS for the traditional post-world-saving tea.

Chapter End Notes

We’re short staffed at work recently so I've been working literally everyday since Sunday- on top of keeping up with classes. Sorry this took me longer than normal! I'm really excited for the next chapter though and I hope you lot are too! 💖 I’d be really interested to know if any of you have any theories for the direction of this story!

-comments keep writers writing 💖

(Also still looking for a beta reader/editor if you are one or know any good ones please let me know!)
To Dwell on Dreams

Chapter Summary

Amy's Choice

...but not really. I struggled a lot writing this chapter- which is part of the reason it's so late. I think this is the first like proper rewrite of this series that doesn't just change a character's role but rather than whole point to the plot. I thought about just not having this episode, as I believe that Rose's continued existence in The Doctor's life would have prevented all the self-loathing dark thoughts that led to the Dream Lord's existence. And it only existed in the series as a way to make Amy "choose"/realize who she loved- The Doctor or Rory, and that isn't even an issue in this rewrite. However, I really wanted certain other things to be discussed and I found that a lot of the plot from this episode could be salvaged if approached differently.

tl;dr: if you're familiar with the original script- forget about it. most of it doesn't apply.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rose and The Doctor laid in bed facing each other after a long day of visiting old friends- they’d had a nice chat with the Brigadier all afternoon, and they now found themselves exhausted from all the reminiscing (“a pompous, self-absorbed, idiot I believe you called me, Doctor” “Oh let’s not bring that up again, Brigadier” “So you’ve always been rude then, haven’t you”). Rose ran her thumb along his cheekbone absentmindedly. “What are you thinking?” She asked eventually, recognizing familiar thoughts flitting through his head, but too tired to figure it out herself.

“That you’re beautiful and brilliant and I’m not sure what I did to deserve you.” He smirked, reaching out to pull her closer to him.

Rose sighed contentedly. “Saving the universe more than a few times probably put you on someone’s good list,” she teased.

He laughed, somewhat breathlessly, and planted a kiss to her forehead. “Go to sleep now, love.”

He whispered, and Rose nodded tiredly, pressing her ear against his chest to listen to the soothing rhythm of his twin heartbeats, her last thought before finally drifting off being we should go visit Amy and Rory tomorrow.

---

Amy hummed a short tune to herself as she stirred the cupcake icing she was honestly eating more of than decorating with, but cut herself off as it felt as though the baby was squeezing her insides out. She slammed the bowl down, panting, and screamed for Rory.

Rory meanwhile, was leisurely riding his bike up the dirt path to their little farmhouse, scattering some geese, and smiling a bit to himself when he heard “RORY! IT'S STARTING!” screeched from inside their home. He jumped off the bike immediately, pausing for only a second before throwing it on the ground with a pitiful ‘ding’ from the bell, and running through the door- getting
hit in the face by one of the low hanging flowers on his way.

“Okay, okay-” he panicked, running into the kitchen and kneeling down to where Amy was sitting casually in one of the chairs with the cupcake icing.

“False alarm.” She said boredly, cutting him off, and making a small noise of contentment as she ate more of the confectionary.

“What?” Rory asked incredulously.

“Well I don’t know what it feels like. I’ve never had a baby before.” She said, like it was news to him, and held the wooden spoon out for him to get some icing himself.

Before Rory could make a sarcastic comment in return though an odd noise surrounded them, like a sort of metallic thrumming, and he groaned, standing up. “No…” Amy said, dropping the spoon back into the bowl and getting up (rather precariously due to the baby).

“I know,” Rory said, shoving a cupcake into his mouth, “leaf blowers. Use a rake!” He yelled out to supposedly their neighbor who was more than two acres away.

Amy put the bowl on the counter. “No! It’s…” She drifted off as at the window the end of her sentence was finished for her when the TARDIS materialised. “I knew… I just knew…” She whispered happily, and behind her Rory dropped his cupcake to run out the door, Amy following after him more slowly.

The Doctor stepped out of the TARDIS, dragging Rose behind him, and looking about curiously-causing him to trip over what appeared to be a garden stone, and earning a small giggle from Rose. He looked up, “Rory!” He exclaimed, as he spotted the man, and then looked down to the garden they’d landed in. “I’ve crushed your flowers!” He said, pointing.

“Oh, Amy will kill you.” Rory answered seriously, but Rose saw the mischievous glint in his eye.

“Where is she?” The Doctor asked, ignoring the warning.

Rory pointed behind him to the farmhouse with his thumb. “She’ll be a bit longer.” He answered, and Rose squinted as she gathered there was a reason for that that they hadn’t told them yet.

What ‘that’ was though, was answered immediately as Amy came waddling out her front door-pregnant as ever. “Ohh- wahey!” The Doctor exclaimed happily, pointing at her, and her making a similar noise. “You swallowed a planet!” He yelled, eyes wide as he took her in.

“I’m pregnant!” Amy laughed, finally reaching them.

“You’re huge!” The Doctor exclaimed, and Rose had to refrain from hitting herself.

“Yeah, I’m pregnant.” She said again, looking up to Rose.

He spoke over her though. “Look at you, when worlds collide!”

“Doctor, I’m pregnant.” She said more seriously, still looking for a proper reaction, but he appeared to ignore her once again.

“Oh look at you both five years later and you haven’t changed a bit!” He said happily, hugging them both. “Apart from age… and size.” He added, earning a ‘Rude’ from Rose as she was hugging Rory, and he looked down to Amy’s stomach again.
“Oh it’s good to see you two again.” Amy said, happily, holding her stomach somewhat absentmindedly.

He was silent for a moment and Rose decided not to fill it as she heard his thoughts in her mind and found it hilarious. “Are you pregnant?” He asked eventually.

They all just shook their heads and laughed at him, following Amy into the house, and Rose tugged on Rory’s ponytail- “What the hell is this, then?” She asked, teasingly with a tongue-touched smile, but he only shook his head in response- knowing full well he was about to get an earful from The Doctor as soon as he noticed.

Less than an hour later they we walking through the old streets of Leadworth, Rose and The Doctor hand-in-hand with Amy and Rory either side of them. “Ah, Leadworth…” The Doctor said, breathing in the country air, and looking around to the overcast skies and grey-toned buildings. “Vibrant as ever.”

“It’s Upper Leadworth, actually.” Rory said, “We’ve gone slightly up market.” In Rose’s mind The Doctor made a snoring sound that she had to hold back her snort from. It’s always incredible to them when their companions leave life on the TARDIS for anything- but especially for something as boring as normal life.

“Where is everybody?” Rose asked, looking around the abandoned streets and empty fields.

“This is busy.” Amy said, breathing hard from trying to keep up with their fast pace, so Rose tugged on The Doctor’s hand to slow them down, but he stopped altogether for a step to look at her incredulously. “Okay, it’s quiet.” She admitted, “but it’s really restful... and healthy- loads of people around here live well into their 90s.” And she sounded so much like someone trying to defend a life they’d fallen into but didn’t choose that Rose’s heart broke a little- that was nearly her before she met The Doctor. Why did they choose to leave again?

“Well don’t let that get you down.” The Doctor said, because that’s how he truly felt about it. “It’s not getting me down.” Amy said, unconvincing to anyone her knew her, but perfectly fine for anyone who didn’t, and she guided them to a nearby park bench, The Doctor taking the seat next to her, Rose next to him, and Rory next to her.

“Well, we wanted to see how you were. You know us, we don’t just abandon people after they leave the TARDIS.” He said, and it was mostly true- though they don’t visit Amy and Rory as much anymore since their life was so… “These Time Lords are for life- you can’t get rid of us so easily.”

“Hmm you came here by mistake didn’t yah?” Amy said, because she knew her friends, and they didn’t often (or ever) volunteer to come to a place like Leadworth without her or Rory calling.

Rose sent her an apologetic look and that was all the answer she needed, but The Doctor said it outloud anyway. “Yeah, bit of a mistake, but look- what a result.” He said, motioning around to their dim surroundings unconvincingly. He reached across Amy to tap the bench armrest. “Look at this… bench- what a nice bench.” He wrung his hands together in his lap as he often did when he was uncomfortable and didn’t know what to say. “What will they think of next?” He added lamely.

They sat in the impending silence for a bit after that. The Doctor and Rose shared a sort of miserable and helpless look before he looked between Amy and Rory. Rose didn’t have time to
stop him before the next words came out of his mouth. “So… what you do to stave off the, you know…”

“-boredom?” Amy supplied, and the same time the Doctor finished with “…self-harm?”

Rose hit him, but that wasn’t half as bad as the sad look Amy gave him in response. He looked over to Rory awkwardly to save him- offended he could handle over sad any day.

“We relax…” Rory said, and then looked around, missing the incredulous look The Doctor gave, and breathed deeply. “We live.” He finished, looking out.

‘Is this living?’ The Doctor asked Rose.

‘It might be for them. You don’t know.’ Rose tried to defend their friends.

‘Except I do know. I know them and this isn’t living. Something isn’t right.’ He retorted.

Rose rubbed her head at that. ‘Yeah, maybe.’

“We listen to the birds.” Rory added, like it was worth it, as he heard the birds surrounding them.

“Yeah, see!” Amy exclaimed, but drifted off. “Birds… birds are nice.” She said looking around, and she looked so miserable it took everything in Rose not to jump up and drag them both back into the TARDIS that instant.

“We didn’t get a lot of time to listen to birdsong back in the TARDIS days, did we?” Rory asked matter of factly.

The birds got louder then. “Oh, blimey, me head’s a bit… ooh.” The Doctor said, rubbing at the space between his brow, trying to stave off the headache, and beside him Rose was doing the same thing. Their former companions looked at them worryingly. “Uh, no, you’re right. There wasn’t a lot of time for birdsong back in the good…” He drifted off as the birds got even louder and he felt the sudden overwhelming need to close his eyes. The rest of them doing the same, Rory falling to Rose’s shoulder as she fell to The Doctor and Amy fell to his other, “old…”

---

“Days.” He finished, eyes snapping open to meet Rose’s where they leaned against each other on the jump seat. He was fully dressed- he hadn’t met to fall asleep. “What? No- yes- sorry- what?” He added in short bursts, looking around wildly as they both sat up. They looked to each other, both seemingly having the same thoughts run through their heads.

Amy and Rory appeared at the top of the stairs before they could say anything. “Oh, you're okay!” He exclaimed, holding his arms out. “Oh thank god, I had a terrible nightmare about you two!” He looked around, as Rose stood up finally, struggling a bit with her pregnant belly.

Amy looked dazed and confused, she rubbed her flat stomach, and she looked over to Rory as she tried to see behind his neck to check for a ponytail. “What was the nightmare about?” Amy asked, furrowing her brow at The Doctor.

“Don’t ask. You don’t want to know.” He said quickly. He pulled Rose by the hands. “We’re safe now.” He said, eyes searching hers, and they knew they were thinking the same thing. It wasn’t uncommon for them to have the same dream- being psychically linked and such, but now it was scary- seeing worlds together in their minds where they don’t have this baby too- where they’ve lost again.
He sighed and looked back to their companions. “I’m getting on a bit you see- don’t let the cool gear fool you.” He adjusted his bowtie for emphasis and spun around the console. “Now what’s wrong with the TARDIS?” He pushed a few buttons randomly. “Red flashing lights… I bet they mean something.” Rose scrunched her face up as she noticed the TARDIS seemed like a less defined presence in her head than normal, and The Doctor ducked down to inspect the wires running just underneath the console.

“Uh, Doctor… I also had a sort of dream.” Rory said, not sure why it was important, but feeling like it was. It hadn’t felt like a normal dream, and travelling with them had made him start questioning everything.

“Yeah… so did I.” Amy said, squinting at him.

He turned to her quickly. “Not a nightmare, though, just um… well we were married.” He smiled at her, to let her know that that was okay.

“Yeah,” Amy said, nodding, but then they both got the same sort of perplexed look on their faces. “In a little village…”

Rory squinted at her. How had she known that?

...And you were pregnant…” He added.

“Yeah,” She exclaimed. “I was huge! I was a boat!”

The Doctor and Rose shared a terrified look and both walked around to the couple, the Doctor pulling back Rory’s shirt as he spoke- checking for a ponytail himself. “So you had the same dream then?” He asked her. “Exactly the same dream?”

“Are you calling me a boat?” She accused menacingly. She tilted her head towards Rose. “And Rose, she’s pregnant. Do you think she’s a boat then?”

Rory’s eyes flitted back and forth between the women, and decided it best not to answer at all rather he dig himself a deeper hole. “And Doctor you were visiting.” He said to the Time Lord, as he looked Amy up and down for any visible signs of pregnancy while she nodded in agreement. “How could we have had exactly the same dream? It doesn’t make any sense.”

Rose’s eyes grew wide. “And we did too…” She mumbled.

Rory spun around to look at her. “You too?”

Rose opened her mouth to say something, but The Doctor cut her off by coming up to her. “Look it doesn’t matter.” He said, taking her hands. “We all had some sort of psychic episode- must have jumped a time track. We’re back to reality.”

But Rose only looked at him wearily- knowing he didn’t believe it himself. In the back of their minds the birds started chirping again. “Then how come I can still hear the birds?” Rose asked slowly.

They all blinked, and when they opened their eyes they were back on the park bench.

---

Rory started in his seat and looked over. “Sorry, must be over doing it. I just dreamed we were back on the TARDIS…” he drifted off as he caught the looks of the rest of them. “And you all just had the same dream didn’t you?”
The Doctor didn’t answer, choosing instead to jump up and begin inspecting the soil, but the girls nodded, looking in between Amy’s round stomach and Rose’s flat one. “Weren’t we just saying that same thing? In the dream?” Amy asked, looking up to The Doctor.

“But we thought that this was the dream, didn’t we?” Rory added, as they all got to their feet.

“I think so,” Amy answered. “Why do dreams have to fade so quickly?” She added exasperatedly and Rose was inclined to agree, but it was different this time. While they were here it felt real- no obvious tells, not like the ones she could normally detect in a dream, but when they were back on the TARDIS it faded like a dream would.

Rose ran her hands down her flat stomach in the same way Amy had back on the TARDIS, but more sadly. “Doctor…” She started.

He spun on his heel to rest his hands on her shoulders. “Listen to me. Trust nothing.” He said, looking at Rose, but talking to Amy and Rory. “From now on trust nothing you see, hear, or feel.”

“It felt real.” She mumbled pathetically, tears threatening to fall, and he pulled her closer.

“But we’re awake now, right?” Rory argued.

The Doctor held Rose closer at that and closed his eyes for a moment. “And we thought we were awake on the TARDIS too. We’re jumping back and forth through time. Trouble is, are we flashing forwards or backwards?” He asked them seriously.

Rose pulled back miserably. “But they can’t both be real.” She said, shaking her head. “Or else where’s our baby, Doctor?”

---

Amy gasped as they came back awake on the TARDIS. The ship shook violently and The Doctor ran forward to grab a lever on the console. “This is bad.” He muttered, struggling to keep the controls steady. “I don’t like this.” He stepped away from the console, and then back quickly to kick it angrily- screaming in anguish, holding his now injured toe and hobbing around in circles in result.

“Did that help?” Rose asked, raising her eyebrow knowingly.

“Yes.” He said bitterly, but the effect was ruined as he was still holding his foot.

“Shall I go get the manual?” Rory asked, point off awkwardly in an attempt to be helpful.

Rose sighed and crossed her arms. “He threw it into a supernova.” She said exasperatedly, as her husband ran down the stairs leading to the underside of the console.

“You threw the manual into a supernova? Why?” Amy asked, despite sounding unsurprised by the information.

The Doctor yelled up to her through the glass. “Because I disagreed with it! Stop talking to me while I’m cross!” He reprimanded, sounding once again like a proper dad, and grabbing a nearby wrench.

Rory spun around to Rose. “Okay, but whatever’s wrong with the TARDIS- is that what’s causing us to dream of the future?”
Rose shrugged noncommittally, and The Doctor came back up the stairs handing Rory and Amy pliers and a wrench respectively as we went to the console with his screwdriver. “If that was the future. But if so, like Rose said, where’s our baby?” He said it quickly, while scanning the TARDIS, but they could all hear the sorrow behind the words.

Rory went over to Rose, “maybe you left them with a sitter,” he offered comfortingly.

Rose and The Doctor gave him the ‘not-bloody-likely’ look they often did, and Rory held back the impulse to roll his eyes. “Okay… so what?” He said, looking between them. “You think one of them is just a dream?” He asked, and then immediately winced at the word choice as both women’s hands fell to their stomachs.

The Doctor sighed and glared at Rory, going over to pull his pliers from his hands. “Look around you. Examine everything. Find the details that don’t ring true.” He ordered as he worked, and Rose’s hand reached out to stroke the TARDIS console, finding little solace in the barely-there telepathic presence she had in her mind.

“Okay well we’re in a spaceship that’s bigger on the inside than it is on the outside.” Rory said, finally able to roll his eyes at the Time Lord.

“With a bowtie wearing alien and his half-human pregnant wife.” Amy added, leaning forwards with her eyebrows raised, and earning a sideways glance from The Doctor.

“Maybe ‘what rings true’ isn’t so simple.” Rory summed up.

“Valid point.” The Doctor muttered, and Rose smirked.

Then, because things always got worse, the TARDIS made one last pathetic noise before the power went out completely. What little telepathic presence the TARDIS had left inside The Doctor and Rose’s mind faded, and they stood in the console room with only an eerie green light from the time rotor illuminating their faces as they all looked around. “She’s dead…” Rose whispered, not bothering to hold back her sorrow as the bird song surrounded them.

Back on the streets of Upper Leadworth The Doctor waved his hand rapidly in front of his face, as behind him Amy claimed loudly that this was the real one- poking her stomach as she commented on its solidity.

“Uh… what are you doing?” Rory asked, stepping forward.

“Looking for motion blur- pixelation, it could be a computer simulation.” He answered quickly, he put his hand down, and then came back up again to tug on Rory’s face. “I don’t think so, though.” He spun around and grabbed Rose’s hand.

‘I know, love.’ She said, before he could start.

‘I know this is the worst thing imaginable-’ He cut himself and leaned forward, resting his forehead against hers. ‘The TARDIS, a baby-’

‘We could lose both.’ Rose finished, nodding against him. ‘But we can’t think about that. Or else we’ll go insane and lose everything… Later.’ She finished, and it was a word they said often with their life. Always there were thoughts and feelings that had to wait- things they couldn’t think about all at once or else destroy everything else in their wake.
He sighed deeply, hating it as much as she did. ‘Later.’ He agreed, and then spun back around, pulling her with him as they walked, Rory and Amy following dutifully, relatively unfazed by the seemingly silent conversation their two alien friends had had.

He stopped suddenly to look at them. “What’s that?” He asked, pointing his thumb behind him to the building.

Amy looked at him incredulously. “Old people’s home.” She answered, and he turned back slowly—his eyes falling on each elderly human staring at them creepily through the lace-covered windows.

“You said everyone here lives into their 90s… there’s something here that doesn’t make sense…” He started, mumbling a bit as he was mostly speaking to himself.

Rose squeezed his hand. “Let’s go and poke it with a stick.” She finished with a smirk that he returned, happily settling on their resolution for ‘later.’ They ran into the retirement home quickly, with Amy’s call of “Oh can we not with the running thing!” just missing the listening part of their ears.

Rory and Amy came in after them just as they were starting to catalogue the room, Amy waddling as she held her back, and earning a sympathetic glance from Rose. An old lady perked up at the human couple’s entrance. “Oh hello, Rory, love!” She exclaimed merrily.

Rory extended his arms widely in greeting. “Hello, Mrs. Poggit, how’s your hip?” He asked conversationally, Amy coming up next to him with a polite smile while Rose and The Doctor hung back, looking around the room curiously.

“A bit stiff,” she answered truthfully, and then looked over to the strange couple sniffing about the coffee table. “Who’s your friends?” She asked.

“Um…” Rory started, looking over to them, but drawing a blank. Thankfully, Mrs. Poggit didn’t seem all that genuinely interested in the answer, as she extended her arm out to The Doctor.

“Can I borrow you?” She asked, tugging him to her, and pulling the jumper in her lap up. “You’re the size of my grandson.” She explained, with a slight chuckle.

“Ah… okay.” The Doctor said, slightly fidgety as he kneeled down to her level. “Slightly keen to move on. Freak psychic schism to work out.” He rambled as he shoved the muted-rainbow knit over his head, and only found one sleeve. He leaned forward towards the old lady once his head was free again. “You’re incredibly old aren’t you?” He asked, eyes searching hers. And he knew he was onto something as Rose didn’t even think to reprimand his tact.

Then the birds came back, and they all fell to the floor.

---

“Okay. I hate this, Doctor. Stop it.” Amy said, a bit petulantly, as they woke up, slouched against the dark TARDIS console. “Because this is definitely real! It’s definitely this one!” She yelled at him, and then spun around to Rory. “I keep saying that don’t I?” She asked loudly.

He didn’t feel the need to respond. “It’s bloody cold!” He yelled up to The Doctor who was already running up the stairs.

“The heating’s off. Put on a jumper. That’s what I always do.” He yelled back flippantly, sounding very much like a dad again, as he walked purposely across the mezzanine.
“Oh yeah sorry about Mrs. Poggit,” Rory said, crossing his arms to keep warm. “She’s so lovely though…” He drifted off as he caught the look Rose was sending him from where she’d taken a seat.

“I wouldn’t trust her sweet old lady act if I were you.” She said.

Amy took a step forward. “What do you mean, ‘act’?” She asked, but The Doctor stood up before Rose could reply.

“Everything’s off- censoring, core power- we’re drifting.” He started marching back towards the stairs, ranting. “The scanner’s down so we can’t even see out. We could be anywhere-”

Rose, feeling his growing frustration, cut him off before he could start yelling and scare the humans further. “You feel it though don’t you, Doctor? Something’s in our heads.” She said, referring to that creepy telepathic presence that wasn’t supposed to be there- just hovering right on the edge of perception.

And then right on cue: “Well!” A new voice appeared along with a new man, standing at the top of the stairs in all black- from tie to toes- looking around at them all haughtily from his place above their heads. “That took a while.” He mocked, and began his dissent down the stairs. “Honestly, I’d heard such great things. ‘The Last of the Time Lords’” He started, motioning between Rose and The Doctor. “‘The Oncoming Storm and the Bad Wolf.’” He elaborated, and then smirked. “‘Him in the bowtie and the pretty one beside him.’” He finished, attempting to get under their skin as he passed.

“How did you get in our TARDIS?” The Doctor practically growled, and Rose came up beside him.

“What are you?” She asked, squinting at the stout, darkly dressed man. He had thinning hair, but his face was smooth, and angry eyes that were somehow a cool blue. Everything about him was a contradiction.

He sighed dramatically. “Let’s see, what shall we call me?” He mused. “Well if you’re the Time Lords then let’s call me the Dream Lord.” His eyes glinted at the title, like he’d been wanting to use it for a long time.

They stared at him for a second, unconvinced. Then, seemingly unthinkingly, The Doctor pulled the packet of jammie dodgers from his coat pocket and through it at the self-proclaimed ‘Dream Lord.’ It passed right through him, causing only a slight disturbance in the man’s appearance as it hit the far wall.

“How did you get in our TARDIS?” The Doctor practically growled, and Rose came up beside him.

“What are you?” She asked, squinting at the stout, darkly dressed man. He had thinning hair, but his face was smooth, and angry eyes that were somehow a cool blue. Everything about him was a contradiction.

He sighed dramatically. “Let’s see, what shall we call me?” He mused. “Well if you’re the Time Lords then let’s call me the Dream Lord.” His eyes glinted at the title, like he’d been wanting to use it for a long time.

They stared at him for a second, unconvinced. Then, seemingly unthinkingly, The Doctor pulled the packet of jammie dodgers from his coat pocket and through it at the self-proclaimed ‘Dream Lord.’ It passed right through him, causing only a slight disturbance in the man’s appearance as it hit the far wall.

“Interesting.” The Dream Lord said, inclining his head. “I’d love to be impressed, but um, Dream Lord- it’s sort of in the name isn’t it?” He goaded, clearly gaining quite a lot of joy in belittling him. “Spooky, not quite there-” He flicked out of existence, and back to on the opposite side of them- earning a startled gasp from Amy and Rory, but the Time Lords only turned slowly to meet his gaze again- unsurprised themselves. “And yet, very much here.” He finished with a sneer, and Rose would have rolled her eyes at his arrogance if it wasn’t such a serious situation.

Rose moved to step in front of Amy and Rory while The Doctor moved to step in front of her. “I’ll do the talking, thanks.” He said. “5th dimensional being.” He explained to Amy and Rory over his shoulder without breaking eye contact with said being. “Some of the strongest telepathic presences in the known universe- well, outside of the known universe. Haven’t got a home or a life of their own. So they choose to prey on the lives of others. It seems he’s taken an interest in ours.” He tilted his head and squinted down at the imp.
“Look at you five.” He mocked, referring to their stance. “Rose protecting the children while The Doctor protects her.” Rose glared at the implication, but Amy reached out and grabbed her hand— not wanting her to walk forwards and leave her, and Rose calmed slightly. The man, (whom of which Rose’s head had already started referring to as Mxyzptlk), flashed in and out again to stand right beside the girls. “You can’t fool me.” He said at a whisper to Rose, even though the rest could hear. “I’ve seen your dreams. You can’t have it both ways.” He looked over to The Doctor, and then put a hand on Rose’s stomach threateningly- earning a growl from the Time Lord. “Everyone leaves you eventually. Even your own daughter.” He said, eyes glinting with secrets, and flashing away before The Doctor could push him away.

He appeared on the mezzanine, looking over them like a sort of malevolent ruler. “So here’s your challenge: Two worlds. Here, in the Time Machine. And there, in the village that forgot. One is real, the other is fake.…” He drifted off purposefully as he looked down at them. “And just to make it more interesting, you’re going to face in both worlds a deadly danger- but only one of the dangers is real.”

He grinned manically. “Tweet, tweet, time to sleep.” He finished with a wave, and all of their eyes rolled back as the birdsong came over them again. “...Or are you waking up?”

---

“Now then,” The Dream lord said, walking up to them as they rose from the floor of the retirement home. He was wearing glasses and a stethoscope now, which he adjusted in order to bring attention to them. “The prognosis is this: If you die in the dream, you wake up in reality- healthy recovery in next to no time.” He turned to Rory. “Now, ask me what happens if you die in reality.” He said.

Rory stared at him for a second. “We die, obviously.” He said plainly, and earned a glare from the Dream Lord as he’d taken his chance to mock him away.

“Why us? Why are you messing with our lives, then?” Amy demanded, leaning into the shorter man.

He shook his head. “Am I messing with your life, Amy Pond? Or the one you’ve decided to tag along on?” He raised on eyebrow and let bet pass before going on. “Nevermind that- you’ve got a world to choose.” He turned to The Doctor again as he was sitting down in the chair Mrs. Poggit had vacated. “One reality was always too much for your Doctor. Take two, and call me in the morning.” And with that line he flicked out of existence again.

“Okay, I don’t like him.” Rory declared rather dorkishly, and Rose snorted from where she was leaning against The Doctor’s chair.

Amy crossed her arms over her pregnant belly. “Who is he?” She asked, looking between the two Time Lords.

“Told you. An imp, basically. Fifth dimensional being. Every once and awhile they latch onto the lives of other people- especially trans dimensional ones like Rose and I. We bring too much attention to ourselves.” He said, putting his finger tips together and bringing them to his chin as he spoke.

“Sort of like an interdimensional parasite.” Rose summed up.

“Why is he doing this?” Amy went on, still not satisfied with the answer, and unwilling to accept random chance.
And the alien couple thought they might know the answer to that one, but saw no reason to open that particular box— not now, anyway. Later, always later. The Doctor took a deep breath and shrugged noncommittally. “Maybe because he has no physical form.” He offered, giving an easy, sort of believable answer. “That gets you down after a while. So he’s taking it out on folk like us…” he drifted off only slightly as he looked down and realized he was still wearing the jumper Mrs. Poggit had put on him, and he stood up to fling it off as he went on, “…who can touch and eat and feel.” He finished, looking around as he suddenly realized what was wrong.

Him and Rose spun in a small circle as in front of them Rory rambled. “What does he mean ‘deadly danger’ though? Nothing deadly has ever happened here… I mean a bit of natural wastage obviously-”

“They’ve all gone.” Rose cut him off, and The Doctor repeated her words to himself more quietly. Without another word they ran from the room and out of the building to the little park outside the castle turned primary school. They paused for only a second to look around before walking quickly once more, but Rory and Amy made them turn around as they came up behind them.

“Why would they just leave though?” Rory asked.

“And what you said on the TARDIS… about Mrs. Poggit’s ‘nice old lady act.’ How do you mean an ‘act’?” Amy demanded, sort of awkwardly trotting to catch up to them.

“Things are not what they seem.” The Doctor answered quickly before clapping his hands together. “So, come on, let’s think.” He rubbed his hands together and started gesturing vaguely with his hands as he was wont to do this regeneration. “The mechanics of this reality split we’re stuck in… Time asleep exactly matches time in our dream world, unlike in conventional dreams.” He explained, checking on his time senses as he did.

“And we’re all dreaming exactly the same dream at the same time?” Rory clarified.

“Yeah,” Rose said, speaking up. “It’s sort of like a… communal trance.” She took a deep breath and it created smoke around her in the cold air. “It’s rare and complicated and really not worth going into unless you want a headache.”

That earned a small smirk from her husband, but it quickly disappeared as he became more frustrated with their situation. “I’m sure there’s a giveaway, a tell, but my mind isn’t working because this village is so dull!” He yelled angrily at the grey sky and spun around in frustration.

“I’m slowing down. Like you two.” He accused over his shoulder to Amy and Rory.

Only a fraction of a second of anger passed over Amy’s features, too quick for even Rose to catch, before suddenly she was grabbing at her stomach. “Oh- oh- OW!” She moaned seriously. “Really-” She looked to Rory and started screaming while he sputtered. “IT’S COMING!” She grabbed onto the two men’s arms for dear life… while Rose stood in the background having a silent panic attack.

“You’re a nurse! Help her!” The Doctor said to Rory.

“You’re a Doctor!” Rory yelled back incredulously, and Amy screamed again.

“Well what do we do?” The Doctor asked frantically, bending down stupidly to hold his hands out below her skirt.

Just as quickly as it had happened though, Amy straightened up. “Okay it’s not coming.” She deadpanned.
He stood up. “What?”

She took a step forward to get into his face. “This is my life now. And it just turned you white as a sheet. So don’t you call it dull again, ever. Okay?” She demanded.

He stared at her for a second, but eventually mumbled an apology under his breath. She nodded and grabbed Rory by the hand, walking past Rose on the way to the nearby swing set.

Finally, the Doctor realized that there was still residual panic in the back of his mind, and he spun around to see Rose, still shell-shocked and breathing heavily, pupils blown wide in fear, and tears hovering on the edges of her vision. “Oh, Rose…” He said, taking the distance separating them in wide strides and pulling her into his arms. “Everything is okay, love.” He whispered, and Rose nodded pathetically into his chest.

Amy looked over her shoulder and stopped in her tracks when she saw them. “What’s wrong with Rose?” She asked, looking over to Rory.

He swallowed. “It’s… a long story. That I’m sure will come out later now that this has happened.” He sighed and put his arm around Amy’s shoulders to spin them back around.

A few moments later the other couple joined them at the swings. “Now,” The Doctor started, sitting down on the swing next to Amy’s while Rose leaned against the pole. “We all know there’s an elephant in the room.”

Amy rolled her eyes and folded her arms, cross with him again. “I have to be this size, I’m pregnant.” She pouted.

The Doctor swung back and forth on the swing. “No, no. The hormones seem real, but no.” He said quickly. “Is nobody going to mention Rory’s ponytail?” He asked, with a look to Rory and small smile to Amy with his attempt to diffuse the tension.

And it worked. Amy’s laughter got the better of her and a small snort escaped her as she turned to face him with a grudging smile.

He grinned widely at her. “You hold him down, I cut it off?” He offered, and swung more jovially as both women giggled at his teasing.

Rory stared down at him. “This from the man in a bow tie.”

“Bow ties are cool.” He answered easily, and then stood up quickly as his work was done-everyone officially back to at least mostly normal emotional states.

Him and Rose both spotted the elderly woman standing at the edge of the ramp leading to the school. “I don’t know about you…” Rose muttered, “but I wouldn’t hire Mrs. Poggit as a babysitter.”

She turned to make eerie eye contact with them across the field. “What is she doing? What does she want?” The Doctor asked quietly.

And then the birds came.

---

Amy immediately shivered as they woke up on the TARDIS floor, and Rose scooted over to her to rub her hands down her arms. “Go see is you can get to the wardrobe. There might be some warm
clothes in there. If not, check the cupboard to the left for some blankets.” She said comfortably, and with a look to Rory the two humans disappeared down the steps leading to the corridor.

The Doctor looked up to Rose as he leaned against the console next to him. “We need to figure out what she’s up to.” He said, running his hands through his hair, frustrated again.

Rose put her hand to his arm. “One problem at a time, yeah?” She said, tilting her head down to get him to look up to her.

He smirked, sort of half sadly and half gratefully at her. “How are you?” He asked.

Rose gave a small laugh and shook her head. “Not this problem.” She said, with a motion to her stomach. “Broken TARDIS, remember?”

“Right, yeah. Broken TARDIS.” He repeated, and was halfway to the stairs going below the console before suddenly turning on his heel to kiss her quickly but passionately. “Rose Tyler you are never a problem. And neither is any baby of ours.” He said firmly, planting another kiss to her lips in ending, and with that turning back to deal with the ship again.

What do you think it was?” Rory asked eventually as they made their way towards the cupboard—since the corridor that was supposed to lead towards the wardrobe ended short. “What made us end up back in Leadworth.”

Amy sighed and watched as her breath curled away in front of her. “I know. Why would anybody want to leave this?”

Rory nodded, “and them.” He added.

Amy nodded as well and repeated the sentiment as she opened the cupboard door. “And back in Leadworth? I know when we’re there we like it, but back here I can’t remember why.” She located the box marked ‘blankets’ and pulled off the lid, handing it to Rory.

“Not that a normal life would be bad one day.” He said to her back.

Amy turned to smile over his shoulder. “Married with a house and about to have baby?” She teased happily, not hating the whole idea herself, and he grinned back at her.

They wrapped the blankets around themselves and carried the remainder back to the console room where Rose was sitting cross legged on the jump seat connecting two wires together on what appeared to be some sort of makeshift device. “Ah! Here-” Rose said as she finished and the two companions came to join her. “Rory, wind this please, and Amy will you connect these to the monitor?”

Rory took the odd thing that appeared the be a hand-held mixer with a corkscrew for wine bottles sticking out the end and a series of wires wrapped around it. “I was promised amazing worlds. Instead I get duff central heating and… a weird kitcheny wind-up device.” He teased, earning a giggle from Rose.

“It’s a generator.” She explained. “We’re trying to get enough power to the monitor to at least see where we are.”

At that Rory wound the device more quickly, and used the resulting noise to lean closer to Rose as their respective partners worked on the other side of the console. “You know why the Dream Lord
is targeting you don’t you?” He asked.

Rose didn’t answer, but the sorrowful look she gave him was one enough.

Before he could push her however, an electronic beep sounded and the largest window flashed on. They all turned to see a massive blue ball of gaseous light. “What is that?” Rory quit winding to ask.

“A star. A cold star.” He answered quickly, and then ran to open the door. “That’s why we’re freezing!” He yelled over the cold blast of light that entered the ship as he did. “It’s not a heating malfunction! We’re drifting towards a cold sun!” He slammed the door. “There’s our deadly danger for this reality.”

“So this must be the dream.” Amy said, attempting to jump to conclusions too soon. “There’s no such thing as a cold star. Stars burn.”

“So’s this one. It’s just burning cold.” The Doctor argued, finally shivering for the first time since the power went out- his superior biology failing him. He ran around to Rose, grabbing a blanket on the way to wrap around her and she nodded gratefully when he sat down next to her.

“Is that possible?” Rory asked.

The Doctor shook his head. “I don’t know! I can’t know everything!” He said, frustrated again, until Rose put a hand to his leg and he took a deep breath.

“Okay…” Rory said, as usual unaffected by The Doctor’s random outbursts. “This is something you haven’t seen before. So does that mean this is the dream?” He asked hopefully, like Amy trying to reach a conclusion that isn’t necessarily there.

Rose shook her head and bit her lip. “We’ve been stuck in orbit around black holes and nearly swallowed by a living sun.” She said, looking up to him. “Both times it was the first and last times we’d seen anything like it. Impossible has a vague definition to us.”

The Doctor looked at his watch. “And I’d say we have about 14 minutes until we crash into this impossibility.” He stood up and went back to the dead console. “But that’s not a problem.” He mumbled.

“But the Doctor only turned to him. “Because we’ll have frozen to death by then.” He said, omitting the part about how him and Amy had even less time as humans.

The Dream Lord appeared on the mezzanine again then. “Tick, tock, goes the clock.” He said, smirking like it was an inside joke, and holding up a pocket watch on a chain- he was clearly big into the whole ‘props’ thing. “You’ll have to figure it out soon, Doctor.”

They all glared up at the imp, but Rory was the one who spoke. “You’re asking us to choose which child is real!” He accused.

The Dream Lord only shrugged in response though, clearly unaffected by the implications the statement made about his character. “Only one of them is real.” He said coolly, and then looked up as the birdsong came. “Oh no… we’ve run out of time.” He looked around manically as they all struggled to keep their eyes open. “Don’t spend too long there- or else you’ll catch your death here!”
Rose groaned as they woke up slouched against the railing of a ramp, but shook it off quickly to run the rest of the way towards the top where moments before Mrs. Poggit had been standing.

“Where have the children gone?” The Doctor asked, looking around the castle grounds.

“Maybe playtime is over.” Rory offered to their backs as they went to inspect what appeared to be a series of sand hills- each with books and a yellow bag like the ones the children had been carrying earlier resting next to it.

“Doctor, what are you doing? What are those piles of dust?” Amy asked stepping around Rory to come up to the couple.

Rose gasped and her hand flung to her mouth when The Doctor ran his hands through the dust and determined what it was. He stood up slowly. “Playtime’s definitely over.” He said quietly.

“Oh, my God…” Amy muttered, looking around horrified.

“What happened to them?” Rory asked, a similar expression on his face.

The Doctor and Rose turned slowly towards the ominous line of old people marching towards the playground from the other side of the field. “I think they did.” The Doctor answered.

“But they’re just old people.” Amy argued incredulously.

Rose turned to her. “No, they’re very old people,” she answered.

The Doctor and Rose started towards them, and Amy and Rory followed after a moment of confusion. Rory calling “Yeah so, you two are very old people too.” Which they both ignored.

The Dream Lord appeared halfway there. “Attack of the old people! Oh, that’s ridiculous! This has got to be the dream, hasn’t it?” He mocked. He tilted his head and turned to the Doctor. “But then, Rory has got a point. Age had never been important to you has it, Doctor?” He nodded towards Rose. “Robbing the cradle with this one aren’t we? How old was she when you took her away? Nineteen?” They both glared at him, but he didn’t seem to care as he directed his attention to Rose. “Did you know then how much you would have to sacrifice for him?”

“Leave her alone.” The Doctor practically growled, but the Dream Lord only smiled mischievously in return.

“Everyone left him but you, Rose.” The Dream Lord said to her, ignoring the look The Doctor was giving her. “So he took you and twisted you up to be just like him- just as miserable.”

“We’re not miserable.” Rose said with so much conviction in her voice Rassilon himself wouldn’t have argued with her, but the Dream Lord only tilted his head- intent on getting under their skin. “Aren’t you?” He asked simply, before disappearing again, leaving in his wake the army of the elderly, advancing on them with their canes and walkers.

Rose sent her love and reassurance over the bond, and The Doctor was able to pivot towards the old people with his usual nonchalance. “Hello! We were wondering where you went. By the looks of it, to get reinforcements.” He exclaimed with casual merriment while the continued to draw nearer.
“Hello, Mr. Nainby,” Rory started, speaking to the older man as he approached him.

“Rory…” Rose interrupted hesitantly.

Rory went on though. “Mr. Nainby ran the street shop. He used to slip me the odd free toffee now and then-”

He was cut off as Mr. Nainby stepped forward and pulled Rory off the ground by his coat collar-with far more strength than the old man appeared to have. “Did I not say thank you?” Rory asked in his clutches, just before getting thrown backwards six meters into the dirt. “HOW DID HE DID THAT?” Rory demanded from his place on the ground.

“I suspect he’s not himself.” The Doctor answered, not taking his eyes away from the elderly army to look at Rory as he answered. “Don’t get comfortable here, you may have to run. Fast.”

Amy sighed and held her stomach at that. “Can’t we just talk to them?” She exasperated.

Right on cue, they all opened their mouths and answered that question for them. Coming from the back of their throats appeared to be something resembling a green eye stalk blinking back at them. Amy took a step back as she stared at the thing coming out of old Mrs. Poggit. “There’s an eye in her mouth.” She said incredulously.

The Doctor scanned her with the sonic. “There’s a whole creature inside her. Inside all of them. They’ve been there for years, living and waiting.” He explained, looking around at them all.

Rory wrinkled his nose. He’d seen a lot travelling with Rose and The Doctor, but nothing quite like this. “That is… disgusting…” He muttered. “They aren’t going to be peeping out of anywhere else are they?”

They eye inside Mrs. Poggit extended itself outward and sprayed a sort of green dust at the two humans, causing Amy to squeal as she stumbled back into Rory and they both stepped back as Rose pushed them behind her with orders to run.

“Okay, leave them, leave them.” The Doctor said quickly, extending his arms. “Talk to me,” He started, looking around as he put the pieces together. “You are Eknodines, a proud, ancient race. You are better than this- why are you hiding away here? Why aren’t you at home?”

“We were driven from our planet-” The voice inside Mrs. Poggit answered.

“-by upstart neighbors.” The Doctor finished.

“So we’ve-” The deeper voice inside Mr. Nainby continued.

“-been living inside the bodies of old humans… for years.” The Doctor interrupted again. And he knew Rose was mad at them for attacking Amy and Rory as she didn’t chastise his rudeness. “No wonder they live so long, you’ve been keeping them alive.” His brow furrowed.

“We were humbled and destroyed.” Mrs. Poggit said, and an angry glint appeared behind her usually dead eyes. “Now we will do the same to others.”

Meanwhile, behind him, Rose was arguing with Amy and Rory. “Please, run!” She begged them, but they wouldn’t listen.

The Doctor closed his eyes in frustration. “Okay, makes sense, I suppose. Credible enough. Could be real.” He rambled, and then turned on his heel at a run, pulling Rose by the hand, and Amy and
Rory following dutifully.

The elderly chased after them, much faster now, and by the time they reached the main streets of Upper Leadworth the birdsong had started up again, all four of them stumbling as they attempted to fight off its effects. They found themselves slamming and locking the door to the butcher’s shop behind them, and The Doctor flipped the sign around a few times as in his dazed state made sure it said they were closed- as if that would do anything.

“Oh I love a good butcher’s, don’t you?” The Dream Lord said from behind them. “We’ve got to use these places or they’ll shut down.” He said, mocking small-town conversation. “Oh but, you’re probably a vegetarian aren’t you? You big flop-haired wuss.” He harassed The Doctor as he grabbed a set of keys and attempted to open the far door while still fighting off sleep.

“Oh, pipe down. I’m busy.” The Doctor spit out at the same moment Rose yelled “shut up” towards the Dream Lord. He grinned knowingly though.

“Oh, bit grumpy aren’t we?” He said to the couples. “Maybe you need some sleep?” And the birdsong got louder, making them all slump against the walls.

It stopped though just before it could fully take effect.

“But oh wait-” The Dream Lord said, leaning forward as all their eyes snapped open. “If you fall asleep here, several dozen angry pensioners will destroy you with their horrible eye thingies.” They all struggled back to standing and made their way behind the counter and into the back corridor of the shop while The Dream Lord yelled “Come in! Come in!” to the elderly and the birdsong got gradually louder.

They made it into the cupboard and locked the door just in time to fall asleep again.

---

They all shot awake on the console floor.

“Oh, it’s colder.” Amy shivered and pulled her blanket closer to her while Rory threw his hood over his head and The Doctor buttoned his coat and wrapped an arm around Rose.

“The four of us have to agree, now, which is the dream.” The Doctor said.

Amy squinted. “The science is all wrong here. Burning ice?”

“No, no, no,” The Doctor shivered violently and Rose was so disturbed by that concept she was able to move her numb hands to grab a nearby blanket and throw it over his shoulders. “Ice can burn. Sofas can read. It’s big universe!” He explained loudly. “We have to agree which battle to lose. All of us, now.” He repeated again frantically.

“She’s sort of right though Doctor.” Rose mumbled, looking into his eyes. “How can I be pregnant?”

“It’s happened before.” He argued, but Rose raised an eyebrow at him. “Miracles do happen.” He said desperately.

“Twice?” She challenged miserably, and the stared at each other sadly in the impending silence. Rose sighed eventually and looked down to her lap. “Nine minutes until impact.”

That got them all moving again. Amy and Rory jumping to their feet, while The Doctor helped
Rose to hers. “How cold is it?” Amy asked, grabbing the stack of blankets on the console and a pair of scissors.

“Outside? Brrr! How many naughts have you got?” The Doctor answered, spinning a bit as his did. “In here? No idea. But I can’t feel my feet and… other parts.” He added, purely for the small giggle he got from Rose for it.

“Can’t we call for help?” Rory asked hopefully, pulling the TARDIS phone off the reciever for emphasis.

The Doctor grabbed it from him. “Yeah, ‘cause the Universe is really quite small and there’s bound to be someone nearby.” He answered sarcastically, bopping Rory on the forehead with the phone before hanging it back up.

“Put these on!” Amy interrupted, throwing the modified blankets at The Doctor and Rose, who immediately did as they were told, slipping their heads through the hole Amy had cut through the middle. Amy stepped towards Rory and put it over his head herself.

The Doctor spun around sillily and Rose giggled at his goofy childlike expression while behind them Rory continued to be sarcastic. “Oh! A poncho! The biggest crime against fashion since lederhosen!”

Amy threw her own poncho on and fluffed her hair. “Oh, here we go!” She exclaimed, looking around at the four of them. “Oh- big happy family then! The poncho family.” She smiled, doing a little jig as she said it. She walked over to stand in between The Doctor and Rory- the former still looking confused and the later looking on the better side of miserable. “If we’re going to die, then let’s die looking like a Peruvian folk band.” She said confidently, earning a proud laugh from Rose.

“We’re not going to die.” Rory declared, effectively sending The Doctor pacing again.

“No, we’re not. But our time’s running out.” He said, poncho flying out behind him as he went. “If we fall asleep here, we’re in trouble.” He rambled, and pointed at them. “If we could divide up- then we’d have an active presence in each world- but the dream lord is switching us between the worlds- why, why, why, what’s the logic?” He exclaimed, frustratingly ruffling his hair.

The Dream Lord appeared beside him suddenly, pacing with him without missing a beat. “Good idea, veggie. Let’s divide you four up, so I can have a chat with these lovely mothers-to-be, here. Or at least… one of them is.” His eyes glinted.

“Can you hear that?” Rory asked, looking around tiredly as the birdsong surrounded him.

“What? No.” Amy said, grabbing onto his hands as Rose went to The Doctor.

“Don’t be scared.” He told her, as he was falling to the floor. “We’ll be back.”

“No.” Rose started.

“Please don’t leave us.” Amy finished, grabbing at their hands, but they slipped through to the floor, so she settled for clutching onto Rose for dear life as the fear consumed her. She had Rose. She wasn’t alone. He couldn’t take Rose…

The Doctor will always come back for Rose.
Rory and The Doctor woke up in the cupboard, their respective wives still fully asleep on their shoulders, with alien-screaming was coming from the other side of the door separating them from certain death.

“Oh, good, great. I think I preferred the cold.” Rory mumbled as they stood up.

The Doctor flicked the sonic screwdriver. “Okay… where is it…” he muttered, clicking it a few times as he pressed himself against the door. “Get ready to run.” He said to Rory, and gave him no time to process that before he was flinging the door open and sonicking the light just above the heads of the elderly surrounding them to send sparks about. The Doctor pushed Rory in front of him and closed the door back, sealing their wives inside and praying they’d be safe before running out into the streets once more.

“You couldn’t live near the shops could you?” The Doctor accused over his shoulder as they ran in the direction of the farm house and the TARDIS- nearly twenty miles away. Rory didn’t dignify that with a response.

“HELP! SOMEBODY HELP!” A man yelled, and they looked over the see an elderly fellow attempting to grab the man from a nearby VW bus. They ran forward, and pushed the alien aside, pulling open the front doors to the vehicle.

“Don’t worry, only me.” The Doctor said to the owner of the camper van as he took the wheel and Rory the passenger side, shoving the owner the the back.

They started down the road only to see more men, women, and children cowering in fear of the attacking old people. “We have to help them.” Rory said, and The Doctor nodded as he pulled over. The man they’d rescued and carjacked sliding open the side door to pull the townsfolk inside.

---

Frost was forming on the TARDIS and the girls by the time the Dream Lord appeared again. They were huddled together on the third stair, and he spoke from the one just below them. “He always leaves you, doesn’t he?” He began, not looking at them.

“He always comes back.” Amy snarled, and Rose pulled her closer.

“For both of us.” She said, more to the girl than to the Dream Lord. Amy nodded.

“And now he’s left you with me.” The Dream Lord went on as if they hadn’t spoken. “Spooky, old, not-to-be-trusted me.” He stood up and turned to face them finally.

“Why are you doing this?” Rose demanded, eyes flitting between the Dream Lord’s face and where her husband laid on the ground at his feet.

He leaned forward, eyes glinting menacingly. “To make you see.”

“See what?” Amy demanded angrily, her Scottish accent even more pronounced than usual.

“That he doesn’t deserve you. Either of you.” He spit out, stepping over The Doctor, and purposefully kicking him as he did. “This is what comes with him. Death and darkness, that’s all he is.”

“You’re wrong.” Rose growled, standing up. “He’s the kindest most wonderful man I’ve ever known. And there’s nothing you can say to that will change that. I’m in his head.” She tapped her temple purposefully, where The Doctor’s mind was resting against hers, dormant as if asleep. “I
know all the darkness he holds and it doesn’t even *compare* to the light.”

He ignored her, and turned to Amy. “Rose is the first companion he kept in 900 years. And only because he accidentally twisted her up until she wasn’t even *human* anymore. Where do you think that leaves you?”

“He didn’t keep me like I’m some *stray.*” Rose argued. “I stayed because I loved him. I would have stayed whether I was Time Lord or not so shut up and quit acting like you know *anything* about us.” She glared at him and stuck her hand out behind her for Amy to take and stand beside her. “And as for Amy and Rory, they can stay forever if that’s what they want.” She finished, looking at her.

The Dream Lord smirks. “That’s what you want, isn’t it Rose?” He taunted. “For someone to stay. Everyone leaves you now, don’t they? Your family… even your own *child-*”

“*Shut up.*” Rose growled through her teeth.

He smirked, but backed off of that subject. “Pick a world. And this will all be over.” He demanded.

Rose tilted her head. “Why?”

He took a step back, fumbling for the first time since he appeared in the TARDIS after the power went out. “What do you mean, ‘*why*?’”

Rose smiled, feeling like she’d finally gotten the upper hand. “I mean- *why*?” She said again, taking a step forward. “Because the way I see it that’s exactly what you want us to do. And if there’s one thing I’ve learned from my husband- just one thing- it’s to never, *ever,* do what you’re told.”

The Dream Lord stared at her for a second, and then disappeared without answering.

“Rose, what are you talking about?” Amy asked frantically, and Rose spun around to grab her by the shoulders.

“Think about it Amy! Fifth dimensional being. No true form. No control over reality. He’s a *Dream* Lord, Amy!” Rose’s eyes glittered with excitement. “He has no control over *reality.*”

Amy’s eyes widened as she understood. “He can only offer us the choice between two dreams.” She finished. “Neither one is real.”

Amy’s eyes flickered down between them though, and the smiles wiped off both their faces. “But that means…” Amy started, drifting off as she couldn’t say the horrible truth.

“Neither one is real.” Rose repeated Amy’s words, sadder this time, as her hands fell to her stomach.

---

*‘It’s not real!’* Rose practically yelled inside his mind as they pulled up to the (blessedly vacant) church.

The Doctor winced and held his head, while Rory continued to herd the townsfolk into the church. He was surprised Rose could even manage to send a message across dreams, much less one so loud. ‘*What is it, love?*’ He asked, but wasn’t sure she heard him as her only reply was a flurry of images from inside the frozen TARDIS.
A single coherent thought managed to escape through the cacophony of muddled telepathic communication through: ‘Dreams’ repeated over and over again.

And then it clicked. Dream Lord. He didn’t have any control over reality. Only dreams. They were both dreams.

“Rory, we have to go.” He said out loud as the last person left the van.

“I know, to the TARDIS.” Rory said quickly, jumping back into the passenger’s seat.

“No.” The Doctor slammed his door behind him and put the car in gear. “Back to reality.” With that he jammed the accelerator into the metal, and steered them back to the butcher’s shop. Going near eighty kilometer an hour, safety-belt-less they crashed into the solid stone wall separating them from the girls.

---

His eyes clicked open on the TARDIS floor, a thick layer of frost had now taken over the entire interior of the ship, and the ice danced its way across all of their features. On the bottom stair Amy and Rose were huddled together, and beside him Rory gasped awake, only barely disturbing the snow that piled itself upon him in his sleep.

The Doctor and Rose made eye contact, and tears hovered on the edges of their vision. “It’s not real.” Rose mumbled miserably, clutching at her stomach.

Rory spoke up before The Doctor could even begin to think of words that could answer that. “No, but. We woke up. We crashed, and we woke up here. Doesn’t that mean this is the real one?” He asked, looking around the frozen TARDIS.

“They’re both dreams, Rory.” Amy answered, pulling Rose closer to her. “We have to die here too.”

Rory looked over to Rose sadly as he understood what that meant. The words ‘it’s only a dream though’ stopping short on his lips- they wouldn’t help. It felt real, at least for now, and that’s all that mattered. At the top of the stairs the Dream Lord reappeared.

“Smart wife you have there, Doctor. She outwitted me even sooner than you could.” He said by way of greeting, eyes shifting between Rose and her husband maliciously.

“I know. Now bring the TARDIS back so we can end this.” The Doctor demanded.

The Dream Lord only tilted his head though. “Oh, but why would I do that? I’d much prefer to watch you suffer a slow… cold death.” He flickered out of existence once more.

The Doctor ran over to Rose as soon as he disappeared again. “Rose, I’m so sorry.” He said, pulling her into his arms. “I’m so sorry, love.”

Rose sobbed into his chest and just mumbled “It’s not real, it’s not real” over and over again like that was some sort of solace. He tucked his face into her hair and kissed her there, breathing deeply and closing his eyes against the onslaught of tears. Rory came down beside Amy who was rubbing Rose’s back comfortingly.

Then the light came, bursting through every small crack in the TARDIS. The cold grew unbearable, painfully turning their skin blue before ripping it to shreds. Seconds or centuries passed with silent screams.
And then everything went black.

---

Rose started awake in their bed, finding her husband’s shirt damp beneath her from her tears, and for a moment she couldn’t remember what had made her so sad.

Then the TARDIS lights flashed and it all came flying back to her. She pulled her knees up to her chest just as The Doctor was sitting up next to her. “Rose…” He whispered quietly, too lost for words to say anything else.

She took a deep breath and leaned back against him. “Just a dream, yeah?”

He only shook his head in response and pulled her closer.

They eventually got dressed and made their way down stairs where Amy and Rory were already waiting for them, leant against the console. “Alright?” Amy asked, ducking her head a bit to look up at Rose through her lashes.

Rose nodded and went over to place her hand on Amy’s shoulder. “We have a lot to talk about.” She said instead of answering.

“How’d he do that, then?” Rory asked, looking over to The Doctor as he stepped up to the console, poking around.

The Doctor remained silent until he found what he was looking for in the vents around the time rotor, and pulled back with a smirk, holding his palm out to show them all the shimmering little beads he held in his hand. “This.” He said, but went on before Amy and Rory could ask what.

“Specks of psychic pollen, from the candle meadows of Karass Don Slava.” He rolled them around and they made a sort of crackling sound as the pieces bumped together. “Must have been hanging around for ages…” He drifted off, thinking the last time he went anywhere near Karass was right after Time War. He sighed a went on, “fell in the time rotor, heated up, and induced a dream state for all of us.”

He wandered over to the doors and opened them up, then carefully blew the pollen specks into the void amongst the stars. Rory watched him somewhat reverently. “Was that him then? The Dream Lord, or whatever?” He asked, with a nod towards the now-gone specks as the Doctor closed the door.

Rose leant her hip against the console and crossed her arms. “Sort of. Fifth dimensional beings can’t exist in our reality- not to psy-nulls anyway. We should have realized sooner…” She drifted off and then shrugged, shaking her head. “The pollen was more like his transport- gave him a way into our heads and a somewhat physical form that we could all perceive.”

“So do you two still see him then? Is he still about?” Amy asked, furrowing her brow at them before looking around the TARDIS wildly like he may be lurking behind her shoulder.

The Doctor shook his head though. “Without the pollen he’d need to break down ours and the TARDIS’s telepathic barriers- which would take an army.”

“Why though?” Amy asked, not for the first time. “It seemed… personal. Why does he hate you two so much?” She knew now that the attack didn’t have anything to do with her and Rory.
Rose sighed, and her and The Doctor shared a look over their companions’ heads. “Let’s get some tea and meet up in the library, yeah? We’ve… got a lot to talk about.” She said again.

In the library Rose situated herself between The Doctor’s thigh and the arm of the chair they sat in, throwing her legs over his lap, and holding the warm mug of tea close to her while The Doctor’s hand rested comfortably on her knee. ‘I guess it’s later.’ He smirked, and Rose snorted into her tea in response.

Next to them Rory sat in the corner of the sofa with Amy stretched out along the rest of it, her head in his lap. “It was worse for you than me, wasn’t it?” Amy started, looking up to the ceiling and not offering anymore explanation- but it wasn’t needed.

Rose took a deep breath, meaning to begin explaining, but instead only coming up with “yeah.”

Amy shifted so that she was laying on her side and could look up to Rose. “You’ve been pregnant before.” She said, and it wasn’t a question, but Rose nodded in confirmation anyway. “And you lost her.” Amy finished, remembering what the Dream Lord had said about a daughter. A long silence ensued after Rose nodded again and leaned further into her husband. “When?” Amy asked eventually.

It was The Doctor’s turn to take a deep breath. Taking it upon himself to explain to Amy- as Rose had already done for Rory. “Oh… forty years ago now.” He said, breathing only shuddering a bit. “Doesn’t ever leave, that sort of pain.”

“Forty years…” Amy repeated, eyes searching his. “Did she…?” She drifted off, unwilling to voice the hopeful question.

The Doctor shook his head. “She didn’t get to live, no… Stillborn.” He blinked a few times at the tears the memories brought on.

Amy’s eyes widened and she stifled her gasp. “That’s why-” she started, but cut herself off before she could say Rose freaked out when I pretended I was going into labor. They both nodded at the unspoken end to the exclamation anyway. “I’m so sorry.” She said instead.

Rose smiled ruefully and shook her head. “You didn’t know.”

“Do you remember it now, the dream pregnancy?” Amy asked, and Rory silently admired her ability to keep asking questions despite circumstances.

Luckily for them though, Rose seemed to too as she let out a little indulgent laugh towards Amy’s resilient personality, and nodded sadly. “I imagine it was more real for me. The Dream Lord could pull from my memories, make me feel like I was really carrying another baby…” She drifted off and The Doctor let out a little involuntary growl at the being who hurt his wife.

“Yeah I just felt fat and crampy.” Amy said, wrinkling her nose a bit and earning laughs from the rest of them. “It’s all fuzzy now though. Like a proper dream.”

To the Doctor’s relief Rose nodded at that in agreement. “Me too. I remember the pain more than I can still feel it. Not like with Alina.”

Amy perked up. “Was that her name? Alina?” The both nodded with small smiles and Amy grinned. “That’s beautiful. Like from a fairytale.” She said with a mischievous glimmer behind her eyes, and finally earning real proper smiles from the Time Lords since they’d woken up in reality.
They were still just proud parents after all.

Rory chuckled and ran his fingers through Amy’s hair, still stunned at how easily she can dance through minefields he’s bound to have stumbled in. “That’s one question left then.” He said eventually, looking up to the Time Lords. “What’s he got against you two?”

The Doctor tilted his head and sighed, running his hand down Rose’s shin. “If my assumptions are correct he’s been hanging around my timeline for nearly a century now- since before I met Rose. Correct me if I’m wrong, love, but we haven’t been to the candle meadows have we?”

He turned to his wife who looked up in concentration before finally shaking head. “Nope, don’t think so. You’ve mentioned Krasus Don Slava before though… it’s a telepathic sanctuary isn’t it?”

The Doctor nodded and smiled a little at her impressive memory. He’d only mentioned the planet to her in passing sometime in his ninth regeneration. “After Gallifrey was lost, the broken down TARDIS and myself were discovered drifting through Andromeda by some Time Agents, and they took us to the candle meadows to recover. It’s sort of like the zero room but with a bit of healing mixed in.” He explained slowly. “It was the only place I could have healed after losing that many telepathic frequencies at once…” He drifted off and caught Amy’s sad look by accident. “After being at the heart of an explosion like that I’m sure I was incredibly loud. Suppose he took a ride on the psychic pollen and… stuck around.”

“What just like a fifth dimensional stalker you’ve had for the last century?” Amy asked incredulously.

The Doctor let out a surprised chuckle at that. “Yeah, I suppose so yeah.” He gave her.

Rory shook his head. “But why was he so angry with you?”

He sighed as he remembered the emotional telepathic frequencies the Dream Lord had been projecting. “I assume because he’d started following me around because of the loneliness I was projecting after the Time Lord- he related to it on some level.” The Doctor looked determinedly at the far wall instead of any of their faces as he spoke, but he turned to Rose then. “But then Rose came along…” He drifted off as she smiled that wonderful tongue-touched smile of hers. Some things didn’t need to be said. He took a deep breath again, shaking off all the wonder Rose managed to instill in him with just that one look. “He got jealous. I imagine he found some solace in my existence until I stopped being miserable.”

Amy bit her lip, and nodded as she processed all that. She shifted on the couch, getting comfortable again as she decided on what question would keep them talking. It wasn’t often that the alien couple was so open and honest. “Did you know?” She asked eventually with a small smile. “When you first met did you know you’d be together forever?”

Rose laughed and shook her head at the girlish question following such a serious discussion. “I thought he was mad.” She answered honestly.

Amy sighed and flipped back onto her back. “That’s weird to think about. You two before you knew each other…” She drifted off as she stared at the high beamed ceilings of the library. “The way I see it you two have each other, and with something like that you don’t need anything else… So why?” She turned back to look at them properly again. “Why’d you bring along me and Rory and every other human you’ve ever let through those doors?”

The Doctor looked at her for a moment before answering. “Because you see it.” He said.
Amy froze as she remembered the Dream Lord telling her she needed to see some horrible truth. “See what?” She asked hesitantly, giving Rose a look.

The Doctor didn’t catch it though, and he went on comfortingly. “Everything - I look at a star -hot or cold- and it's just a big ball of burning gas, and I know how it began and I know how it ends... and I was probably there both times.” He sighed and looked up thoughtfully. “After a while, everything is just stuff. That's the problem; you make all of space and time your back garden, and eventually what do you have? A back garden. But you; you can see it. And when you see it, I see it.”

Amy stared at him as she took that in, then flickered over to Rose. “Do you see it?"

Rose grinned, “I don’t think I’ll ever stop…” She paused thoughtfully. “I like being able to show it to other people though y’know? If we don’t, then who else will?”

“How you do decide though?” Rory asked suddenly. “Because you must meet people all the time, but you don’t bring them all along. Why us?” And it wasn’t the first time they’d gotten that question, but it was the first time they intended to answer it properly.

Rose and The Doctor shared a look as they were clearly struggling with putting into words what has become innate ability. “Some people just… have it in them.” The Doctor answered eventually. “That bit of light in their eyes- like the universe was made to be seen by them.”

Hours later, Amy and Rory sat in bed reading when Rory suddenly looked over to Amy and spoke for the first time since they’d entered their room. “I knew.” He said simply.

Amy looked over to him with a question on her lips, but he went on without being prompted. “When I first met you. I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life knowing you.”

Amy stared at him for a long moment before finally launching herself forward and kissing him passionately- always preferred actions to words, she did. When she pulled back though worry colored her features. “We have to leave don’t we?”

It took Rory a second to catch up with her thought process, but when he did he shook his head vehemently. “This can be our life.” He argued.

Amy gave him a sad look. “You know it isn’t though. We’re on holiday. We took a long, extended break from real life, and if we ever plan on going back we have to before we’re married.”

“We could just… say we eloped.” Rory offered. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to go back to life. It was that he didn’t want to tell Rose and The Doctor that they did.

She raised her eyebrow. “We’d been dating a week before we left. Now it’s been six months. It’s going to be complicated enough.” She sighed and leaned back. “It won’t be so bad…” She tried.

“Rose will be crushed.” Rory said miserably, following her lead in resting against the headboard. “How are we even going to do it? -Go back to normal life.”

Amy thought about that for a moment. “What if we keep travelling in between?” She offered eventually, brightening up a bit. “We go back to Leadworth and do all the normal life stuff we have to do, but keep travelling every now and then.”

“You think they’d agree to that? And understand?” Rory asked, liking the idea more than any of
Amy shrugged. “I don’t see why not. Rose was human once. She had a normal life…” She drifted off, realizing for the first time that she didn’t know any of the details surrounding Rose’s life before The Doctor, and resolving to ask before bringing this up. She brightened up again though and looked up to Rory with shining eyes. “What do you say? Want to do real like with me Rory Williams?”

Rory smiled. “Toughest adventure yet, yeah?”

Amy laughed and kissed him again. “Oh, I don’t know about that.”

Chapter End Notes

please please please leave comments and feedback. they are my fuel, and another part of the reason this chapter was so late (the other parts being finals, work, and illness)
Of Fast Forward Buttons and Verbal Chess

Chapter Summary

An intermission of sorts. The Ponds have some catching up to do in the real world. Amy's learning how to navigate conversations with Rose towards information.

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the unexpected holiday! Between the actual holidays and work I've been swamped. Anyway, finally I'm back and we'll be returning to your regularly scheduled programming!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Amy was entertaining herself by following Rose around the TARDIS. The Doctor had disappeared into his workshop to toy with whatever random junk he’d picked up on their last stop at the markets, and Rory had holed himself up in the library with some book he’d found on fifty-first century medicine. Amy found the boys preoccupations as a perfect excuse to get into Rose’s head.

To Rose’s credit, she was taking the interrogation in stride.

“But how did you decide?” Amy asked again, following Rose as she went around the console doing routine maintenance. “To just stay here forever? And make Earth the holiday?”

Rose sighed and leaned heavily against the TARDIS. “It just sort of happened, Amy. Every time I went back home I’d bring more of my stuff onto the TARDIS and eventually one day I woke up and all my things were here, and the only thing left in London was my mum.” She shrugged noncommittally. “I’d made my decision before I even knew it was an option.”

Amy nodded and came beside her, hoping maybe she’d finally decided to stop walking around in an effort to avoid her questions. “What about your mum then?” She tried again one of the first questions she’d brought up earlier.

Rose rolled her eyes and stood up again. “She’s not dead, if that’s what you think.” She answered vaguely as she went down the stairs leading to the corridor, and Amy sighed before chasing after her.

“What did happen then?” Amy persisted, mentally going through the list of people the alien couple had taken them to meet so far.

“We found a parallel Earth where my dad didn’t die and she went there.” Rose answered shortly, leaving out all the important bits on purpose- that was a long story she really didn’t feel like going into.

“Parallel worlds? Can we go to those?” Amy asked excitedly as they turned a corner into Rose’s studio room. Simulated natural light filtered through the sky lights- casting long shadows across
the room from Rose’s multiple half-finished canvases, and half-filled bookshelves of oddities she’d picked up over her years of travelling.

Rose picked up the stack of files Jack had asked her to translate for him a few weeks ago and went over to the work desk to attempt to start and put a dent in them. “No, they’re blocked off.” She answered, taking a seat, and Amy hoisted herself up to sit on the desktop. “I was trapped in one for about fifteen minutes once, but the TARDIS was able to pull me back because of my connection to her.”

“Oh yeah, are you ever going to explain that to me?” Amy asked, tilting her head so that her hair would fall into Rose’s view of the alien files.

Rose looked up to Amy knowingly and sat back in her chair, twirling her pen. She was acting very much like an attention deprived child today and she was inclined to blame the boys lack of presence on that. ‘I think Amy’s missing you dear.’ She said to The Doctor, but all she got back was a distracted hum in response- he was clearly far too interested in whatever he was messing with to be of any use today. “Alright. My turn to ask questions.” She said out loud to Amy, deciding to change tactics.

Amy’s eyes glowed, and she smiled brightly as finally Rose was giving her her undivided attention. “Alright, shoot.” She said, swinging her legs excitedly.

Rose smirked. “You have been trying to tell us something for weeks now.” She said bluntly, watching as Amy’s shoulders fell. “So, because I love you, and because I’m not daft, I’ll say it for you. You and Rory are thinking you should go back to Leadworth.”

Amy’s eyes widened as they snapped up to meet hers. “How on Earth did you manage to guess that?”

Rose shrugged. “Take your pick. I’m good at reading people. I’ve seen it before.” Amy shrugged again at that and Rose shifted so she could meet her eyes. “Hey, no. It’s okay. I get it. This isn’t…” Rose drifted off as she tried to find the words to describe her unique life. “This isn’t something most people can do for a long time- especially when they still have things at home. I used to make The Doctor bring me home twice a month when I first started travelling.”

Amy perked up at that. “Really?”

Rose laughed good naturedly. “Really,” she nodded. “And the only thing I had was my mum and a boyfriend I didn’t want anymore-”

“You had a boyfriend?” Amy interrupted her incredulously. The image of Rose with anyone who wasn’t The Doctor completely throwing her for a loop.

Rose snorted, guessing Amy’s thoughts- wait until she finds out The Doctor had been married (multiple times) before he met Rose. “Mm. He’s married to one of our former companions now.” Rose answered with alternative information rather than what Amy was really looking for- a trick she’d picked up from her husband over the years. “This isn’t something most people can do for a long time- especially when they still have things at home. I used to make The Doctor bring me home twice a month when I first started travelling.”

Amy perked up at that. “Really?”

Rose laughed good naturedly. “Really,” she nodded. “And the only thing I had was my mum and a boyfriend I didn’t want anymore-”

“You had a boyfriend?” Amy interrupted her incredulously. The image of Rose with anyone who wasn’t The Doctor completely throwing her for a loop.

Rose snorted, guessing Amy’s thoughts- wait until she finds out The Doctor had been married (multiple times) before he met Rose. “Mm. He’s married to one of our former companions now.” Rose answered with alternative information rather than what Amy was really looking for- a trick she’d picked up from her husband over the years. “As I was saying though. We’re honestly surprised you two haven’t asked to go back sooner.”

Amy leaned back and sighed, looking up to ceiling as she tried to find an answer for that. “We kept saying how long it’s been… but we didn’t really want to do anything about it until now. We love it- the travelling, you two, all the running…” She drifted off as she had to remind herself why they were wanting to go back to Leadworth again. “But we had only been dating a week before we ran away with you. And the Dream Lord reminded us- we can’t very well turn up back in Leadworth
having only had five minutes pass when it’s been two years for us and want to get married.”

Rose raised her eyebrows at that. Of all the explanations- she wasn’t expecting that one. “You want to get married?”

Amy started as she had her own words repeated back to her. “Well, not now- obviously. But eventually one day probably-” she cut herself off as she found herself rambling like a schoolgirl, and Rose giggled. She took a deep breath and tried again. “Can we do that though? Have both lives?”

Rose looked off, considering for a moment, before finally shrugging. “I don’t see why not. It’s not like when we invite people onto the TARDIS that we make them sign a contract giving their lives up.”

“It will be different though, won’t it?” Amy said, furrowing her brow.

“Different doesn’t always mean bad.” Rose answered wisely, but suddenly smiled mischievously. “Besides, we’ll probably just drop you off back home and only make it about ten minutes before we miss you and hop forward a month.”

The Doctor was already waiting for them in the console room when Amy dragged Rory up the stairs. The Time Lord clapped his hands together upon their entrance. “So! Rose tells me you want to go back to Leadworth! That’s fine, we offer all sort of of travel plans here aboard the TARDIS, well- is it still considered a travel plan when we’re discussing the not-travelling bits?” He rambled as he flew about the console, cutting himself off to grab Rose by the waist and spin her around until she was out of the way of the dematerialisation lever. He grinned up at them and pulled it happily, delighting in the familiar lurch of the ship and the thud that followed only a few moments later.

“Here we are! Leadworth! The morning after you left!” He announced. “And Rose don’t think I don’t see you checking the monitor.” He added, not bothering to look over to his wife as he did.

Rose only raised her eyebrow and looked over to Amy and Rory. “The first time he brought me home he’d told me it’d been twelve hours but-”

“It had been twelve months.” The Doctor interrupted her, finishing the story boredly. “I’m never going to live that one down, am I?”

Rose laughed merrily. “Not a chance, love.” She said, and he shrugged with a small smile at the a familiar and century-old banter.

Amy ran over to look over Rose’s shoulder at that though. She’d already had experience with the Doctor’s poor driving and she beat Rose by eleven years. “So are we in the right time then?” She asked, scanning the circular Gallifreyan on the screen without actually being able to read it.

The Doctor scoffed. “My driving isn’t that bad!” He protested, and Rory opened his mouth to make some sort of remark but the doctor cut him off, pointing at him sternly without looking at him. “Don’t” he warned- earning snorts or laughter from the girls.

Rory rolled his eyes and made his way towards the door. “It’ll be weird going back to work after all this. Like nothing has changed.” He shoved open the doors and stepped out into the same-old central Leadworth full of empty park benches and wandering old people.

“Really nothing.” Amy muttered under her breath as she came up beside him.
Rose and The Doctor shared dissatisfied looks as they shut the TARDIS doors behind them. A town couldn’t get further from life on the TARDIS than Leadworth. “Oh it’s not so bad…” Rose tried as she looked around them. She really didn’t appreciate her own life often enough.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels awkwardly and adjusted his bowtie to give his hands something to do. He looked down at his watch on impulse. “The fourth of April, 2009. Nine o’clock.” He rattled off before sighing and looking around the small town once more.

Rose tilted her head. “Is it really?” She asked, pulling his wrist towards her to see for herself. She’d only looked at Amy and Rory’s timelines in the TARDIS, seeing as she had no clue what the date had been when they first came here. “I’m only supposed to turn twenty-four in a few days. Instead I’m a hundred and twenty two.”

The Doctor furrowed his brow at that. “Your birthday was months ago.”

Rose giggled “Yeah twelve months ago to be exact.”

Rory snorted at The Doctor’s expression. “How can you two even keep up? Do dates even apply to you?”

Rose tilted her head as she considered how to answer that. “If we count it like we’ve been on Earth, I’ve been traveling with The Doctor for… one hundred and three years, one week and a day. But in your timelines I’ve only left Earth about five years ago…” Rose paused as she thought that through. “When we crash landed here twelve years ago, the TARDIS must have been trying to find a date that was aligned with our own timelines.”

Amy wrinkled her nose and shook her head. “Why 1996 though?”

Rose directed the question towards the ship and felt The Doctor doing the same, but all they got in response was a noncommittal shrug that they didn’t believe for a second. Rose sighed and patted the TARDIS. “She always takes us where we need to go.” She answered somewhat dreamily, but laughed as another important date flitted through her head. “You know, love,” she said to her husband with a cheeky grin, “our anniversary was eleven months ago.”

The Doctor’s eyes widened comically at that, and he cleared his throat before turning to Amy and Rory, rocking back on his heels. “Well looks like I have a lot of last-minute plans to make. We’ll be off then-” he pulled Rose by the hand and opened the TARDIS door. “Be back quick as you like, you know our number- toodles!” And with that he shut the ship’s door in their faces, cutting off Rose’s amused giggles, and seconds later the phone box was dematerialising without them.

Amy took a step forward as the wind swept through her hair and the last whirring sounds of the time-ship faded out, Rory following suit to take her hand in his. “Back to life then?” He asked her, not sounding as sure about it now that they were there.

Amy nodded and squeezed his hand as she looked over to him. “Yeah, back to life.”

Rose lifted herself onto the console, and around her the various controls shifted positions kindly in order to make room for her bum. The Doctor grinned at one of his favorite sights and moved to stand in between her legs, resting his hands on her hips. She grinned up at him with his favorite tongue-touched smile and his hearts melted at the sight. “Rose Tyler you are…” He drifted off and shook his head as words failed him in his effort to describe just how wonderful and truly amazing
his wife is to him. “Everything” He finally settled on, feeling the timelines sing in agreement to the word.

Rose raised her eyebrows at that, amused by his breathless romantics. “Everything, huh? That’s quite a lot.” She whispered, bringing her lips closer to his.

His breath stuttered only infinitesimally at her teasing. He smirked and felt her lips brush his own. “Yes you’re quite the handful.” He joked easily, spinning away from her a moment later to begin piloting the TARDIS through the vortex.

Rose’s shoulders fell and she rolled her eyes, shaking her head at The Doctor’s familiar antics, before pushing herself off the console to follow him. “Where are you taking us then?” She asked, peeking over his shoulder to the monitor.

He skipped over to the dematerialisation lever and grinned over to her before answering. “A century bonded to you Rose Tyler! It’s our anniversary and the kids are away- let’s have some fun.” He pulled the lever with a giddy giggle and the ship lurched delightfully towards their destination.

Amy groaned as she attempted to write yet another draft of the article for the Leadworth News Tribune. “You know what was better than this?” She said over her shoulder to Rory who was lounging casually on her bed. “My first draft!” She groaned loudly again and stood up, shuffling papers around and knocking one of her childhood replicas of the TARDIS onto the floor in the process. “You should meet my editor by the way. He’s an arse and keeps hitting on me while yelling. He’s got about as much charm as a dead slug.”

Rory flipped the magazine page disinterestedly. “Humans share 70% of our DNA with slugs.” He informed her without looking up.

Amy wrinkled her nose. “It shows in him.” She flopped down next to Rory on the bed and attempted to see over his arm at what he was reading, but gave up when it looked boring anyway. “It was easier being a kissogram.” She pouted towards the ceiling.

Rory raised his eyebrows at that but didn’t feel the need to dignify it with a proper response. “I wonder what percent of slug is Time Lord.” He mused instead.

“99 percent.” Amy answered, leaning over to grab the replica TARDIS from the floor and spin it around in her hands.

“What’s the other one percent then?” Rory asked, tossing the magazine aside in favor of watching Amy repeatedly throw the paper-mache craft project from their childhood into the air.

Amy shrugged noncommittally, too exhausted to bother coming up with a clever response. “Time stuff” she answered boredly before shifting to cuddle into her boyfriend’s side and begin her attempt at catching up on some much-needed sleep.

The Doctor and Rose had a habit of celebrating things sort of more around the actual date rather than the date itself- as they were often either remembering a ahead of time, and then promptly forgetting it in the mess of their hectic lives, or otherwise remembering it two weeks after the date had already passed in their timelines. So it was just best that they celebrate when they remember rather than try to remember again later.
So they decided to celebrate their anniversary first, and then Rose’s birthday once they had Amy and Rory with them again.

The finest resort on the planet Barcelona knew the alien couple so well that nearly every generation of employee knew them, and how to best accommodate them, so the Doctor didn’t bother being too careful on landing, instead choosing to grab Rose by the waist and spin her around the console in a spontaneous and clumsy waltz.

Rose let out a surprised noise when her husband pulled her to him, that dissolved into delighted laugh as he twirled her. “You’re so beautiful, love.” The Doctor breathed as she fell into his chest once more, and they continued to sway to the sounds of the TARDIS.

Rose flushed, still awed by how in a hundred years she was still as in love with this man as she was on the day she married him- if not more so (as impossible as she thought that was). She shook her head breathlessly, and ran her hand down his face reverently, before coming up on her toes to meet him in a kiss. She was always better with actions than words.

She’d meant to keep it chaste, but as her husband moved to deepen the kiss- she was loathe to protest, instead finding herself melting further into his arms as his hands fell further down her hips to grab at her bum while hers ran through his wonderful hair.

The Doctor groaned in her mouth as her nails scraped slightly into his scalp and pressed his hips more insistently into hers so she could feel-

The TARDIS dinged loudly to get their attention suddenly, and they both sighed as they broke apart to rest their foreheads together. The Doctor looked up to the ship’s ceiling annoyed, but Rose only giggled. “’Spose we should greet the people waiting for us in the lobby we just landed in.” She said, nodding towards the monitor that was indeed showing the interior of their favorite Barcelonian resort.

Rose pulled away to rifle through the bags the TARDIS had taken the liberty of packing for them while The Doctor clicked his tongue in annoyance. “I meant to land on the beach.” He exasperated, scrolling through the coordinates to see where he went wrong.

“Last time we landed on the beach she nearly got towed.” Rose said distractedly as she held up the turquoise sun dress she’d forgotten about ages ago.

The Doctor snorted. “Yeah, I’d like to see them try.” Rose let out a small laugh, after nearly losing the TARDIS to the Daleks they’d taken nearly eight months of their lives modifying the ship for better security.

“Well, it’s still rude.” She said, throwing a significant look over her shoulder that he gave a quick, somewhat snarky smirk, and eyebrow flash to.

Amy squealed, and laughed merrily as Rory caught her by the waist and spun her around a few times before she could get her feet back on the ground. The elderly couple on the bench nearby smiled politely at them as Rory set her down, and Amy waved sillily, a goofy grin still plastered on her face. “Sorry,” she said breathlessly.

The woman only shook her head with a smile though. “Nothing to be sorry about dear. I remember when we were that young… seems like only yesterday.” Her and her husband both gained nostalgic smiles as they remembered the days gone past.
Yeah, enjoy those hips while they last.” The old man joked happily, jostling his cane a bit at them for emphasis, and pulling his wife closer to him as she laughed at his cheek.

Amy gave a short nod and salute. “Yes sir,” she said, mock-seriously, before taking Rory by the hand to pull him further down the path they were covering before she’d decided to run away from him for the fun of it. She breathed in deeply. “Y’know… I missed this bit.” She said eventually.

Rory nodded to himself, looking around, before realizing he didn’t know which part she was referring to. “Which bit is that then?” He asked.

She squeezed his hand and looked back to the the couple they’d just spoken to. “The home part. Feeling like I fit in everywhere I go- rather than just constantly being a visitor.”

Rory nodded more thoughtfully at that, never having thought of it like that, but suddenly understanding that warm feeling that’s been resting at the bottom of his chest since they returned to Leadworth. “Yeah… yeah, the adventuring.” He started.

“It’s great!” Amy interrupted, catching up and unable to help herself- she was a lot like The Doctor in that respect. “But something about home…”

“We’re not as nomadic as them.” Rory summarized as she drifted off again, and Amy laughed, looking up to the sky. The sun was beginning to set and paint their little corner of Earth in pinks and purples. Even despite loving being home, her heart couldn’t help but ache to see The Doctor and Rose again.

“Okay,” Rose started, flopping back on the lavender-toned sand of Barcelona, “I miss them.”

The Doctor was standing over her, still dripping from their dip into the sea, and Rose giggled as he shook his hair out like a dog- spraying her with water droplets. “I think two weeks is our max for staying in one place.” He mused after a moment, plopping down next to her.

Rose admired the muscles moving in his back as he stretched his arms out in front of him while he spoke. It wasn’t often she saw her husband in daylight with less than three layers of clothing on, and she was going to appreciate it while she could- especially if they were leaving soon.

The Doctor caught on to her rogue train of thought. “See something you like, dear?” He asked cheekily, looking at her over his shoulder.

Rose blushed at being caught in the act, but quickly recovered, huffing and sitting up to hit him lightly on the arm. She stood up quickly, and bent over to begin brushing the sand from her skin- she felt The Doctor’s mood shift though before she could get to far in the process. “Think I could say the same to you, love.” She teased, looking around her knee to see The Doctor ogling her bum. She laughed at his flustered response and straightened out again, yanking her towel up with her, but not bothering to wrap it around her sun-dried skin. “Let’s go pick up Amy and Rory.” She said, before leaving her bespotted other half to begin her slow trek up the beach towards their hotel.

The Doctor watched her walk away for a moment. It was a sight to behold on any given day, but Rose bathed in the golden light of the Barcelonian suns, wearing nothing but the dark blue bikini that left very little to the imagination, could bring even the most sinful man to his knees at church. “Oh, I don’t know, I think we could spare a few more hours to ourselves before we get the children.” He yelled to her retreating form after a few moments.

Rose giggled and looked over to see him tripping over himself to catch up with her, and she
thanked the regeneration gods for her endearingly-clumsy husband. “A few hours huh? That’s a bit optimistic.” She teased him once he came close enough for her not to shout it.

He huffed, and moved to grab her by the waist and pull her closer, but she sidestepped him with a laugh- more for the fun of it rather than out of any desire to get away from him. She was rewarded with that small pout she loved to kiss away.

“Minx.” He chastised, taking a step closer. She didn’t step away this time, and he took the opportunity to successfully pull her towards him. “You’re going to pay for all this teasing.” He spoke softly in her ear, as his arm wrapped around her hips.

Rose couldn’t help the full body shiver than ran through her at his tone, and she felt his pride and pleasure run through the bond in response. She bit her lip though, never one to let him have the final word, and leaned up on her toes to reach his ear as well. “It’s only teasing if you don’t plan to follow through.” She whispered, before in one fluid motion she kissed him just deeply enough to leave him wanting more, and then spun away with a laugh.

“Bloody minx.” He growled, before chasing her up the beach, catching her by the waist just before she reached the flowering verbena at its edge.

The difference between six months and a single month was just too large- especially in relationship terms.

“We should have come back sooner!” Amy bemoaned, not for the first time, as she plopped down on the sofa next to Rory who’d just gotten off the phone with his nagging mum.

“Well it could be worse.” Rory tried, running his fingers through her hair as she situated her head on his lap. “Imagine how they’d be if we hadn’t known each other our entire lives.”

Amy wrinkled her nose at the thought, and huffed in resignation. Rory had been staying at her house most nights- because they’d somehow managed during their time on the TARDIS to become that couple that couldn’t sleep without each other. Her aunt was away the majority of the time anyway, and Amy hated being alone anymore, especially in her too-big house. To them, of course, it seemed perfectly ordinary, but to their small, old-fashioned village it was practically a front-page worthy scandal- made worse by the fact that to the town they’d only been dating a few weeks and have hardly gone through anything that could have solidified their relationship (like, for example, multiple near-death experiences had while saving the universe). “Don’t the people in this town have anything better to gossip about than our personal lives?” She complained.

Rory snorted mercilessly, “no.”

Amy sighed at her tiny town, but also to the universe at large, and suddenly wondered what Rose and The Doctor were up to- how long they’ve been away.

Halfway through the vortex back towards Amy and Rory the TARDIS knocked herself of course, apparently deciding that something couldn’t wait- despite her being a time machine.

And nearly sixteen hours later Rose was covered in dirt, dust, and grime from the mine explosion on Bandraginus 5. She huffed as they stumbled into the TARDIS, and leaned heavily against the railing before looking up and speaking directly to the ship. “Did you just reckon I needed another shower today then dear?”
In response the TARDIS hummed somewhat boredly in her mind, and gave the telepathic equivalent of a nod towards The Doctor who startled at the gesture. “What? Hm? Oh! Yes, would have caused a huge paradox if we hadn’t been there.” He explained, distantly wondering how in the chaos that the information hadn’t slipped through in his rambles like it usually tended to. He shook his head at Rose’s questioning look. “It’s a very long story, love. And Bandraginus 5 is only a small part of it… and it unfortunately doesn’t get a happy ending.”

Rose nodded, understanding the mourning flowing through the bond, and her heart suddenly ached for all the people she’d just met. She could only hope whatever horrible thing it is that happens, happens long after the time they’d just left- and if not, she’d rather not know. Ignorance truly was bliss when it came to the fate of thousands and fixed points in time. She sighed, resigned, and started up the stairs leading to the small landing for their bedroom door.

“Well, I know I don’t sleep nearly as much as I did when I was human, but I think it’s been about… ninety hours now since I last slept- and I think that’s too much for even you dear.” She said, pausing to turn around and lean over the railing to look down at her husband.

“So a shower, a kip, and then friends?” He offered, rocking forward on his toes a bit to let out the random energy that tended to build up in this body.

Rose hummed in a agreement, but paused again before turning to their door. “We’re going to need to put a cuppa in that checklist.” She told him, squinting a bit as she considered going back down for the tea she really felt she needed now.

The Doctor laughed at the very Rose statement, and waved her on. “Go get cleaned up love, I’ll put the kettle on.”

Amy rushed out her back door as the familiar sounds of the TARDIS materialising filled her ears. It was the same sound that used to swirl around her dreams, always, always, calling her name—giving her hope. Now she knew it well though it still filled her with that same childlike wonder and excitement.

“You’re back!” She enthused, pulling Rose into a hug the second they stepped out of the ship.

Rose laughed, “oh, did you ever doubt we would?” She asked, as she passed the girl off to The Doctor. Rose caught the small glimmer of fear flicker over Amy’s face before she could stop it, and Rose instantly regretted the question. Of course a part of her did. They’d left once already and didn’t show up for twelve years.

“How long has it been for you?” Amy asked, pulling them both by the hand and into the house where Rory was groggily coming down the stairs.

“Oh just two weeks.” The Doctor answered easily, rocking back on his heels to look around the kitchen that really hadn’t changed much in the twelve years that had passed since they’d last been in it. “First time back too- we figure we’d keep the order straight even if not the time.”

Amy nodded in understanding, even as her heart tightened a bit that it hadn’t just been ten minutes for them. She knew Rose had been joking, but it had still been a line she’d held close to her over the last month. “So, what adventures have you been up to then?” Rory asked from behind her, putting the kettle on as he spoke. “Saved any planets lately?”

Rose snorted and took a seat at the table before answering. “No we went on a bit of a holiday on
Barcelona-the-planet, and then helped a small mining disaster on Bandragiune 5 on the way here.”

Rory tilted his head. “Barcelona has a planet?” He asked, more fixated on Spain’s supposed deed to a world than his friends apparent heroism- as that was just commonplace.

“Nah, they’re not related.” The Doctor answered, opening up the fridge and finding a jar of blackcurrant jam. He was halfway to opening the jar and using his fingers in place of a spoon when he caught a slight telepathic nudge from Rose and looked up to see her raising her eyebrows at him in warning. So he held the jar up to Amy in silent question who rolled her eyes and nodded, going to grab a spoon for him. He flashed her a brilliant smile in thanks, and shoved the spoonful of jam in his mouth before speaking again. “Suh wher’ ‘ou wan’a go?” He asked around the utensil, earning eyerolls from both the girls and Rory.

Amy laughed and shook her head at him, before sighing and leaning against her counter, gratefully accepting the tea Rory handed her. She shrugged, “surprise us.” She answered, partly because that’s what she really wanted, but mostly because it wasn’t like she had a list of planets and worthwhile time periods ready and at her disposal.

Rose wrinkled her nose though. “Haven’t you got something in mind? A time? A country? We don’t have to leave Earth to have fun.”

Rory set his mug down as he thought that through. “What about… the Victorian Era? Royal balls and all that?” He suggested after a moment.

Amy brightened up at that. “Yeah! We’ve met the Queen, but not like… a real proper ball-dancing queen.”

The Doctor and Rose both sucked in a breath at that though. The Doctor scratched behind his neck awkwardly. “Yeah… we- we haven’t got the best relationship with British royalty in that time period.” He answered, voice going squeaky in the way it did when he’d really rather not get into it.

Behind him Rose snorted into her hand. “We’re sort of enemies of the crown.”

“How can you ‘sort of’ be enemies of the crown?” Rory asked incredulously.

Rose shrugged noncommittally. “Well they aren’t actively looking for us and hoping to lock us in the tower of London or anything… nowadays…” She drifted off as she vividly remembered getting chased down by the royal guard in the 15th century.

“Yeah, Elizabeth II loves us!” The Doctor exclaimed, going over to put a hand on his wife’s shoulder.

Amy shook her head with a small smile at the crazy lives of the people she calls her best friends. “Well that idea’s out then. So the cards are on your table again.”

Rose tilted her head at that though, suddenly having a thought. “Actually, not necessarily- well, not completely anyway.” She looked up to her husband and spoke more to him than the room at whole. “I’ve had that invitation to the New Year’s Ball sitting on my vanity for ages.”

“You’ve been invited to a royal ball despite being enemies of the crown?” Rory asked incredulously once more.

The Doctor looked over to him. “Yes, actually, but no- not this one.” At Rory’s (hesitant) nod in understanding he went on. “There’s a planet, Cashel- human, populated in the 43rd century. It’s a lot like Earth except it’s only got two continents, north and south, and they’re run by kingdoms-
Tollund and Lindow.

Amy raised a brow, “What, and they’re dressing like it’s the Victorian Era in the 43rd century?” She asked, ready to be told it’s a futuristic, holographic-wearing, royal ball.

“Yes.” Rose and The Doctor chorused though, without missing a beat. Rose shrugged, “They were feeling nostalgic when they found Cashel. It’s castles, but with plumbing and air con.”

“All the fun of Victorian England, without the horrible smell!” The Doctor exclaimed happily, with a goofy smile on his face that Amy couldn’t help but laugh at.

“What are we waiting for then?” She grinned.

Rose pulled Amy in the wardrobe room the second they were in the vortex. “This is the fun part.” She said, eyes shining as she flung open the door.

Amy, whose hand was still tightly clasped in Rose’s, squeezed tighter and held back a gasp at the sight before her. The normal haphazard assortment of jumpers and shirts that normally filled the room was instead replaced with row after row of beautiful ball gown after beautiful ball gown.

Amy thought she was going to be overwhelmed by choices, but as it turned out the TARDIS was in her head and had her back, lighting up the lights on the floor to lead her to a rack specific to her tastes and color palette, and she began flicking through the dresses with giddy joy threatening to bubble over.

Meanwhile Rose strode over to her vanity and gently plucked up the dress already hanging on the full length mirror. She’d decided a long time ago to just let the TARDIS decide what she was going to wear, and her lovely ship has yet to fail her.

Waiting for her was a gorgeous dusty-rose colored satin ball gown with golden lace beading adorning the bodice that flowed down to half-way down the skirt before tapering off like flowing ivy. Rose sighed reverently at the dress as she ran her fingers over the smooth fabric, silently thanking her home for knowing exactly what she wanted before even she did herself.

Amy came up behind her, two dresses draped over her arm. “You gotta help me choose.” She said desperately, holding both gowns up for Rose to see.

In her right hand hung a dark blue dress that was gorgeous, but didn’t hold a candle to the teal number she held in her left. The green-blue shone off the silk gown brilliantly, and made Amy’s eyes pop even just resting next to her. All around the skirt silver lace lined the bottom and dotted it’s way up to the bodice, tying it together in way the blue dress just couldn’t with it’s simple design. “Teal, definitely.” Rose said, without hesitation.

Amy bit her lip and looked between the two dresses. “You think?”

The TARDIS chimed overhead, somewhat exasperatedly, and both girls laughed at the nosy ship. “I think we have a consensus.” Rose joked good naturedly.

Back in the console room the boys suits appeared folded neatly on the jump seats, and The Doctor let out a happy sound at the sight of the top hat and cane that joined the reddish-brown frock coat, wing tip shirt, and shiney-taupe silk puff tie. “Oh it’s been ages since I’ve worn one of these…” He
mumbled, picking up the familiar neck piece.

Behind him Rory snorted as he picked up his own traditional dark grey morning coat. “It’s been ages since you’ve worn most things, mate.”

“Oi!” The Doctor said indignantly over his shoulder, meaning to sound reprimanding, but only getting a laugh in response, making him grumble like the old-man he was trying very hard not to be at the moment and prove Rory’s point.

Rory shook his head, picked up his own teal cravat and silver vest, and held them up to The Doctor. “Think these are hints on what the girls are wearing?” He suggested, raising a brow.

The Doctor held up the champagne-golden vest to his chest. “Possibly.” He said, looking up to Rory with wide eyes as if they’d just made a grand discovery. It was a look and feeling Rory had become accustomed to when it came to being around The Doctor- he tended to think everything was a lot more monumental than it really was.

One of Rose’s favorite things about the dress-up adventures was getting to see her Doctor’s reaction to whatever beautiful thing she was wearing when she walked in the room- and she wasn’t disappointed this time either. His jaw went slack as she descended the stairs into the console room, as his eyes swept over her form- attempting to take in everything at once. Over the bond pulsed all his love and reverence, and Rose’s skin positively tingled with the affection she felt from him.

“Alright lads pick your chins up.” Amy said from behind her, and Rose finally looked away from her husband to see that Rory had a similar expression looking at Amy. Rose giggled at the sight they made, and allowed the still breathless Doctor to pull her out of the TARDIS and onto the waiting dance floor.

Later, Rose found herself dancing with Amy while their respective significant others went to get more champagne. “You look beautiful.” Rose said, not for the first time, as they twirled about the room.

Amy flushed, and tucked a stray curl behind her ear. Rose had piled her red hair on top of her head in an intricate bun, and she found her hands now constantly flitting around it making sure it hasn’t fallen. “So do you. Though I’m sure The Doctor has told you that half a dozen times by now.” She joked.

Rose rolled her eyes. “More than,” she giggled, and they both looked over to see the alien in question get roped into yet another conversation with the crown princess.

“Does that not bother you?” Amy asked, brow furrowing at the princess as she rather unsubtly twirled her hair and batted her eyelashes.

Rose sighed as she took in the exchange, but also took in her husbands incredibly-uncomfortable posture, and felt his displeasure through the bond, and couldn’t help but giggle again. She tapped her temple knowingly at Amy. “A hundred years with a bloke inside your head- jealousy sort of becomes a moot point.”

Amy huffed, and looked back over to the princess she had labeled spoiled and entitled early in the night. “Still. If that was Rory I’d be over there putting that little-”
Rose interrupted her with another giggle, and Amy looked over to her quizzically. “Sorry,” she said, shaking her head. “The Doctor said something funny…” She drifted off as Amy’s words caught up with her and she shrugged. “I married a fit and impressive bloke. I’m used to him getting hit on. The point is I know it hardly matters- I can also feel our timelines woven together with the fabric of space-time itself all throughout history and farther out than even I can see. I’m hardly threatened by that wispy grey timeline currently bothering both of us with her inane small talk.”

Amy rolled her eyes and spun them around again. “Yeah yeah I get it. A century of marriage and telepathy and the fabric of the universe and all that blah blah blah-” She cut herself off with a laugh as Rose scoffed and hit her playfully in the arm. “But still. Don’t you ever just want to stake your claim?” She insisted, eyes glimmering mischievously as a smirk played at her lips.

Rose sighed at the young girl and looked over to where her husband was currently backed into a wall from his efforts of trying to step away. “Every once and a while- sure. But if either of us did that every time the other was hit on we’d be walking bundles of nerves.”

As if the universe was helping her prove her point, in that moment a rather dashing blue-eyed, dark-haired, young man stepped up to them and held his hand out to Rose. “Mind if I cut in?” He asked her confidently.

Rose had to physically bite back her snort. The idea that any bloke thought he even had a chance when standing next to her husband was laughable. Being bonded to someone was a special kind of devotion, but it unfortunately wasn’t as obvious to the rest of the universe’s population as it was to them.

The Doctor appeared on her other side before she could formulate a response to that, and he gracefully took her hand in his own. “Sorry mate, this one’s taken.” He said, flashing his wedding ring, and Rose bit her lip to keep herself from laughing as the young man looked down to her own ringed finger.

To his credit, he only nodded regretfully. “Of course, my apologies.” He said politely, before stepping away again.

“Oh now see why does he get to do it then!” Amy complained loudly, just as Rory was stepping up to her.

“Do what now?” Rory asked, taking a sip of his drink as he handed the other glass to Amy who took it gratefully.

Amy didn’t answer him, however. “He goes all Oncoming Storm all the time!” Amy pouted, and Rose bit her lip again when beside her The Doctor furrowed his brow in confusion. “All these aliens always telling me what a force Rose Tyler is, when do I get to see that?”

Rose hid her giggle behind her hand. “He just gets grumpy easier is all- comes with age.” She answered easily, using the light teasing to subtly edge around the question of Bad Wolf.

“Oi! I’m getting real tired of all these digs at my age.” He reprimanded, looking around at all of them sternly- but the effect was of course lost in his puppy-dog face and overall childlike personality.

Amy crossed her arms and squinted at Rose though, not missing the move in their verbal game of chess. The older woman knew that Amy hadn’t meant that was him being the ‘Oncoming Storm’- as it were- but she was still of course able to avoid the indirect question by using the context against her. Inwardly, Amy felt she had a lot to learn from Rose in this game she often found
herself in with her. Either way though, she’d lost this round, and she allowed The Doctor to pull Rose away on a laugh and a twirl.

Later that night, they curled up in their pajamas, sat around the library's fireplace.

“So how’s normal life going then?” Rose asked, finally able to get back to basics after their spontaneous night out dancing.

Amy was sitting sideways on the sofa, back against the arm and legs draped over Rory’s lap, she sighed at the question, and took a sip of tea before answering. “Really quite well actually.” She answered honestly, with a look to Rory for confirmation.

Rory nodded thoughtfully. “It’s weird because well… it’s like the rest our life missed out on a huge chunk of important bits, and now we have to go back and sort of… catch up. But other than that it’s nice to get back to family and friends.” He explained slowly, trying to put into words what they’ve been mulling over for the last month.

Rose nodded in understanding though from where she was curled into The Doctor’s side on the other side of the couch. “When I first started travelling I used to go back to London just to see my mum and go out for drinks with friends. I didn’t have a job or anything like you two, so I didn’t need to stay, but I get just needing the normalcy every now and again.”

“But you don’t need it anymore?” Amy asked curiously.

Rose shrugged. “This is my new normal.” She answered easily, and looked up to her husband who was watching her carefully. “And I love it,” she assured him with a tongue-touched smile that was rewarded with a brilliant smile of his own.

Amy scoffed. “You two are disgusting.” She said dryly. To which the alien couple both stuck their tongues out at her.

A week on the TARDIS brought picnicking on Asgard, single-handedly repairing the economy on Algol, going back in time for lunch with David Bowie, ending the civil war on the human colony of Metralubit, and an evening spent exploring the city of New New York.

And in the blink of an eye they were back in Amy’s back garden.

“We’ll see you soon.” Rose promised as she wrapped Amy in a hug, already thinking she was going to walk right back into the TARDIS and skip forward.

She was in the middle of turning away when Amy grabbed her hand and quickly pulled her back. “Tell me when.” She begged, eyes pleading, and Rose suddenly wished they hadn’t landed in the garden where they’d abandoned her for twelves years- it was just poor judgement on her part.

Rose tilted her head in understanding and pulled her back into a hug. “Two months.” She mumbled into her shoulder. “But probably about 5 minutes for us.”

Amy tucked her head into Rose’s shoulder. “You promise?”

Rose’s heart broke at that, and to her left she felt the Doctor’s two as well. “We’ll triple check the coordinates.” He promised her as the girls pulled out of their second hug.
Rose tucked Amy’s hair behind her ear as she nodded reluctantly. “You sure you want to go?” She asked her, needing reassurance that they were doing the right thing here.

Amy nodded more insistently though. “We need to keep our normal lives in tact. I like it, I promise. Just not ready to lose you two.” Amy said, and she didn’t remember her parents, but she imagines that this is what it would feel like to leave them if she had them to leave.

“Oh, Amelia,” The Doctor started, looking at her meaningfully, “you’re never gonna lose us.” And he meant it, this girl had stolen his hearts the second he pulled himself out of the burning TARDIS, and he knew Rose felt the same way.

Amy nodded again and pulled them both into a collective hug again before pushing them away resolutely. “Okay, now go. Before I make you stay in my guest bedroom.” She looked over her shoulder to see Rory looking worriedly out the kitchen window, “we’ll be okay.” She said at the sight.

The Doctor kissed her forehead. “We’ll be right back.” He promised again, before taking Rose by the hand and leading her into the TARDIS with him. They didn’t look back, and for that Amy was thankful as the ship dematerialised.

A few weeks in Amy really missed them, and she pulled up her contacts to find Rose. After a moment of biting her lip while her thumb hovered over the ‘call’ button, she finally sighed and pressed it, really needing to be sure she hadn’t dreamt the last eight months of her life.

Rose answered on the third ring. “Hello dear,” she said easily, and Amy couldn’t help the grin that spread across her face at the voice.

“Hey Rose. I was just bored… and missing you guys.” Amy said honestly, pulling her sweater sleeves further down her arms and tucking her feet under her thighs.

There was a long pause, and Amy could tell Rose was pulling the phone away from her cheek to check the screen. “Oh, okay oh my god I’m glad I checked” Amy heard Rose mumble to herself before she pulled the phone back. “Sorry the TARDIS apparently redirected your phone call to much further in my future than it is for you.” She explained on a laugh. “What year is it where you are? Where are you?”

Amy knew the questions were only partly out of curiosity and mostly so that Rose wouldn’t reveal anything she shouldn’t, and she was inclined to lie, but she was more inclined to keep in tact the future where Rose easily answered her call on the third ring and didn’t ask who it was. “2009, Leadworth.” Amy answered, furrowing her brow a bit. “Where am I for you?”

Rose let out a surprised laugh. “Wow okay much further back than I thought then.” She said instead of answering Amy’s question, and Amy rolled her eyes as apparently this phone call was going to be another game of verbal chess. “When did you last see us then?” Rose asked, still clearly trying to figure out the exact timelines.

Amy sighed heavily, wanting to get past this part. “About a month ago, we came back to Leadworth after New New York.”

Rose laughed mischievously at that. “Oh I love it when this happens.”

Amy rolled her eyes again. “What? Knowing more about my future than I do? Isn’t that sort of par for the course for you?”
To Amy’s surprise Rose snorted, but other than that involuntary sound that Amy filed away for later, she predictably avoided the question. “New New York you said? Yeah the TARDIS rerouted the call because it’s only been about two and half minutes for us on your side.” She offered the new information easily instead of answering the question presented, in that way she often did- not unlike her husband.

Amy’s eyes widened at it though. “Oh my god I thought you were joking when you said that.”

Rose laughed again, but Amy was more interested in the sudden noise coming from somewhere else on Rose’s end. What sounded like a front door opening and a number of people filing through with shopping bags… but also voices that sounded a lot like her own, Rory’s, and The Doctor’s.

Amy’s hand flung to her mouth on a gasp. “You aren’t on the TARDIS!” She yelled. “Who’s that? Who’s there?” She asked quickly, standing up from the sofa to let the sudden build up of energy out.

Rose pulled the phone away from her ear though to talk to whoever just entered the room, and when Amy caught what sounded like the voice of a small child her heart started thrumming wildly, but she couldn’t make out any of the words spoken as Rose’s hand was apparently over the receiver. Then just as quickly Rose’s hand fell away and Amy could catch snidbits-

“-m give me the phone! I wanna talk to myself!” A scottish accent begged, and Amy gasped again at the familiar voice.

“Amelia, that’s a serious risk to the timelines and you know that.” The Doctor’s voice appeared, though it sounded far off like he was in a different part of whatever house they were in. Rory’s responding chuckle came from a similar direction.

A child’s voice came again, but Rose caught the receiver before the squeal could turn into words. “Amy, I love you, but I have to go.” Rose said eventually, and Amy could hear herself protesting behind her.

“Oh that’s just not fair.” Amy complained.

“Oh my god it’s in surround sound.” Rose laughed. “I have to go. Knowing you you’ll tell yourself the next ten years of-”

“It’s been ten years?” Amy interrupted, practically screaming, and she could feel Rose wince on the other end of the line.

“Oh, time to go. I promise I’ll see you soon. Or you’ll see me. Whatever. Gotta go. Love you.” She let out quickly, and the line clicked shut before Amy could reply.

Despite the abrupt end though Amy was still grinning down at her phone. She’d just won a game of verbal chess. Clearly, the Rose of the future was out of practice.

Another month passed quickly enough, and when Rose and The Doctor reappeared Amy decided not to tell them about the phone call- wanting to instead keep it as her little reassurance that everything was going turn out okay in the end. For once she didn’t want the reminder that time could be rewritten.

And before she knew it they were leaving again, but this time it was easier, and Amy found herself thanking the TARDIS for that.
Six months since they returned to Leadworth, it was October, and Rory had a hole burning in his pocket.

*It was going to seem fast to everyone else.*

*It’s fast for them.*

*But they’ve known each other since they were seven years old.*

*He’s known he’s wanted to marry her for at least that long.*

*They’ve been through so much together already.*

*There isn’t anyone else.*

*But what will she think?*

The thought process repeated in his head on a loop for days on end, and Rory was slowly starting to lose his mind. He was wandering through the corridors of the TARDIS, mumbling to himself, when he suddenly found himself standing in front of an unfamiliar door.

It was wooden -which wasn’t a popular choice in the time ship- but that wasn’t the interesting thing about it. A complicated series of gears, all engraved with Circular Gallifreyan, spiraled their way across the panels, ticking rhythmically and moving altogether like the world’s most complicated clock, and there wasn’t a handle to be spoken of.

Rory stared at the metalwork for a while, trying to figure out what exactly he was looking at, when suddenly the door flew open in front of him to reveal The Doctor sans coat but instead with welder’s goggles strapped around his head- which in of itself was just frightening. “Hello!” He greeted enthusiastically, flapping his gloved hands about as he did. “I was wondering why the TARDIS was flashing the lights. Blimey, you must have been standing out here for a while!”

Instead of confirming that he pointed at the alien curiously. “Why are you wearing welding gear?” He asked, somewhat hesitant of the answer.

“I’m glad you asked!” The Doctor exclaimed, happily pulling Rory inside the room by his arm, and shutting the door behind him.

Inside was a madman’s amalgamation of a workshop and a science lab. The walls were littered with tools, both one’s Rory recognized (or sort of recognized), and others more alien than Rory had ever seen before. The counter lining the room had nails and screws but also microscopes and petri dishes. In the far corner a telescope was set up at a window and a complicated series of what Rory could only assume was astrophysics notes and calculations written in Linear Gallifreyan surrounded the area on large sheets of butcher’s paper. At the massive desk in the center, The Doctor’s more recent attentions sat, and that was apparently today welding together large sheets of some alien metals- complete with a smelting pot set up to the side.

“Oh my god, you are mad.” Rory mumbled, wide eyed as The Doctor went over to pick up the monstrous welder he’d been using before answering the door.

The Doctor grinned widely and lit the flame. “Catching up now are we?” He laughed as Rory took a step back, but relented, putting the tools back down and moving the goggles to the top of his head. “Rose has been telling me to properly fix the hole the Titanic made in the console room for
ages. Just finally got all the parts.” He explained, moving aside a still-glowing sheet of metal.

Rory shook his head at the absurdity of that statement, but decided not to question it further, instead taking a seat on one of the (many) rolling chairs scattered about the room. The Doctor followed his lead, sitting behind his desk and pulling a microscope closer to him, apparently content with shifting his attentions to something less explosive (as far as Rory could tell anyway) for the time being.

A comfortable silence passed where Rory watched The Doctor inspect some sort of glowing space-rock and write more notes in the one language the TARDIS wouldn’t translate for him. Rory knew that The Doctor was waiting for him to speak first. That the TARDIS had brought him here for a reason and The Doctor knew it. But everytime Rory attempted to open his mouth the words got stuck somewhere in the back of his throat.

Finally, The Doctor leant back in his chair and sighed. “We were on the planet Aeternum.” He started, and went on before Rory could start to question what he was talking about. “The planet is located right where one of the largests time rifts once existed. Time is at its purest state there, and many people believe that a promise made on Aeternum can withstand the tests of time.” He gave a sideways look to Rory and saw dawning understanding as the human realized that he’d known all along why he’d shown up at his door. “I didn’t tell Rose that at the time of course, because I was a coward.”

“How did you know-” Rory finally interrupted.

“I carried that ring around in my pocket for months. And I looked exactly like you do right now that entire time.” Rory flushed at that, and The Doctor went on. “I’d bought the ring shortly after we’d realized that she was telepathic, but before we were even properly-” He cut himself off, as there was really no way to explain the early stages of their relationship. It seemed they were in the middle of it before they’d even realized they’d started. “We didn’t even know just how much Time Lord she was until we were already bonded.”

“You didn’t know she was immortal before then?” Rory asked incredulously.

“No immortal.” The Doctor corrected gently. “Regenerative, and non-aging. And no, I’d already accepted that I was going to lose her before I realized I didn’t have to.”

“But you wanted to bond anyway?” Rory asked reverently. Rose had already explained to him that telepathic marriage bonds were forever. They couldn’t be undone, and if they were forced to break it hurt.

The Doctor just smiled in response, communicating what words couldn’t- he loved her, he loves her, it was going to hurt either way. “Rings weren’t a thing on Gallifrey, but I knew it would be important to Rose.” He said instead of answering the question out loud.

“But how did you do it?” Rory asked desperately, leaning forward as he did.

He smiled slowly as his features turned nostalgic. “I turned to her and I asked her ‘How long are you going to stay with me?’ and she just smiled and said ‘Forever’- just like that, like it was the easiest thing in the world! So I pulled out the ring, and asked her to share a marriage bond with me.” The Doctor answered quietly, looking at a point somewhere behind Rory, though not seeing it- clearly lost in the memory.

Rory broke the silence after a moment. “Yeah well there’s no way I can top that one, mate.” He joked, earning a surprised laugh from The Doctor.
A month into Rory’s and Amy’s future but only about a week into The Doctor’s and Rose’s the TARDIS materialised a little ways outside Leadworth on top of a grassy hill. They stepped out to find Amy swept off her feet in Rory’s arms- a ring adorning her left hand.

Two months later Amy huffed in frustration as she threw yet another bridal magazine down. Her bridesmaids had just left, and despite the fact that they’d just spent hours making plans she felt like she didn’t have a single thing down. Amy felt the sofa shift next to her and looked around her elbow to see Rose sitting down and offering her a cuppa. She took in gratefully.

“It’ll be okay.” Rose assured her after she took a sip of the tea.

“There’s not enough time!” Amy protested.

“Amelia, you have free use of a time machine. You know that’s not true.” Rose reprimanded her gently, and Amy smirked as she remembered The Doctor using a similar tone and phrasing in her future. “You have the date, the venue, the color scheme, the tuxedos, the guest list, the invitations, and the majority of the decorations. You’re ahead of schedule dear. So why don’t you tell me what’s really bothering you?” Rose raised her eyebrows and sipped her tea knowingly.

Amy groaned into her hands.

“Sorry, what was that?” Rose asked, and Amy rolled her eyes, mumbling something unintelligible into her arm. “Didn’t quite catch that, dear.”

Amy groaned loudly again and finally pulled her hands away from her face. “I haven’t got a mum, okay?” She finally said loudly, mad at herself for it.

Rose’s features immediately softened, and she put her mug down to pull Amy closer so that the girl’s head rested on her shoulder. Amy spoke softly again. “I just feel like she should be here. I don’t remember her. But that’s what girls are always talking about. Planning their wedding with their mum, trying to pick out a dress that she doesn’t hate—”

Rose laughed, “I wanted so badly to avoid that argument that I got married in jeans.”

Amy pulled Rose’s left hand towards her and started spinning the ring there around her finger. “Tell me about your wedding.”

Rose used her free hand to brush her fingers through Amy’s hair. “It wasn’t really a wedding so much as a ceremony. The same day he proposed we flew the TARDIS to the light of the Medusa Cascade and said our vows… Then we tied our timelines together—”

Amy snorted, “you had a shotgun wedding.” She giggled.

Rose laughed as well, “Yeah that’s what my mum said when she found out too.”

Amy straightened up at that. “Your mum wasn’t there?”

Rose shook her head. “I felt bad once I saw how upset she was, but I couldn’t bring myself to regret it. Our wedding was exactly how I wanted it. It was just us -promising to be with each other forever.” Rose paused and tucked Amy’s hair behind her ear. “Which, is the most important part.” She said meaningfully.
Amy nodded, feeling better. After all, how could she yearn for a mother she never even had? “I still need to find a dress though.” She said eventually, earning a giggle from Rose.

“I think the TARDIS may be able to help you out there.” Rose said, grinning cheekily.

The next four months passed by in a whirlwind of planning and adventuring, and before they knew it it was the night before the wedding, and both Rose and The Doctor were getting panicky phone calls from the humans in their charge.

“What are you gonna do?” Rose asked, leaning against the console while The Doctor straightened his bowtie in the mirror.

“Giving them their wedding present early.” He answered vaguely, turning to his wife whose eyebrows were raised in question at him.

“But first you’re going to crash Rory’s stag party?”

“Oi! I was invited! And it’s not my fault he didn’t call before now.” He protested, but Rose only hummed at him in response, knowing her husband well enough to know he wasn’t going to just sit Rory down for a nice chat over a few pints.

“Just try and be a little subtle?” She requested shortly, before placing a kiss to his lips and wishing him luck, then disappearing around the corridor again, gone to deal with Amy who was currently wearing a hole into the floor of her studio with her pacing.

Nearly an hour later The Doctor burst out of his second cake of the evening (he’d gone to the wrong bar the first time- who knew there were so many girls coming out of cakes in Leadworth?). At least this one was wooden and not baked.

He broke through the paper, wide eyed at the sheer amount of noise coming from these blokes, and looked around wildly for Amy’s finance. He stood up slowly, brow furrowed as he worried he got it wrong again, but spotted the man of the hour as he turned. “Rory!” He exclaimed happily, and around him the music squealed to a halt. “That’s a relief! Thought I’d burst out of the wrong cake-again.” He grinned goofily, but Rory only continued to look at him with unamused features, arms crossing in front of him- a hard look to achieve while wearing a shirt with a photo of his face surrounded by a heart, but he managed.

The Doctor swallowed and looked around. “That reminds me, there’s a girl standing outside in a bikini. Could someone let her in and give her a jumper? -Lucy. Lovely girl.” He paused and then whispered “Diabetic.” Rory rolled his eyes because of course The Doctor had gotten to know the stripper.

“Doctor, what are you doing here?” He asked, raising his eyebrows at the seemingly mad man, while all his friends looked wholeheartedly disappointed and confused at the turn of events, but really Rory wasn’t sure why he expected anything different.

“Oi! Why does everyone keep forgetting that I was invited?” The Doctor pouted, though the effect was lost as he was still covered in bits of confetti from coming out of the cake.

“Not as a stripper!” Rory argued, giving a pointed look to the wooden contraption The Doctor was still stood in.
“Right yes well blessing in disguise. Lucy’s in nursing school. Could get a bit awkward somewhere down the road don’t you think?” The Doctor flapped his hands about as he spoke, looking around and running his palms down the side of his coat- a sure sign that he felt a bit uncomfortable now. “Anyway, Rory, I got your message. Let’s go to Rio!” He grinned goofily again, eyes wide in excitement, and Rory was helpless to do anything but agree.

Chapter End Notes

Rose’s dress
Amy’s dress

Comments keep writers writing ❤️
(like seriously they were a huge help to me these last few weeks)
She isn't here.

Chapter Summary

The Hungry Earth

Chapter Notes

ends about five minutes before the actual episode because it's a cliff hanger anyway but I wanted a different one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sparks flew around The Doctor as he swung gently on the swing underneath the console. His welding goggles we back and in full effect as he… did whatever it was he was doing. “The life out there, it dazzles!” He yelled through the floor, to where Rory was standing over him. Rose was sat on the jump seat while Amy paced back and forth on the opposite side. “I mean, it blinds you to the things that are important.” He clarified loudly. “I’ve seen it devour relationships and plans-” A small explosion went off, sending sparks flying on the console above him and Rory jumped as the floor underneath him lit up. “It’s meant to do that.” The Doctor said easily, and Rose snorted, but he went on as if nothing had happened. “-because for two people to have seen all that, to taste the glory, and then go back … it will tear you apart.” He finished his rant meaningfully and lifted his goggles to his head. “So! I’m sending you somewhere!” He announced, grinning happily through the floor to Rory as he swung back and forth beneath him. He jumped off the swing and ran up the stairs jauntily. “Think of it as a wedding present! Because frankly, it’s either this, or tokens.”

And with that, he pulled the dematerialisation lever.

When the ship landed The Doctor practically flew to the doors. “Behold!” He announced grandly, “Rio!” He opened the door to reveal… overcast skies and an old graveyard.

“Not really getting the whole sunshine carnival vibe.” Rory said dryly, stepping out after The Doctor. Behind him Amy giggled and Rose snorted.

“No!” The Doctor said, stepping up to Rory, but immediately getting distracted from whatever snark he was going to offer back. “-Ooh feel that though. What’s that?” He asked, rocking back on his heels, before striding purposefully further along the pavement and hopping up and down a few times. “Ground feels strange…” He continued hopping until he looked around to see the rest of them staring at him dubiously. “Just me…” He finished awkwardly. “Wait- that’s weird…”

“What’s weird?” Rory asked, somewhat exasperatedly, as he knew he wasn’t going to get an answer.

“Doctor, stop trying to distract us. We’re in the wrong place!” Amy complained, stepping up to him, but The Doctor only ran right past her to the other side of the abandoned church. She switched tactics as they all followed him. “Rose, it’s freezing and I’ve dressed for Rio!” Rose only patted her arm distractedly though- clearly her and The Doctor were having a conversation, so Amy let
out a long suffering sigh. “You promised me a beach-” She started, but they were no longer
listening.

‘Blue grass.’ The Doctor said to Rose, standing up from where he’d been inspecting the ground,
holding the grass in question between his fingers. ‘Patches of it all around the graveyard.’ He
looked over to her, and she nodded in understanding and confirmation, but couldn’t offer any
further explanation, so he tucked it into his jacket pocket. “So, Earth, 2020-ish, ten years in your
future.” He said out loud as Amy and Rory came up to them. “Wrong continent for Rio, I’ll admit,
but it’s not a massive overshoot…” He attempted to defend, waving his hands a bit.

Amy was distracted already though as she looked across the field to a hill about a hundred meters
away. “Why are those people waving at us?” She asked, nodding to the two figures in the distance.
The Doctor’s and Rose’s gazes flickered flickered in between Amy and Rory and the two people
across the way. “No… it can’t be!” Rose mumbled, eyes glittering.

“It is!” The Doctor exclaimed, taking out the binoculars from his bigger-on-the-inside pockets.
“It’s you two!” He laughed.

Rory squinted at the now-familiar looking figures. “No, we’re here…” He argued. “How can we
be over there?”

“Ten years in your future, come to relive past glories I’d imagine…” The Doctor trailed off, and
looked down at his hands, taking that to mean they weren’t travelling anymore in ten years. Rose
put a hand to his arm though and gently reminded him that they could just be on Earth for a bit like
they had been the last year and he nodded gratefully at her. “Humans… you’re so nostalgic.” He
said out loud, smiling a bit at the tendencies of his favorite aliens.

Amy wasn’t surprised to see her and Rory were still together in ten years- actually, she was more
surprised to find herself not surprised. That is why they were getting married tomorrow ten years
ago, she supposes. Besides, she heard the proof on the phone last Summer. “Hey, let’s go and talk
to them!” She exclaimed, remembering her future self wanting to talk to her. “We can say hi to
Future Us! How cool is that?”

She was already attempting to pull Rory down the hill with her when the Doctor interrupted. “Uh-
nod, best not, really, best not.” He said quickly, having Amy pull to stop. “These things get
complicated very quickly, and- Oh look!” The Doctor had been looking around as he spoke and
was of course, distracted. “Big mining thing…” He trailed off, eyes dancing excitedly over the
giant yellow contraption in the distance.

Rose giggled. “Oh, you love a big mining thing.” She teased.

The Doctor looked back over to the humans, grinning. “See, way better than Rio! Rio doesn’t have
a big mining thing!”

“We’re not gonna go and have a look are we?” Amy moaned, leaning forward dramatically.

“Let’s go and have a look!” The Doctor exclaimed, as if he hadn’t heard her, pulling Rose down
the hill with him and calling over his shoulder. “Come on you two let’s go and see what they’re
doing!”

They eventually came to a large iron gate, blocking them from the the big mining thing -as it were.
“Restricted Access. No Unauthorised Personnel.” The Doctor read the posted sign aloud. He
smiled and humed, pulling out his screwdriver and pointing it at the padlock. It opened rather dramatically with a loud bang.

Amy reprimanded him with a sort of yelled-whisper. “That is breaking and entering!”

“What did I break?” The Doctor challenged, holding back a chuckle. “Sonicing and entering. Totally different.” He said easily, bending over to open the gate while over his back Amy and Rose shared amused looks and Rory rolled his eyes.

They ended up in partially underground facility, complete with concrete floors, metal walls, and random bits of hardwood. The Doctor bounced on his toes as they made their way through the narrow corridors, looking over to Rose. ‘It’s like it’s... less dense...’ Rose said, struggling to find the words to describe how the ground felt so different here.

“What about now? Can you feel it now?” The Doctor asked the two humans the same question he had been their entire descent to where they were now.

“I honestly have no idea what you’re on about.” Amy answered dryly, not unlike she had the last half a dozen times he’d asked. Beside her Rory shook his head—though he looked like he was actually making an attempt.

“The ground doesn’t feel like it should.” He mumbled, pulling the blue grass back from his pocket and sniffing it, twirling it between his fingers a bit as they continued to walk down the low ceilinged concrete corridor.

“It’s ten years in the future. Maybe how this ground feels is how it always feels.” Amy offered reasonably.

The Doctor breathed deeply. “Good thought, but no it doesn’t.” He said quickly, and from somewhere in the distance a loud beeping went up. ‘Hear that? Drill in startup mode.’ He pulled out the sonic as it beeped and gave the readings. “After waves of a recent seismological shift, and blue grass.” He held up the bit of earth for emphasis, and then on a whim shoved it in his mouth.

“Oh, have you always been this disgusting.” Amy complained, wrinkling her nose, as The Doctor spit the grass out again—quickly realizing what a horrible and pointless idea that had been. He’d gained no more information than the sonic had already given him.

The Doctor furrowed his brow. “No,” he said, and then raised his brows, “that’s recent.” He walked forward, and behind him Rose giggled at something Rory had mumbled to her. “What is in-” He started, turning the corner, “here.” He finished, making eye contact with an older Indian woman. “Hello!” He greeted happily, walking forward to allow the rest of them to follow him into the much more open and well lit room—though still just as industrial as the corridors before it.

“Uh, what are you doing here?” She demanded, until her eyes fell on Amy. “And what are you wearing?” She asked incredulously to Amy’s shorts, tights, and cowgirl boots.

“I dressed for Rio.” Amy grumbled, looking over to Rose and wondering how she’d managed to wear skinny jeans and a jumper. The TARDIS must have picked for her.

Rose, seeming to follow her train of thought, and patted her arm comfortably. “Trust me, I’ve been there.” She whispered reassuringly, earning a small smirk from Amy.

“Ministry of Drills, Earth and Science” The Doctor announced importantly, flashing the psychic paper. “New Ministry, quite big, just merged.” He rambled off. “There’s a lot of responsibility on our shoulders. I don’t like talking about it. What are you doing?” The Doctor squinted at her, eyes
flicking down to the monitor.

“None of your business.” The woman said shortly, walking around him to grab whatever device was hooked up to the computer.

“Where are you getting these readings from?” Rose asked, coming next to The Doctor to read the insane numbers and strange chemical readouts scrolling through the monitor- there’s no way they could be from Earth.

“Under the soil.” She answered vaguely, and Rose huffed in frustration while The Doctor squinted and looked around.

An older gentleman entered then. “The drill’s up and running again!” He announced, as if that wasn’t obvious from the noise, but paused as he took in the new arrivals. “What’s going on? Who are these people?” He asked, rather rudely posing the question towards his colleague rather than them.

The Doctor knelt down to the hole in the concrete though instead of answering, and ran some of the dirt through his fingers. “Why is there a big patch of earth in the middle of your floor?” He asked, having found that people tend to forget they had a question if you ask one of your own about the problem. Something about human need to be helped and be helpful.

“We don’t know. It just appeared overnight.” The woman answered boredly, but with an underlying tone of worry, looking over her shoulder to him.

Rose’s eyes widened. ‘*Something’s wrong with the ground.*’ She reiterated, causing the Doctor to stand up quickly as her theories mixed with his own. “Good. Right. You all need to get out of here very fast.” He said, going back to the computer to pull up the readings again.

“What’s your name?” The Doctor asked, typing quickly.

“Nasreen Chaudhry.”

“Look at the screens, Nasreen, look at your readings.” He finally answered, notes of urgency entering his voice as he tried to get her to understand as quickly as possible.

“It’s moving.” Rose finished, coming up next to him.

“Hey! That’s specialised equipment! Get away from it!” The other man yelled, coming up behind them.

Nasreen didn’t seem as bothered though. Too interested in getting the answers the couple seemed to have. “What is?” She asked, looking between the screen and them.

Amy meanwhile was bent over the patch of earth as smoke started to form over it- like dry ice. “Doctor, this steam, is that a good thing?” Amy asked doubtfully, just as Rory knelt down beside her. Rose came to stand on her other side, frowning at the ground.

The Doctor turned around at Rose’s spike in worry. “Shouldn’t think so.” He mumbled quickly, walking around to where Rory stood. “It’s shifting when it *shouldn’t* be shifting.”

“What shouldn’t?” Nasreen asked insistently again, but before anyone could answer the whole room started shaking violently, sending shelves of lab equipment, tools, and files crashing to the
“The ground, the soil, the earth, moving.” The Doctor rambled quickly, barely audible over the noise, hands fidgeting as he looked around the room and to the computer for answers. “But how? Why?”

“Earthquake?” Rory asked, bending his knees for balance as the Earth shook beneath him.

“Doubt it.” The Doctor answered quickly, pacing now. “It’s only happening under this room…”

A small moment passed where nothing was spoken, the six of them only looking around at each other while the room quaked, metal and wood around them clanking together violently. Then suddenly large pieces of earth started collapsing in the floor -almost as if it was searching for them- and they all jumped back.

“It knows we’re here. It’s attacking us. The ground’s attacking us.” The Doctor yelled quickly.

“No, no, no, that’s not possible!” Nasreen argued frantically. She looked over to her colleague desperately. “Tony!”

The Doctor spoke over her though. “Under the circumstances I’d suggest… Run!” He yelled, and took off, Rory, Nasreen, and Tony close on his heels.

The ground crumbled under Rose on her third step and she let out an involuntary scream. “Rose!” The Doctor yelled, spinning around to see his wife already knee deep in the dirt, and Amy stopped next to her, wide eyed with a hole between them.

“Amy, run!” Rose ordered, but of course the Scot didn’t listen, choosing instead to jump the hole to get to her. The ground crumbled under her feet as soon as she landed.

“Amy!” The Doctor and Rory yelled together, and they both ran forward to grab at their respective others, too desperate to save them to think of their own safety.

“It’s pulling me down!” Amy yelled, grabbing desperately at Rose until Rory came. “Something’s got me!” She yelled to him, and her and Rose both fell to waist deep as they reached them.

“I’ve got you!” The Doctor yelled frantically to Rose, on his stomach trying to gain leverage against whatever was pulling at his wife- pulling her away from him.

“Don’t let go.” Rose answered desperately, gripping his hand for dear life.

“Never.” He said with so much conviction Rose could almost convince herself they were going to be okay.

Amy was hyperventilating. “Doctor, what is it? Why is it doing this?” She begged desperately, knuckles turning white as she held onto Rory.

The Doctor didn’t answer, too preoccupied with Rose. “Stay calm,” Rory said, nursing training kicking in, even as his voice shook. “Just keep hold of my hand. Don’t let go.” It sounded like a prayer.

“Your drill, shut it down!” The Doctor ordered over his shoulder, squatting now, with one hand holding Rose up by her armpit.

Next to him Rory’s hand slipped and Amy fell further, even with Rose now. “It’s pulling me!
Something is pulling!” She yelled, desperately holding her hand out until Rory could grab it again.

“Doctor,” Rose started, as she fell a few more inches.

“Don’t say it. I’m not letting you go, Rose. I’m not losing you. Not again.” He rambled frantically as he struggled to keep hold of her hand.

“I love you.” Rose whispered, tears in her eyes, and seconds later the earth came over face.

“No! No! No!” The Doctor yelled, tears streaming down his face as he struggled and the dirt swallowed his wife. “Rose! No!” He dug desperately at the dirt “No. No. No.” He repeated, over and over again, staring at the place where Rose had been. Where she’d slipped through his fingers.

“I don’t wanna suffocate under there.” Amy whispered, eyes wide with fear.

Rory shook his head and adjusted his hold on her. “Don’t give up. If they just turn off-”

“Rory-” Amy interrupted, but she couldn’t finish. Earth was filling her nose, and she had to let go for hope there was air on the other side.

“Amy!” Rory yelled, but it was too late—she was gone. He sat silently next to The Doctor who continued to ramble madly, both of them with tears in their eyes.

Seconds later the drill turned off; the room stilled.

Rory allowed The Doctor to quiet down before he spoke. “Are they alive?” He asked finally, closing his eyes for fear of the answer.

Pain radiated off of The Doctor in waves. His eyes closed slowly, and a second later he stood up, not happily, more robotically, but at least he was standing. “Yes.” He said, focusing on the bond that definitely wasn’t broken—just dormant. “Unconscious, but—alive.”

Rory breathed a sigh of relief, neither one of them saying that they didn’t know for sure about Amy—their hope too fragile to risk breaking it with words.

Nasreen and Tony ran in then. “Where are they?” Nasreen asked, but taking in at their grief-stricken faces and already knowing the answer.

“She’s gone.” The Doctor said quietly, still staring at the dirt where his wife had been. His suffering too apparent to wonder why he only spoke of Rose. “The ground took her.” He sounded like he was on the edge of a cliff. He made short eye contact with Rory and started pacing madly in impulse. His thoughts were racing and Rose wasn’t there—she isn’t here—she isn’t—

“Is that what happened to Mo?” Tony asked, motioning to the Earth. “Are they dead?”

The words sounded far away, but The Doctor shook his head, running on autopilot, and paused for an explanation that wasn’t ‘I can feel my telepathic wife in my head, but only sort of.’ “It’s not quicksand.” He said after a moment. “It didn’t just sink. Something pulled her in. It wanted her.” He made a vague, empty motion with his hands. She isn’t here—

“The ground wanted her?” Nasreen asked incredulously.

The Doctor continued pacing, shoulders slightly hunched. “You said the ground was dormant. Just a patch of earth when you first saw it this morning.” He rambled, they hadn’t said that, but he was right. “And the drill… had been stopped.” He paused as the idea finally crashed through the
jumbled wall of thoughts.

“That’s right.” Tony confirmed, waiting for him to go on.

“But when they restarted the drill the ground fought back.” Rory finished The Doctor’s thought process for him- an act for which The Doctor was grateful, as that was usually Rose’s job, but she isn’t here-

Nasreen let out another disbelieving sound. “So what, the ground wants to stop us drilling? Doctor, that’s ridiculous.”

The Doctor was frankly getting tired of her constant insistence that things that were clearly happening weren’t. (She isn’t here). He knelt down to sonic the ground again. “I’m not saying that, and it’s not ridiculous- I just don’t think it’s right.” He said shortly, reading the screwdriver, and then letting out a wild chuckle, sounding for all the universe like the madman he always claimed to be. “Oh- of course.” He spread his arms wide and clicked the screwdriver shut again. “It’s bio-programming.”

“What?” Nasreen asked.

“Bio-programming.” The Doctor said again, louder- as if the volume explained it. “Oh!” He clapped, “Clever!” He growled, pacing again. “You use bio-signals to resonate the internal molecular structure of natural objects. It’s mainly used in engineering and construction, mostly jungle planets- but that’s way in the future, and not here. What’s it doing here?” The Doctor rambled on impulse, letting the stray thoughts out- the okay thoughts. He wrung his hands together and waved them about in a futile attempt to expel the pent up energy.

“Sorry did you just say ‘jungle planets’?” Nasreen interrupted incredulously.

“You’re not making any sense, man!” Tony asserted.

The Doctor stopped, annoyed. “Excuse me, I’m making perfect sense you’re just not keeping up.”

Rory, who was still on his knees, looked down at that, sure Rose would have corrected him for his rudeness had she been there. Of course, he probably wouldn’t have said that at all if Rose were there. He heard Nasreen make an indignant noise, and looked up to see her raised brows and crossed arms.

“The earth,” The Doctor went on, repeating himself slowly like he was holding back the full extent of his anger, “the ground beneath our feet was bio-programmed to attack.”

“Yeah,” Nasreen interrupted, holding her hand up. “Even if that were possible, which, by the way, it’s not, why?”

The Doctor glared at her unwillingness to accept new information, or put the pieces together herself, but he answered anyway. “Stop you drilling- Okay, so we find out what’s doing the bio-programming. We can find Rose, we can get her back- sh, sh, sh-” He cut himself off with his own shushing as another thought crashed though. “Have I gone mad? I’ve gone mad.” He said quickly, and Rory was inclined to agree.

“Doctor-” Nasreen started, shaking her head, no doubt to insist he was wrong again, but The Doctor cut her off with more shushing

“Silence! Absolute silence!” He ordered. Tony and Nasreen huffed indignantly, but otherwise held their tongues as The Doctor stepped over the hole to get in their faces as he was wont to do in high-
stress situations. “You stopped the drill, right?” He asked, eyes flicking wildly between them.

“Yes.” Nasreen answered, arms still crossed in front of her.

“And you’ve only got the one drill?”

Rory was a little worried that Nasreen was going to slap The Doctor at the look she gave him. “Yes.” She said more slowly, like she was speaking to a small child.

“You’re sure about that?” The Doctor went on, ignoring her tone.

“Yes.” Tony answered this time, and he seemed appropriately more worried.

The Doctor hopped back over the hole and laid down on his stomach, pressing his ear to the concrete. “So, if you shut the drill down- why can I still hear drilling?” He said, and at that everyone leaned down to hear the faint whirring. “It’s under the ground.” He mumbled.

“That’s not possible.” Tony argued this time, and Rory couldn’t help but roll his eyes. He caught himself thinking ‘Humans’ distastefully though, and immediately shook off the very Doctor-ish thought before it could take root. He stood up to follow The Doctor to the computers he was sonicing.

“What are you doing?!” Nasreen yelled, running forward to try and stop his arm, but The Doctor ignored her.

“Hacking into your records.” The Doctor answered without hesitation. “Probe reports, samples, sensors, good, just unite the data, make it all one big conversation, let’s have a look.” He rambled as his fingers flew across the keyboard. “So,” he started, pointing the the diagram, “we’re here, and this is your drill hole- 21.009 kilometres.” He broke off to look over to them appreciatively. “Well done.”

Tony raised his eyebrow at The Doctor’s constantly shifting tones, and Nasreen studied him weirdly, but nodded. “Thank you. It’s taken us a long time.” She said hesitantly.

“Why here though? Why did you drill on this sight?”

Nasreen seemed more comfortable than she had since they arrived with the familiar line of questioning. “We found patches of grass in this area that contained trace minerals unseen in this area for- 20 million years.” She answered quickly, her eyes revealing the excitement the prospect still had to her.

The Doctor scrunched his eyes closed and rubbed at his temple. How many times had human curiosity landed him in situations just like this one. (Except she isn’t here). “The blue grass? Oh, Nasreen, those trace minerals weren’t X marking the spot, saying ‘Dig Here.’ --They were a warning. ‘Stay Away.’” He squinted down at her as confused defiance painted her features. “Because while you’ve been drilling down…” He drifted off, closing his eyes as all the warning bells for Rose’s safety came blaring back to life. “Somebody else has been drilling up.” He leaned towards the monitors again and zoomed out to show the network of tunnels surrounding the drill hole.

“No, no,” Tony said, pointing to the screen, “we’ve surveyed that area.”

“You only saw what you went looking for.” The Doctor answered quickly, just before the computer started beeping, and three dots appeared blinking- travelling up through the tunnel network.
“What are they?” Rory asked, coming to stand beside The Doctor.


“Just my daughter and her family, the rest of the staff travel in.” Tony said, shaking his head, and it was the best news The Doctor had gotten all day. Less humans to get in the way.

The Doctor patted the computer. “Grab this equipment and follow me.” He said quickly, already starting to walk off.

Rory without question closed the industrial computer casing and picked up the wires behind it, but Nasreen of course argued. “Uh- why? What are we doing?”

The Doctor pivoted around quickly, clearly agitated, and walked back to her, voice raised as he answered. “That noise isn’t a drill. It’s a transport. Three of them, thirty kilometres down, rate of speed looks about 150 kilometres an hour. Should be here in…” He drifted off as he did the calculations. “Quite soon… Twelve minutes.” He took the computer from Rory and started walking off again. “Whatever bio-programmed the earth is on its way up. Now.” He finished, taking long strides out the door.

Seconds later they were running through the field separating the drill from the small village containing only three attached houses, a small farm, and the church they’d been at earlier. “Who are you anyway?” Nasreen insisted, “How can you know all this?”

A red streak of lightning-like energy streaked through the sky before anyone could answer. “No, no, no!” The Doctor mumbled, pulling the slingshot from his pocket and picking up a nearby rock. He aimed it at the sky, and just as the projectile was about to reach apogee it hit an invisible barrier— revealing more red-colored energy that fell like a dome around the area. The Doctor pulled out his screwdriver to scan it. “Energy signal originating from under the Earth. Invisible to the naked eye. We can’t get out and no one from the outside world can get in. We’re trapped.” Behind him a woman and her child came running up to them, catching the tail end of his explanation.

Rory allowed his panic to consume him for a only a second before stamping it down. “Okay. What about the TARDIS?” He asked calmly.

“The what?” Nasreen interrupted, but was promptly ignored.

“No— those energy patterns would play havoc with the circuits.” He answered quickly, still scanning the sky. “With a bit of time, maybe, but we’ve only got nine and a half minutes.” He finished, looking at his wrist to the watch Rose had giv— (She isn’t here).

“Nine and half minutes to what?” The mother asked, holding her son closer to her.

“We’re trapped and something is burrowing towards the surface.” Nasreen informed her, panicked.

The Doctor shook his head to get the hysterical thoughts of Rose out. “Get everyone inside the church.” He ordered quickly, turning around to pick up the equipment he’d set down earlier as they all ran ahead— save for Rory.

“She’s alive.” Rory reminded him quietly, coming up beside him.

“But she isn’t here.” The Doctor said shortly and miserably, continuing to look straight ahead as they made their way to the church.
And Rory knew he meant more than just physically. The Doctor had gotten so used to feeling Rose in his head constantly— even when she wasn’t by his side. And now she was in some unknown dangerous situation he couldn’t be sure of, while he was tasked with keeping everyone safe and his sanity in tact without her. Nevermind Rose, it would take a miracle to get The Doctor out of this alive.

The Doctor pivoted suddenly though so that he was face-to-face with Rory. “How are you so okay?” He asked, eyes searching his for the answers he didn’t have.

Rory shook his head. “Well, I’m not.” He answered honestly. “I’m worried. But I know the only way I’m ever going to see Amy again is if I stay sane enough for the both of us. Because I can’t do this on my own- and neither can you.”

The Doctor didn’t know how to respond to that level of honesty, so he did his best to convey his appreciation with a long look before turning and walking through the church doors. Rory sighed and followed him in.

“So,” the mother was saying, “we can’t get out, we can’t contact anyone, and something- the something that took my husband, is coming up through the earth.” She summarised, placing her hands on her hips.

The Doctor set the computer down and moved towards her. “Yes. If we move quickly enough, we can be ready-”

“No, stop.” She interrupted him, shaking her head and pointing at him angrily. “This has gone far enough. I mean, what is this?” She demanded, gritting her teeth as The Doctor walked away again, too busy to deal with more arguing.

“He’s telling the truth, love.” Tony answered calmly, looking over his shoulder to his daughter from where he was wiring up the equipment.

“Come on!” She continued though. “It’s not the first time we’ve had no mobile or phone signals! Reception’s always rubbish…” She shoved her hands in her pockets as her argument lost steam.

“Look, Ambrose, we saw their wives get taken, okay?” Nasreen said, putting her work down. They didn’t feel the need to correct her assumption that Amy was Rory’s wife- she nearly was anyhow. “You saw the lightning in the sky. I have seen the impossible today! And the only person who has made any sense of it, for me, is The Doctor.” She exclaimed, apparently finally deciding to stop her opposition against The Doctor now that she wasn’t the least-informed person in the room anymore.

“Him?” Ambrose asked incredulously.

The Doctor popped up from where he’d been hunched over looking for a socket. “Me!” He grinned manically.

Her son leant around to see The Doctor better. “Can you get my dad back?” He asked hopefully.

The Doctor’s hearts broke again at the question and he dropped the extension cord to give the boy his full attention as the rest of the room paused and looked towards him. “Yes.” He said, unwilling to let another child lose a parent- unable to say no to a kid who was relying on him. “But I need you to trust me.” He went on, speaking to the room at large again, “and do exactly as I say from this second onwards, because we are running out of time.” He spoke quickly, and stopped in front of the tear-filled face of Ambrose.
She shook her head minutely and raised her shoulders. “So tell us what to do.” She said eventually, voice breaking.

The Doctor clapped his hands together. “We have eight minutes to set up a line of defence. Bring me every phone, every camera, every piece of recording or transmitting device you can find.” He ordered, setting them all into action. “Every burglar alarm, every movement sensor, every security light! I want the whole area covered with sensors!” He yelled as they cleared out.

Two minutes later, after he’d sonicked every duct-taped, wired, and mounted spare electrical device they could find he glided back into the church to find the young boy (Elliot- Tony informed him) standing there, clearly waiting for instructions. “Right we need to be ready for whatever’s coming up.” He said, entering the room, and then pointing to Elliot- clapping him on the shoulder. “I need a map of the village- marking where the cameras are going.” He told him quickly as he walked by.

Elliot followed him. “I can’t do the words. I’m dyslexic.” He warned The Doctor worriedly.

The Doctor pivoted back around to lean down to his eye level. “Well that’s alright, I can’t make a decent meringue.” He informed the boy with a smirk. “Draw like your life depends on it, Elliot.” He winked, and Elliot grinned brilliantly at the confidence before running off to get his art supplies.

The Doctor walked around to the computers where Nasreen was monitoring the tunnels and Tony was routing the sensing equipment data to one of the monitors.”Works in quadrants,” he informed The Doctor as the various video feeds and audio data came up. “Every movement sensor and trip light we’ve got- if anything moves, we’ll know.”

“Good man!” The Doctor exclaimed, clapping the man on the ass before running off again. He’d seen a food van parked not far from the church that he wanted to inspect.

“Oi! What are you doing?” Ambrose demanded as he sonicked the door open and began assessing the vehicle.

“Resources!” He told her easily, not coming out to look at her. “Every little helps. What have you got here then? Warmer in the front, cold in the back?” He stepped out to confirm that the back part was indeed refrigerated.

“Bit chilly for a hideout, mind.” Ambrose commented, as she shoved an armful of tools, including a cricket bat, a shovel, a shotgun, and a taser into the front seat.

“What are those?” The Doctor asked, leaning around to see, his hands folded behind his back, as his suspicions were confirmed.

“Like you say, every little helps.” Ambrose answered easily, unaware of The Doctor’s suddenly rigid posture and too-tight smile.

The Doctor let out a long breath. “No, no weapons. It’s not the way I do things.” He told her.

Ambrose pulled her chin back. “Well you said we’re supposed to be defending ourselves!” She argued.

“Oh, Ambrose,” The Doctor said, stepping forward. “You’re better than this. I’m asking nicely. Put them away.” He had a smile on his lips, but the Oncoming Storm shone through his eyes. He didn’t wait for an answer before turning back to the church.
Elliot came running in seconds later, proudly presenting his map to The Doctor. “Oh, look at that!” He exclaimed, properly impressed and incredibly proud. “Dyslexia never stopped da Vinci or Einstein, and it’s not stopping you.” He told the boy, before typing in another command on the computer. Rory looked over from the other side of the room and thought, not for the first time, what a great father The Doctor would have made. His heart ached as the thought process brought Rose and Amy back to the forefront though.

Elliot preened, but furrowed his brow as he looked over The Doctor’s arm to see what he was messing with. “I don’t understand what you’re going to do?”

“Two-phased plan.” The Doctor told him, moving over so that Elliot could have a better look as he pointed out the important bits. “First, the cameras and sensors will let us know when something arrives. Second, if something does arrive, I use this to to send a sonic pulse through that network of devices—” He pulled out the screwdriver, and used it to point at the screen and then at Elliot, “—a pulse that would temporarily incapacitate most things in the universe.” He tossed the screwdriver in the air and caught it deftly, while Elliot grinned at him.

“Knock ‘em out. Cool.” He said, in much the same way any ten year old boy would.

The Doctor smiled, and grabbed the map, walking around to the other side of monitors to do more work. He looked up when he realized Elliot was still watching him. “Lovely place to grow up ‘round here.” He said, holding up the map of the village.

“Suppose,” Elliot shrugged. “I wanna live in a city one day though. Soon as I’m old enough, I’ll be off.” He told him, sounding for all the world like Rory used to when he was young. Rory looked down at his feet as he remembered why he’d stayed in Leadworth.

The Doctor smirked though. “I was the same way where I grew up.” He told the boy, and Rory’s head snapped up at the prospect of information about The Doctor’s alien childhood.

“Did you get away?” Elliot asked.

“Yeah.” The Doctor answered quietly, still scanning the computers- clearly trying not to think to hard about it- especially not while Rose wasn’t there. *(She isn’t here).*

“Do you ever miss it?” Elliot went on though, innocently voicing the concern of every small-town kid, too well-intentioned to be blamed for the pain the question brought to The Doctor’s eyes.

The Doctor looked over to the young, unsullied eyes of the boy, watching him expectantly. “So much.” He answered quietly, honestly.

Elliot, thankfully, knew enough about adults to see when they didn’t want to talk about something. “Is it monsters coming?” He asked, allowing the very real amounts of fear to show on his face for the first time since he’d found out his dad was missing. The Doctor studied him, pressing his lips together, and Elliot took that as answer enough. “Have you met monsters before?” He edited as The Doctor came back around to stand beside him.

“Yeah.” The Doctor answered shortly, forehead wrinkling a bit.

“Are you scared of them?” The boy asked, looking up at him, looking for assurance that it was okay to be afraid.

The Doctor gave him one better though. “No. They’re scared of me.” He said, smirking a bit.

Elliot paused. “Will you really get my dad back?” He asked finally what he really wanted to know.
“No question.” He said easily, even as his hearts were breaking. Maybe the Universe wouldn’t let him have his own child, but he’ll be damned if it keeps him from helping everyone else’s. At that, more thoughts of Rose flooded his senses though and it was all he could do to check the readings on the monitor and halfway process them. Elliot said something, but it sounded distant and fuzzy. The Doctor gave him a thumbs up without looking over, and a second later heard his footsteps running away. One minute left.

He stepped out the door to see Rory had gone back out to set up one last camera. “How you doin’?” He asked, before Rory could of him.

Rory looked up to the sky though, distracted. “It’s getting darker. How can it be getting dark so quickly?” He asked as a sort of black film surrounded them and quickly increased opacity.

“Shutting out light within the barricade.” The Doctor said swiftly, the answer coming to him on automatic. “Trying to isolate us in the dark…” The world looked as if it was midnight rather than twelve noon before The Doctor finished his sentence. “Which means-” A deep rumbling coming from the direction of the drill interrupted him. “It’s here.” He finished ominously, pulling Rory by the arm and hauling him back to the church door where Ambrose was already struggling with the lock.

“I can’t open it! It keeps sticking! The wood’s warped!” She complained loudly as The Doctor joined her in pushing, and Rory hovered on the edge.

“Anytime you want to help!” The Doctor yelled over his shoulder.

“Can’t you sonic it?” Rory squinted.

The Doctor huffed. “It doesn’t do wood.”

Rory blinked slowly. “That is rubbish.” He said dryly.

“Oi! Don’t diss the sonic!” The Doctor yelled angrily, and Rory rolled his eyes instead of answering, stepping up to help them force the door through its frame.

They all stumbled through seconds later and The Doctor ran to the computer while Ambrose slammed the door shut again. “Let’s see if we can get a fix.” He mumbled, typing in the command as all around them the rumbling increased, sending years worth of family storage off of their shelves. Suddenly though the wires sparked, and over head the light exploded into glass shards and smoke, forcing The Doctor to jump back with a yell.

Tony ran over to the power box and flipped breakers to no avail. “No power.” He announced unnecessarily.

“It’s deliberate.” The Doctor answered.

“What do we do now?” Rory asked, while next to him Nasreen and Ambrose flicked on their torches.

The Doctor started pacing wildly again in frustration. “Nothing! We’ve got nothing! They sent an energy surge to wreck our systems.”

Rory nodded, and recognized a Doctor too frazzled to help, and stepped in between him and the others before one of them could ask him another question he didn’t have the answer to and send
him over the edge again. “Is everyone okay? Is anyone hurt?” He asked, looking around and doing a mental headcount as they all answered. He paused on Ambrose as she nodded. “Where’s Elliot?” He asked her, pointing, brow furrowed.

She spun in a circle, and behind Rory The Doctor pulled to a halt. All around them the rumbling increased again, along with their panicked shouts for Elliot and rephrased questions of what was going on. Silence finally fell as whatever it was broke though the final layer of earth. “Who saw him last?” Ambrose demanded desperately.

The Doctor’s mouth dried. “I did.” He said, and all heads turned towards him.

“Where is he?” Ambrose asked, stepping forward, but the openly horrified look on The Doctor’s face didn’t disappear with sudden realization that the boy was hiding under the table like she hoped.

He searched his thoughts frantically for what Elliot had said before he ran off. He left something. He wanted to go get something. “He- he went to get headphones.” The Doctor answered finally as the fuzzy thought cleared up.

“And you let him go?!” Ambrose demanded angrily, and Rory thought it brave words coming from the mother who didn’t notice her kid was missing in the crisis. “He was out there on his own!”

“Hey, just, calm down.” Rory said, stepping between them while behind her Tony put his hand on his daughter’s shoulder to pull her back. “It’s no one’s fault.” He said, with a significant look to the woman who hadn’t thought to watch her son while they were being invaded by aliens. “We’ll find him.”

The Doctor’s hearts were beating wildly in his chest as he beat himself up internally—no Rose there to stop him from throwing punches at himself. No Rose there to have kept him from screwing up like this. No Rose to keep the rest of the world safe from him and his stupid—

She isn’t here, She isn’t here, She isn’t here.

Repeated like a mantra in the back of his mind right in the space where Rose was supposed to be. Where Rose was always supposed to be. The silence was deafening.

Loud banging suddenly interrupted his thoughts as Elliot screamed on the other side of the door. “Mum! Grandpa Tony! Let me in! Open the door! Something’s out here, let me in!” He yelled over and over again as his small form attempted to push the door that had taken three grown adults to open earlier.

They all ran to the door, Tony immediately pulling at the large cast iron lock as Ambrose and Nasreen pulled on the handle. By the time they got it open though the desperate yells had stopped, and Elliot had disappeared.

“Elliot!” Ambrose screamed running off in search of her child, Tony following suit. The Doctor yelled at them to stop, but they wouldn’t listen and he couldn’t blame them. He turned quickly to Rory who nodded in understanding, before following the distraught mum and her father. He heard her blood curdling scream seconds later, followed by grunts of pain from Tony and he followed the noise.

“What’s happened?” He asked frantically, skidding down the hill to where Tony was hunched over in pain as he held a spot on his neck.

“My dad’s hurt!” Ambrose yelled, hands flitting about her father’s wound.

“Get him into the church now.” The Doctor ordered, and then stepped in the direction of the
creature he’d only managed a glimpse of before in disappeared into the simulated night. He felt Rory step up behind him, and go over to Tony- training taking over.

“Elliots gone!” Ambrose sobbed. “They’ve killed him haven’t they?”

The Doctor paused, recognizing that pain, and his hearts clenched. “No, I don’t think so, no.” He told her. “They’ve taken four people when they could have just killed them up here.” He looked into her eyes deeply. “There is still hope, Ambrose.” He told her, a sentiment he couldn’t tell himself when he and Rose had lost Alina. “There is always hope.” Behind her Rory looked up from where we was checking Tony’s pulse, and spotted the tears hovering at the corners of The Doctor’s eyes.

“Then why have they taken him?” Ambrose demanded miserably.

“I don’t know.” The Doctor answered honestly. “I’ll find Elliot, I promise. Believe me, all I want to do is get my wife and my best friend and your husband and your child back home. But I can’t do that without stopping this attack first. Please get inside the church.”

Ambrose didn’t answer, still choking on her own tears, and she turned to help her father stand up, guiding him back to the church without further questioning.

“So what now?” Rory asked quickly, and The Doctor turned in a slow circle as he devised a plan.

Moments later he slid on the heat-signature sunnies, and smirked, stepping around the tree lining just next to the food van. Something rustled the undergrowth, and The Doctor took in the cold-blooded figure through the glasses. “I know who they are,” he sung to himself, and ran back over to the van he’d left Rory inside.

He tapped on the metal casually, whistling a short birdsong, and looking around surreptitiously. He opened the driver’s side door and grabbed the fire extinguisher. Shutting it in time to see the hissing reflection of the the homo reptilia. He grinned as it started running toward him, and spun away just in time- spraying the alien with the foam after it ran into the van. Rory came out screaming then, helping him grab the green bi-ped and shove (her?) into the back of the vehicle. “We got it!” Rory exclaimed as inside it thrashed around wildly. He raised his hand for a high-five, but pulled back as more rumbling shook the earth. “What’s that?”

“Sounds like they’re leaving.” The Doctor said, looking around.

“Without this one?” Rory asked, jutting his thumb towards the hissing van. The darkness cleared in answer though, revealing once again the overcast skies familiar with the area. “Looks like we scared them off.” He said, daring to hope.

The Doctor shut him down quickly though. “I don’t think so, no... Now both sides have hostages.”

Amy woke up slowly in a glass coffin. Inches from her face the wavy lines came into focus, and she attempted to spread her arms out but only made it a few centimeters before wood blocked her way. She looked around wildly as the fog in her mind cleared and panic started to set in. She pressed her hands against the glass desperately. “No…” She mumbled. “Can anyone hear me? I’m alive in here!” She yelled. “Let me out!”
She paused and breathed heavily as no answer came. “I know you’re out there!” She leaned forward as much as she could and pressed an accusatory figure to the glass. “My name is Amy Pond and you better get me the hell out of here or so help me I’m going to kick your backside!” A green and masked face leaned over her, but the texture of the coffin kept her from making out features. “Please?” She tried.

“Shh.” It said, and Amy pulled her chin back.

“Did you just shush me?” She asked incredulously, and then began pointing and yelling again. “Did you just shush me?” She banged on the glass angrily.

Gas started spilling around her before she could go on and panic set in again. “No, no, no, don’t do that! No gas! No gas!” She begged, choking. Seconds later she was unconscious again.

The Doctor stepped around the side of the church back to where Rory was waiting outside the door to the cellar guarding the alien. “So, I think I’ve met these creatures before.” He started, startling Rory into standing. “Different branch of the species, mind… but all the same. Let’s see if our friend’s thawed out…” He opened the door easily, taking the stairs two at a time to where they had her chained up.

“Are you sure?” Rory hesitated, following him halfway down until they were in view of the alien. “By yourself?”

“Very sure.” The Doctor answered easily, and Rory knew the tone. He was pretending to be really okay to hide the fact that he really wasn’t.

“But the sting…” Rory started to protest weakly, knowing it was an argument he wasn’t going to win.

“Venom gland takes at least 24 hours to recharge.” He mumbled, squinting through the poor lighting towards the creature. “Am I right?” He said louder, inclining his head towards her.

Rory looked over to him imploringly when she didn’t answer but continued to stare at them menacingly. “I’m fine.” The Doctor insisted, clapping him on the shoulder. “I know what I’m doing.”

He looked back over to the alien and sighed, nodding. Rose will kill him for this later. For now though, he did as he was told and left The Doctor to the interrogating.

The Doctor brushed his hands together as he descended the last few steps alone and made his way towards her. She crawled forward, curious of the man that approached her so carelessly. “I’m the Doctor.” He told her. “I’ve calm to talk.”

He put his hands up, palms out non threateningly. “I’m going to remove your mask.” He warned her as he knelt down, slowly lifting the silver bug-like mask away to reveal her green scaled face underneath. “You’re beautiful.” He said, grinning, happy to see a surviving member of a race he’d thought had died out years ago. She only continued to study him. “Remnant of a bygone age on Planet Earth… And by the way- lovely mode of travel! Geothermal currents projecting you up through a network of tunnels!” He complimented her, and her eyes widened in realization that he was smarter than she originally thought. “Gorgeous! Mind if I sit?” He asked, standing up to grab the fold up chair in the corner.

“Now,” he started, pulling the chair around. “Your people, have my wife.” He sat down, folding
his hands on his stomach and crossing his legs. “I want her back.” He looked at her through drawn
brows and she pulled back slightly at the suddenly hostile tone.

“Why did you come to the surface?” He went on though, voice light again. “What do you want?”
He tilted his head at her continued silence and smirked. “Oh I do hate a monologue. Give us a bit
back. How many are you?”

“I’m the last of my species.” She said finally.

The Doctor tilted his head. “Really?” He asked, but no, that didn’t makes sense. “No. ‘Last of the
Species,’ the Kemplari Defence.” He chuckled. “As an interrogation defence it’s a bit old hat, I’m
afraid.”

“I’m the last of my species.” She repeated, more forcefully.

-Too forceful for anyone who properly was the last. “No, you’re really not.” The Doctor said
slowly. “Because I’m the last of my species, and I know how that sits in a heart.” He glared down
at her. “So don’t insult me.”

She sat back, enough decency to show contrition for her claim, and The Doctor nodded.

“Let’s start again.” He said patiently. “Tell me your name.”

She drew her shoulders back. “Alaya.” She answered shortly.

“That’s a beautiful name, Alaya. My daughter’s name is Alina. Quite similar.” He said it mostly to
make her feel more comfortable, but also because it was a nice feeling. Being able to say that
without fear of having to answer the sad questions that followed. It was like playing a small game
of make-believe with an alien hostage. “How long has your tribe been sleeping under the Earth,
Alaya?”

She didn’t answer. Setting her jaw at his knowledge.

He continued to speak softly. “It’s not that difficult to work out. You’re 300 million years out of
your comfort zone. Question is, what woke you now?”

“We were attacked.” Alaya bit out.

He inclined his head, brow furrowing with dawning comprehension and its implications. “The
drill.”

“Our sensors detected a threat to our life support systems. The warrior class was activated to
prevent the assault.” Alaya glared up at him. “We will wipe the vermin from the surface and
reclaim our planet.” She declared through clenched teeth.

“Do we have to say ‘vermin’?” The Doctor exasperated. “They’re really very nice.”

“Primitive apes.” She threw back.

“Extraordinary species.” He reflected. “You attack them and they will fight back. But!” He held
his hand up. “There’s a peace to be brokered here. I can help you with that.” It wouldn’t be the first
time he negotiated peace between humans and another species, but it would be a first this early in
the human timeline.

“This land is ours.” She asserted. “We lived here long before the apes.”
“Doesn’t give you automatic rights to it now, I’m afraid.” The Doctor answered evenly. He shook his head. “Humans won’t give up the planet.”

Alaya didn’t hesitate. “So we destroy them.”

“You underestimate them”

“You underestimate us.”

“One tribe of homo reptilia against six billion humans? You’ve got your work cut out.” He warned.

She stood up at that, squaring her shoulders despite her chained wrists. “We did not initiate combat. But we can still win.” She bit out.

The Doctor studied her, quickly realizing that the way to a peace contract is not through the warrior class of a species. “Tell me where my wife is.” He said instead, jaw clenching as he worried for her again. “Give us back the people who were taken.”

“No.” She bit out, eyes glinting.

The Doctor breathed out heavily, and watched her, steadying his angry heart rates before speaking. “I’m not going to let you provoke a war, Alaya.” He said, standing up. “There will be no battle here today.”

“The fire of war is already lit. A massacre is due.” She said to his back.

He spun around at the words. “Not while I’m here.”

“I’ll gladly die for my cause what will you sacrifice for yours?” She spat, looking him up and down.

He only looked at her sadly though. It was obvious to him that the young warrior really knew very little of sacrifice. He’d already sacrificed so much. And those moments were hardly his most noble. He spun back around without a word, and made his way back up the stairs towards the humans.

“You’re going to what?” Rory demanded, sure Rose was going to kill him now.

“I’m going to go down, below the surface, to find the rest of the tribe, and talk to them.” He repeated more slowly, looking around the dusty chapel.

Ambrose squinted at him. “You’re going to negotiate with these aliens?” She asked incredulously, arms crossed in front of her.

The Doctor leaned back in the plastic-wrapped chair exasperatedly. “They’re not aliens! They’re Earth...liens.” Rory rolled his eyes at that, but continued to rub at the headache forming just behind his brow. “Once known as the Silurian race, or, some would argue, Eocenes, or homo reptilia.” He chuckled as he explained to the humans their far-distant ancestry. “Not monsters, not evil! Well-” He stood up, expelling the pent up energy and spun around. “Only as evil as you are!” He pointed to them as a whole. “The previous owners of the planet, that’s all.” He took in their disbelieving looks and smirked. “Look, from their point of view, you’re the invaders!” He exclaimed, sure Rose could do a better job at this. She was much better at perspectives. “Your drill was threatening their settlement!”
He paused to look around at all their faces, meeting each of their eyes individually. “Now,” He started, “the creature in the crypt. Her name is Alaya. She’s on of their warriors.” He informed them quietly, “and she’s my best bargaining chip. I need her alive… If she lives so do Elliot, and Mo, and Amy, and Rose-” He cut himself off as thoughts of she isn’t here invaded his mind- as if he needed reminding of the glaringly empty space beside him and the maddening silence inside his head. “I will find them.” He stressed, leaving no room for doubt in his tone.

The Doctor looked over to Rory who nodded at him encouragingly. He took a deep breath. “While I’m gone, you four people in this church, in this corner of Planet Earth, you have to be the best of humanity.” He told them, looking around seriously.

“And what if they come back?” Tony interrupted. “Shouldn’t we be-”

What they should be doing according to Tony though The Doctor wouldn’t know, as suddenly scorching pain coursed through his blood like fire. He yelled and cried out involuntarily, and fell to his knees. Rose’s screams of fear and pain echoed in his mind. They were hurting her. They were hurting her-

They were hurting her.

Chapter End Notes

(whoops)

(comments keep writers writing ❤️)
It took everything in him, but he was eventually able to put up barriers from Rose’s pain.

It was wrong. It was so so so incredibly horribly wrong and it hurt even worse than feeling her torture- having to block her out. But if he wanted to save her he had to be able to walk.

He stood up without word to the humans crowding around him, tears streaming down his face, and all but ran to the TARDIS. No more pissing around. He was getting his wife back.

The Doctor looked over his shoulder to see Nasreen quickly approaching him. “No, no, no!” He bit out, running the rest of the way to the doors to block her from them. “What are you doing?” He asked angrily, holding the door handle protectively.

“Coming with you, of course!” She exclaimed, like it was the most obvious thing in the world- a wide smile painted on her face in sharp contrast to the darkness currently storming over his hearts. She tapped the phone box excitedly. “What is it? Some kind of transport pod?”

His brows furrowed as he looked at her incredulously. “Sort of, but you’re not- coming with me.”

She pulled her chin back, raising her eyebrows. “I have spent all my life excavating the layers of this planet. And now, you want me to stand here while you go down into it? I don’t think so!” She insisted, jabbing him in the shoulder for emphasis. “Besides you’re clearly not in any fit state to-”

The Doctor cut her off, not wanting to hear any commentary on what kind of state he was in. He let out a long breath and looked at his watch. “I don’t have time to argue!” He yelled.

Nasreen nodded. “I thought we were in a rush?” She said, giving him a significant look.
“It’ll be dangerous.” He tried anyway.

She shrugged. “Eh, so’s crossing the road.” She answered casually.

The Doctor gritted his teeth as it was obvious he wasn’t winning this argument— not with the clock ticking down on Rose. “For goodness’ sake!” He let out, unlocking the TARDIS. “Alright, then! Come on!” He opened it quickly and shut the door on her— prepared to leave her if she spent too long speaking to the fast-approaching Tony.

When she entered through the doors a second later though he sighed as he set the coordinates for below the earth. “Welcome aboard the TARDIS.” He said as he ran around the console. It had been a while since he’d had to fly her by himself. “Don’t touch anything. Very precious.” He warned her, ignoring the comforting telepathic waves his ship was sending him. It was obvious their ship was as worried for Rose as he was.

“No way…” Nasreen let out as she looked around the bigger-on-the-inside police box. “But- but that’s—” She started, cutting herself off as she went up the stairs. “This is fantastic!” She exclaimed, and in any other circumstances he would have taken the time to delight in her joy. “What does it do?” She asked, laying her hands reverently on the console.

“Everything.” The Doctor answered shortly, getting more peeved at the incorrect pronoun than he normally would. “I’m hoping, if we’re going down, that barricade won’t interf-!” He was cut off by his own yell, making a mad attempt to grab onto the console, as suddenly the TARDIS started propelling itself downwards like a broken lift. “Have you touched something?” He demanded loudly above TARDIS’s alarms.

“No!” Nasreen answered, grabbing onto the railing as the ship tilted. “Isn’t this what it does?”

“I haven’t done anything!” He yelled back frantically, managing to get to the other side of the console. “We’ve been hijacked! I can’t stop it!” He fell back in the jumpseat and stood back up. “They must have sensed the electromagnetic field!” He reached the monitor and hung onto it for dear life as he read the Gallifreyan. “They’re pulling the TARDIS down into the Earth!” He looked out the window to see the miles of dirt flying past.

They fell to the glass floor when the ship came to a crashing halt. After a moment Nasreen pulled back on his brace as he laid there breathing heavily to get his attention. “Where are we?”

He didn’t answer, instead choosing to jump up and run out the door. Dirt fell onto his shoulders like rain as he exited, and he looked about the expansive underground cavern, whistling appreciatively. “Looks like we fell through the bottom of their tunnel systems.” He said, as Nasreen stepped out after him. He looked worriedly to the TARDIS as she made a sickly sound in his head. “Don’t suppose she was made to handle something like this…”

“How far down are we?” She asked, looking around.

The Doctor pulled on one of the vines hanging low above their heads. “A lot more than 21 kilometres.”

Nasreen looked around startled as she processed that. “So why aren’t we burning alive?”

He squinted at the valid question. “Don’t know. Interesting isn’t it?” He said, and spun around like a compass to follow the low frequency in the back of his mind that was his wife.

Nasreen huffed, shaking her head as her hands fell to her hips. “It’s like this is everyday to you!” She exclaimed to his back.
“Not everyday!” He yelled back, and then turned back on his heel to look at her. “Every other day.”

- ‘Trouble’s just the bits in between, eh love?’ Rose’s groggy voice filled his head once more and he was finally able to lift the barriers fully as his hearts soared to feel her presence in his mind again.

Rose screamed, her mind’s survival instincts taking over to wake her from her forced-slumber as the scalpel dug into her chest. She could feel herself projecting the pain to her husband as she came into consciousness, but couldn’t stop herself as her mind tried desperately to protect her by calling to him.

The Silurian in front of her didn’t flinch at finding her awake, or blink at her screams as he continued to drag the knife down her torso- blood spilling in its wake.

She screamed louder and curled her fists, struggling against the restraints. Distantly she heard two voices- one male and unfamiliar, one female, scottish, and incredibly recognizable, yelling at the masked doctor as he continued to torture her.

Before she knew what was happening her vision turned gold. Time itself projected itself from her body, flinging the man into the far wall just as his knife reached her navel. “I am The Bad Wolf.” A voice that was only half her own exited her lips. “I create myself.” She declared, and the light energy swirling around her stitched up the gaping wound. “I cannot be trapped by mere atoms.” She bit out, and at her wrists and ankles the manacles dissolved into the golden dust of time. She took a step forward, the time vortex still surrounding her, and the scientist backed himself further into the wall. “You cannot hurt me. But I can erase you.” She held her hand up to send him the same way as the restraints, but a voice cut through the singing in her ears.

“Rose!” Amy called out to her desperately, and Rose blinked- the gold fading, her vision clearing. She looked down to see she hadn’t bothered to stitch her shirt back up while she was a time goddess- apparently uncaring for modesty while surrounded by the light of the vortex. She pulled the pieces of her top together as she turned around.

Feeling wholly embarrassed, she shuffled over to the control board in front of her, reading the alien language quickly thanks to the TARDIS, and found the release button for the restraints. Allowing Amy, and the other man who’d just witnessed her go all Bad Wolf with her top open, to stand up. He rubbed at his wrists as he looked up to her. “Wish you had woken up when he was taking that knife to me.” He said, nodding down to the long scar that extended from his clavicle to his navel—Rose looked down to see her own matching one and winced.

Amy shook off her jacket and handed it to Rose silently. She closed her eyes to look for her husband as she shoved her arms through the sleeves and zipped the coat up to her neck- and was startled to find barriers in her way- but she could just make out the edges of a conversation. ‘Not Everyday. Every other day.’ He was saying to someone.

Rose smirked. ‘Trouble’s just the bits in between, eh love?’ She sent through the barrier, and sighed in relief as he destroyed it at her voice- allowing the full extent of their bond to take hold again.

‘What’s going on? Are you okay? Please tell me you’re okay.’ He begged frantically as his unkempt emotions barraged her. All his heartache and worry from the last hour since she’d been swallowed by the earth hitting her in a fraction of a second.
‘What were they doing to you? How did you get away?’ He asked.

Rose sighed, not wanting to tell him about Bad Wolf while they were still so far apart. ‘It’s a long story. But we’re… relatively safe now… I think. What’s going on?’

‘Homo Reptilia. Waking up on account of a drill threatening their settlement.’ He answered her quickly. ‘Where are you?’

Rose looked around, aware that Amy and the stranger were staring at her as she had her silent conversation. ‘Labs, I think. We’re quite far apart. What say you we meet in the middle? I’ll bring Amy.’

The Doctor’s relief at the mention of the safety of their companion washed over her, and he agreed quickly. Rose looked up to Amy again finally and nodded. “He’s here. He’s on his way to us.” She told her, and Amy let out a thankful sigh.

The Doctor, significantly happier with Rose back in his mind, started marching purposely through the caves towards her. “We’re looking for a small tribal settlement,” he said over his shoulder-walking forward as Nasreen took a left. “Probably housing about a dozen homo reptilia. Maybe less.”

Nasreen came to a stop at the expansive view she came across and nodded. “One small tribe?” She called to him.

“Yeah.” He answered distractedly, as the direct straight-line path his mind wanted him to take to Rose was blocked by dirt and stone.

“Maybe a dozen?” Nasreen went on, and The Doctor watched her lean over something. He walked over to her curiously, his pace slowing as he took in the large cityscape below them. Walking paths of metal set over a sea of lava. Thousands of dome-shaped constructions likely housing thousands more homo reptilia. An underground metropolitan awaited them.

“Alright… more than a dozen then.” He breathed, and practically ran down the dirt steps seperating them from the catwalks. “This place is enormous!” He exclaimed, looking around. “And deserted.” He added, almost as an afterthought. “The majority of the race is probably still asleep.” Next to him Nasreen spun around to take it all in. “We need to find Rose. I can sense her general proximity to me, but the paths- that’s the tricky bit.”

Nasreen didn’t bother asking how he could manage that. She’d already worked out that he wasn’t human. His seemingly never-ending CV list of ‘special skills’ had lost its ability to surprise her. “How can all this be here?” She asked instead. “I mean, these plants.”

“Must be getting closer to the centre of the city.” He answered vaguely as they entered a network of caves.

“You’re sure this is the best way to enter?” She asked hesitantly.

“Front door approach! Definitely!” He answered without hesitation. “Always the best way-”

“Hostile lifeforms detected, area 17.” An automated female voice interrupted him- alarms blaring.

The Doctor looked up, “-apart from the back door approach, that’s also good.” He edited, spinning on his heel. “Sometimes better.”
But it was too late. In front and behind them the pathway filled with Silurian warriors, carrying their weapons and aiming them at their chests. The automated voice continued to declare their hostility.

The Doctor’s hands flung up in surrender. “We’re not hostile. We’re not armed.” He told them, eyes wide, and he pulled Nasreen’s hands up as well. “We’re here in peace.”

The warriors paid no heed to their assurance, and without further warning, sprayed them with gas, sending them both coughing and unconscious to the ground.

Mo, Rose had learned, was husband to the daughter of Tony. He buttoned his shirt up as he followed them out of the lab. “That creature- do you think it was alien?” He asked them.

Rose tilted her head at that. How did she describe a species that was from Earth, but not human- or human as they knew it anyway? She supposed the same way she described herself. “Sort of.” She answered distractedly, peeking around a corner before they went around it.

“Are there more of them? Do you think the Earth’s been invaded?” He continued. In any other situation she would have told him to hush by now, but she’d rather him be asking questions about the homo reptilia than about Bad Wolf.

She shook her head. “Don’t know.” She said, somewhat honestly, and pulled to a stop when beside her Amy did.

“I wonder where this leads…” Amy said, staring at the metal door- out of place in the earthy caves.

“Maybe it’s a way out of here!” Mo offered hopefully, and Amy hit the button next to the door in response- turning the light on inside. Mo looked through the small window and gasped. “Oh my God, no.” He whispered, shaking suddenly as he took in whatever it was on the other side.

“What is it?” Amy asked, standing on her toes in an attempt to see over the taller man’s shoulder.

Mo struggled with the locked handle of the door. “It’s my son! It’s Elliot! What have they done to him?” He said frantically.

Amy pushed him aside to see for herself the boy hooked up in some sort of stasis as the father continued to panic. Rose stayed where she was. ‘Elliot?’ She asked The Doctor, but just before he was about to answer he was knocked unconscious. A headache bloomed at Rose’s temple at losing connection to her bondmate for the second time in the last hour.

Amy held Mo back as he started mashing buttons on the screen next to the door. Getting Access Denied messages with each attempt. “Stop, seriously, we can’t get in.” She said, pulling his arms back.

“That’s my boy in there!” He argued, and Rose’s heart clenched as she took in the readings on the screen.

“Look.” She said, cutting off whatever Amy was about to say as she pointed to a heart rate reading-recognizable to any species. “They’re monitoring his vital signs.” She told him, and then scanned quickly through the rest of the readouts. “They’ve got him in a temporary stasis chamber- keeping track of his vitals without interference.” Rose hit a button to pull up the boy’s chemical levels. “Yeah, see- look at this.” She confirmed, pulling the distraught father closer to her as she pointed
out certain things on the graph. “Oxygen levels- normal, they’re pumping the room with air from above the surface.” She quickly scanned through the rest of the boy’s vitals and nodded. “He’s safe in there- they’re making sure of that, at least.” There was something else though- something knocking on her time senses. The chamber was slowing down Elliot’s body clock. Rose bit her lip as that realisation hit her- deciding not to tell his father that particular bit.

Mo nodded hesitantly, but then paused. “Can’t you just- get him out. Like you did in the lab?” He questioned her.

Rose shook her head. “It doesn’t work like that. I can’t- I can’t really control it. But my husband- he’s down here somewhere. He can get him out.” She assured him.

Rose breathed a sigh of relief when Mo nodded in agreement, but stopped almost immediately as she went crashing to her knees- The Doctor’s pain overtaking her every sense, turning her vision gold once more as she instinctively tried to reach through the universe to help him.

“Ambrose.” Rory whispered, as he found her kneeling at her Aunt’s empty grave, clutching Elliot’s headphones.

“Who are you?” She demanded, looking up to him. “You and The Doctor?” Tears hovered on the edges of her vision. “Why is this happening to us? What did we ever do?”

Rory wasn’t able to answer any of those questions, but he said what he could. “The Doctor will get your son back to you, I promise. In the meantime, we need to take turns guarding the creature.”

“Oh so that’s it?” She bit out. “We just sit and wait?”

“Then we exchange her for your family- and mine, by the way, cause they’re all down there now.” He sighed and knelt down. “I promise you, Ambrose, I’d trust The Doctor with my life. We stick to his plan. We keep that creature safe.”

She refused to acknowledge that- choosing instead to look him up and down, and then away again.

Back in the cell, Tony approached Alaya slowly. Her back was turned, but she looked over her shoulder as she heard him approaching. “Why aren’t you dead?” She hissed. “You’re carrying my venom in your blood. You should have died. Why aren’t you dead?” She leaned forward. “Show me.”

Tony took the few steps forward slowly, unbuttoning his top button to show her the angry green scars pulsing through the veins on his neck. She hissed in pleasure. “How does it feel, ape?” She requested, eyes lighting up maliciously.

“Like it’s burning in my blood.” He answered honestly. He took another step forward. “Please,” he begged, “if you help me, I can help you. If you could cure me, I could help you escape.”

Alaya tilted her head. “You see? You beg and offer betrayal so early.” She hissed. “Why would I want to escape when I could watch you die?” She leaned back. “The first ape death of the coming war.” She smirked and turned back around.
The Doctor screamed out in pain as the lights went across his body from where he was locked into the examination table. Whatever radiation the scan was giving off was wreaking havoc on his Time Lord physiology. Sending his body into hyperdrive as it tried to compensate. Distantly, he felt Rose calling out to him desperately in the back of his head, and as much as he wanted to protect her from his pain, his mind wouldn’t allow him to stop calling out to her.

He took deep breaths as the scan finally switched off, but the room continued spinning. Distantly he heard the lab-coated Silurian say “I’m decontaminating now.” And all around The Doctor a machine started powering up.

His eyes widened. “Decontamination?” He let out, hearts still pumping wildly in his chest. “No, no, no!” He called out desperately to the aliens, attempting to sit forward but being held back from the restraints. The machine powered on and his body began rapidly attempting to shift in and out of time pockets to escape the war being waged on his cells. “No! No!” He screamed, white-hot pain washing over him again.

The Silurian turned the dial up on his console. “It’s alright. It won’t harm you.” He said boredly through The Doctor’s screams of agony. “I’m only neutralising all your ape bacteria.”

“I’m not an ape!” The Doctor called back frantically as his body continued to shift through space-time. “Look at the scans! Two-hearts! Totally different! Totally not an ape!” He bit out through the pain. “Remove all human germs you remove half the things keeping me alive!” He informed them desperately, unable to hold back the next scream- worsened only as his pain was echoed back to him through Rose.

Finally, finally, they turned off the machine, and The Doctor slumped heavily against the table, even as the female reptilia complained. “That’s much better, thanks.” He let out. Closing his eyes to reach out to Rose. She was there immediately- her pain ending as soon as the machine turned off, even as he was still recovering from the attack. ‘I’m okay, I’m okay.’ He said to her, swallowing.

‘Please be. I love you. I can’t lose you.’ She begged of him. That’s twice now today that they’ve had to go through the other being tortured.

He sighed and looked up to the female homo reptilia who’d requested his continued suffering. “Not got any celery have you?” He asked, going through a mental list of things that could help his recovery. “No… no, not really the climate.” He realised quickly. “Tomatoes though! You’d do a roaring trade in those!” He was still breathing heavily, but he looked up hopefully. “I’m The Doctor.” He finally remembered introductions, and looked over to see Nasreen on the other side of some glass. “Oh! And there’s Nasreen! Good!”

She opened her eyes as the lab head approached her to shine a light in her eyes. “Oh! A green man!”

The female was still stood in front of him though, studying him carefully. He swallowed and grinned at her despite his racing hearts. “Hello! Who are you?”

She squared her shoulders. “Restac. Military commander.”

“Oh dear, really?” He said distastefully, raising his eyebrows. “There’s always a military isn’t there?”

Lab Coat looked over to him then. “Your weapon was attacking the oxygen pockets above our city.” He informed The Doctor crossly.
His head was still struggling to keep up with what exactly was happening around him. “Oxygen pockets! Lovely!” He said, and then squinted as that didn’t sound right. “Oh, but not so good with an impending drill…” He realised. “Now it makes sense.”

Restac came nearly chest to chest with him. “Where is the rest of your invasion force?” She demanded.

The Doctor tilted his head down at her incredulously. “Invasion force? Me and lovely Nasreen? No! We came for the humans you took.” He told her, leveling her with a look. “And- to offer the safe return of Alaya.” He added knowingly. Something hovered on the edge of his awareness. A sentence that was uttered while he was being tortured. “Oh- wait. You and she. What is it? Same genetic source?” He nodded at his own recall. “Of course, you’re worried, but don’t be, she’s safe.” He assured her quickly.

Restac glared at him in return though. “You claim to come in peace, but you hold one of us hostage.” She turned on her heel, calling the rest of her warriors into action with a gesture.

“Wait, wait!” The Doctor called. “We all want the same thing here!”

“I don’t negotiate with apes.” She growled out. “I’m going to send a clear message to those on the surface.” She said to Lab Coat.

The Doctor pressed up against the table as the armed warriors came to either side of him. “What message is that then?”

Restac turned to him with a malicious smirk. “Your execution.”

“What’s the cure?” Ambrose demanded angrily as she came into the cellar.

Alaya smirked. “Why would I tell you?”

Ambrose took a few more steps forward. “Because if you don’t…” She help up the taser gun. “I’m going to have to use this on you.”

“Now you reveal yourselves!” Alaya hissed

“First you take my son. Now you hurt my dad.” Ambrose went on, tears threatening to fall. “I’m just protecting my family here. That’s all.” She shook her head. “I don’t wanna use it… I want you to put things right.” She begged.

Alaya looked up at her through her lashes. “Use it.”

“What?” Ambrose asked incredulously.

“Use it on me.” She repeated, and began walking forward, but winced as the chain ended and the shackles round her wrist dug into her skin. Her eyes ignited as she mocked the mother. “But you’re too afraid! A woman who can’t even protect her own child must be too weak to-”

She was cut off as Ambrose hit the trigger, sending electric pulses coursing through Alaya’s body as she fell to her knees in pain. Ambrose screamed. “I didn’t want to do that! Are you alright?” She yelled desperately. “Just tell me! What’s the cure for my dad?”

Alaya grinned madly up at her. “He’s vermin! He deserves to die a painful death!” She
“I’m giving you a chance!” Ambrose growled out, leaning into Alaya’s face.

“I knew it would be you!” Alaya spat back. “The one with the most to lose, the weakest!”

Ambrose zapped her again at that- right in the chest. Alaya screamed and seized, crashing to the floor.

‘Oh, seems they’re ordering my execution now, dear.’ The Doctor said casually in her mind as she finally convinced Mo to head back to the lab.

Rose startled and deepened the connection at that, fully entering his mind to see what was going on. They were putting him and Nasreen in handcuffs. As they put the metal around his wrists, in his mind he grabbed Rose’s hands and turned her towards him. ‘They’re taking us somewhere. The center of the city I think. Just follow our connection. But don’t get caught.’ He told her quickly, and she nodded, leaning up to kiss him quickly before she opened her eyes. Amy and Mo were staring at her as she had her fingers at her temples.

“Looks like another race wants my husband dead.” She said dryly. “Come on.” And she led them, not towards the lab -like she’d just spent the last ten minutes trying to convince Mo to go along with, but deeper into the city.

“I don’t understand what’s going on!” Mo called to her back. “Are you even human?”

“Sort of.” Rose answered distractedly, taking a sharp left.

“Is your husband?” He tried.

Rose shook her head. “Nope.”

Mo stopped in his tracks at that, but Amy rolled her eyes, grabbing his arm to drag him along as she passed.

“These must be the only ones awake.” The Doctor mused quietly as the warrior class led them through the lush jungle-plants lining the city’s roads. “The others must still be in hibernation.”

“So why did they go into hibernation in the first place?” Nasreen asked.

“Their astronomers predicted the planet heading to Earth on a crash course.” He explained easily. “They built life underground and put themselves to sleep for millennia in order to avert what they thought was the apocalypse… when in reality it was the moon coming into alignment with the Earth.”

Restac turned around at that to face him, and the lab-coat Silurian - Malohkeh, The Doctor had overheard- loomed over his shoulder. “How could you know that?” He asked, somewhere between curious and demanding.

The Doctor hesitated, but answered. “A long time ago I met another tribe of homo reptilia- similar, but not identical.”

“Others of our species have survived?” Restac asked, tilting her head hopefully, even as she hissed
He paused again, but didn’t break eye contact as he told them the truth, shaking his head minutely. “The humans attacked them.” He swallowed. “They died… I’m sorry.”

She grunted at that, cracking her neck angrily. “A vermin race.” She spit out, and then turned on her heel. Nasreen sent him a disapproving look for divulging the information, but he ignored it.

Rory came stumbling down the stairs at the noise, Tony close to his heels. “Ambrose, what did you do?” Her father demanded, as Rory ran to kneel at Alaya’s gasping form.

“She kept taunting me!” Ambrose defended. “About Mo and Elliot and you!”

Tony straightened up as Alaya continued to groan in pain and gasp for air. Ambrose still had her gun pointed at her, and he grabbed it angrily. “We have to be better than this!” He growled, yanking the weapon from his daughter’s hand.

“She wouldn’t tell me anything!” Ambrose screamed back, tears streaming. “I thought sooner or later she’d give in! -I would’ve done!” She sniffed. “I just… I just want my family back, Dad.” She whispered miserably.


Alaya only smirked. “I knew this would come.” She rapped. “And soon the war…”

“You’re not dying!” Rory argued desperately through clenched teeth. “I’m not gonna let you. Not today.” He placed his hands on her shoulders, ready to start doing anything he could to keep the woman’s heart pumping- but it was too late. Alaya let out one last final gasping breath of air, and stilled.

The Doctor looked around the suddenly gleaming-stone and column lined walls of the building they entered. Surrounding them, what appeared to be government stadium benches lined the high walls, and in the center of the room a long, elegantly dressed table sat. The yellow lights from the city shined through the glass dome ceiling- painting the room in golden hues. “Ooh, lovely place! Very gleaming!” He commented excitedly as he sent a picture of the room to Rose.

“This is our court, and our place of execution.” Restac informed him, rounding the other end of the table to face him. The Doctor held his chin up, but couldn’t help the smirk that graced his lips as he saw his wife lean casually against the column behind the lizard woman.

“Oh, a court, you said?” She spoke up, getting the Silurian warriors to turn to her in surprise, weapons poised, but she didn’t flinch. “Does that mean I can object?”

“Oh I do love that woman.” The Doctor breathed, looking over to Nasreen excitedly.

Amy walked in then, coming next to Rose, and Mo behind all of them through the doors The Doctor had entered from- earning an excited noise from Nasreen. Rose smirked over to The Doctor who’s eyes were lighting up proudly at her. “Now,” She said, arms crossed in front of her as she straightened up, taking the few steps up to Restac. “I understand wanting to kill my husband as much as the next species-”
“Oi!” The Doctor let out an indignant sound that she ignored.

“-but I think this execution might be a bit hasty, don’t you think?” She went on.

Restac hissed, and in one fluid movement grabbed Rose’s arm to shove it behind her back. “Don’t you touch her!” The Doctor yelled, as the rest of the warriors grabbed at Mo and Amy.

Rose huffed, her hair falling in front of her face as she bent over in pain- a futile attempt to get away from the woman. “Really not one for talking then, are you? No wonder you put my husband in chains.” She commented dryly- not losing any of her glib.

“Alright, Restac.” Malohkeh interrupted, and he was watching Rose warily as he spoke- all too aware of the powers of the golden woman. Rose just prayed he wouldn’t mention Bad Wolf in front of The Doctor. “You’ve made your point.”

Restac sneered and threw Rose to the ground- clearly underestimating her abilities- as she walked steadily towards him. “This is not a military tribunal.” She bit out. “Go back to your laboratory, Malohkeh.”

Behind him one of the masked warriors jabbed their weapon into his back and he winced. He glanced over to Rose, and back to Restac. “This isn’t the way.” He whispered, but turned on his heel nonetheless- exiting the courtroom.

Restac held her head up. “Prepare them for execution.” She ordered, and they all stepped forward to chain the humans to the far columns.

“Okay, sorry.” Amy apologized as they brought The Doctor to the column next to her, locking him to it. “As far as rescues go it didn’t really live up to its potential.”

The Doctor just smiled at her though. “I’m glad you’re okay.” He let out, happy to see her awake and breathing- even if they were chained up.

“Me too!” Amy called back and on her other side Mo was locked up as well. “Lizard men, though?”

He sent a glance over to Rose, who’d been chained to the furthest column from him, and she just shrugged- ‘Hasn’t been a lot of time to give a history lesson.’ “Homo reptilia.” He said out loud to Amy, figuring right before their execution was a great time to give said lesson. “They occupied the planet before the humans… Now they want it back.”

“After they’ve wiped out the human race.” Nasreen added, looking around The Doctor to Amy from his other side.

Amy swallowed at the news. “Right… preferred it when I didn’t know to be honest.”

Nasreen looked from the armed warriors to The Doctor- who leaned casually against his column, legs crossed in front of him as though he was choosing to stand there rather than being forced. “Why are they waiting?” She asked. “What do you think they’re going to do with us?”

The Doctor didn’t answer as he was suddenly looking over to his wife, squinting at her. “Why are you wearing Amy’s jacket?” He asked, and Rose stiffened.

“What happens now?” Ambrose whispered, looking up to Rory fearfully as her father hugged her.
All around them the lights flickered, and a static buzzing filled the room. In one of the boxes a old abandoned computer monitor shuttered to life- revealing the face of an angry lizard woman. “Oh my God.” Ambrose let out.

The reptilia tilted her head. “Who is the ape leader?” She demanded, and Rory peeked around Tony.

“How are they doing that?” Ambrose asked frantically, moving to cover Alaya with a nearby sheet. “How do they know that we’re in here?”

“Who speaks for the apes?” The woman demanded again, and they all looked around to each other.

Tony appointed Rory to speak with a whispered warning. “Don’t tell them what’s happened.”

Rory swallowed, taking the few steps towards the monitor. “I speak for the… humans…” He let out awkwardly, raising his hand a bit. “Some of us anyway.” He added.

“Do you understand who we are?” She glared.

“Sort of.” Rory nodded, then shrugged. “A bit…” He shook his head. “Not really.”

“We have ape hostages.” She said easily, and the camera panned out to reveal the four columns of their friends- all with their hands tied behind their backs.

“Amy!” Rory let out, the emotions he’d been keeping in check all day finally spilling over as he saw his fiance. “Doctor! Rose!” He added, though more like a call for help.

Ambrose shoved him aside as she saw her husband. “Mo! Mo, are you okay?” She yelled.

“I’m fine, love!” Mo called back. “I found Elliot! I’m bringing him home!” He told her, and Ambrose let out a thankful sob.

“Amy, I thought I’d lost you!” Rory spoke over her, unable to take his eyes off of the redhead.

“What, because I was sucked into the ground?” Amy shot back sarcastically- taking after Rose. “You’re so clingy.” She told him with a smirk, even as her heart clenched.

“Tony Mack!” Nasreen yelled with a smile, and the man chuckled.

“Having fun down there?” He joked, even as he buttoned his top button anxiously.

The Doctor leaned over into frame. “Uh- not to interrupt, but just a quick reminder to stay calm.” He told the humans.

“Show me Alaya.” Restac spoke over him. “Show me, and release her immediately, unharmed, or we will kill your friends one by one.” She threatened angrily through gritted teeth.

“No!” Ambrose jumped forward, ignoring Rory’s warning.

Tony tried pulling her back. “Ambrose, stop it!” He told her.

“Stead now.” The Doctor warned.

“Get off me Dad!” She shook him off, and turned back to the screen. “We didn’t start this!” She yelled.
“Let Rory deal with this, Ambrose, eh?” The Doctor called, but she continued to ignore him.

“We are not doing what you say anymore.” She ground out. “Now give me back my family!”

Restac paused for a long time, taking in the desperate mother, until finally, “No.” She said easily, and then looked over her shoulder to her warriors. “Execute the red one.” She ordered.

“NO! No!” Rory yelled, pulling Ambrose away from the monitor as Amy called out his name. “Wait! She’s not speaking for us!” He said frantically, pushing Ambrose behind him.

“Don’t touch her!” Rose screamed angrily, pulling at her chains, feeling her vision start to fade again.

“There’s no need for this!” The Doctor yelled, not seeing his wife as he looked between Amy and Restac.

“Whatever you want, we’ll do it!” Rory called over the monitor. “Amy!” He yelled, as weapons were aimed at her.

“Rory!” She called back desperately.

“Don’t do this!” The Doctor begged, struggling against his restraints.

Amy’s eyes closed and Rory screamed at the screen before it turned to static.

“Fire!” Restac ordered, and The Doctor’s hearts stopped as time slowed. He looked over to Rose quickly as he realised that wasn’t an exaggeration either. His wife was slowing down time around them. And she was glowing.

An unfamiliar voice rose about the noise “Stop!” The robed homo reptilia ordered, and time sped back up as the warriors lowered their weapons. “You want to start a war while the rest of us sleep, Restac?” He questioned her sternly as he entered the room.

“The apes are attacking us!” She argued, fists clenching at her sides.

“You’re our protector, not our commander, Restac.” He reprimanded her- somewhat boredly. “Unchain them.”

Restac’s eyes flickered between the leader and Malohkeh beside him. “I do not recognize your authority at this time, Eldane.” She bit out.

He seemed unaffected by her denial. “Well then, you must shoot me.”

She hissed at that and stormed over to Malohkeh. “You woke him to undermine me.” She accused.

“We’re not monsters.” Malohkeh said calmly. “And neither are they.”

“What is it about apes that you love so much?” She said like it was an insult, tilting her head, jaw clenching.

“While you’ve slept, they’ve evolved.” He answered her easily. “I’ve seen it for myself.”

“We used to hunt apes for sport!” She spit back. “When we came underground they bred and polluted this planet.”
Eldane spoke up again at that, closing his eyes tiredly. “Shush now, Restac. Go and play soldiers. I’ll let you know if I need you.”

She glared at her leader and took a step forward. “You’ll need me.” She growled. “And then, we’ll see.” She walked out at that, Eldane looking after her.

At that, the rest of the warriors finally unchained them. The Doctor rotated his wrists around for a second before hovering over to his wife. “Rose, what was that?” He asked her quietly, studying her eyes as he clutched at her forearms.

“It’s been a long day.” Rose mumbled, and continued before he could ask again. “Should probably tell Rory we aren’t dead, yeah?” She deflected, and closed her eyes as he reluctantly walked away. There was something in the timelines. Something The Doctor couldn’t sense. It was pulling at her, pulsating, ringing in her ears. The urge to dive into the vortex headfirst and stop it was overwhelming. The wolf was waking up.

Her husband's cheery tones pulled her from her thoughts. “Rory! Hello!” He exclaimed after he’d pulled the video feed back up- Rory’s green tinted face filling the screen.


That reminded The Doctor where Rory had been cut off and he pointed over his shoulder. “She’s fine! Look!” He said, and Amy leaned over until she was in the shot.

“Just keeping you on your toes!” She let out breathlessly.

“No time to chat.” The Doctor went on quickly though as Rory breathed a sigh of relief- thanking God. “Listen, you need to get down here. Go to the drill storeroom. The earth in the middle of the floor. The Silurians are going to send up transport discs to bring you back down using geothermal energy and gravity bubble technology.” He waved his hands about excitedly as he explained. “It’s how they travel, and frankly, it’s pretty cool. Bring Alaya. We hand her over, we can land this afterall!” He exclaimed, grinning. “All is going to work, I promise! Gotta dash! Hurry up!”

He gave a goofy thumbs-up to the humans before stepping off, and Rose rubbed at the headache that bloomed at his promise. He shot her a worried look.

There’s something you aren’t telling me.” He observed at a whisper as he came back up to her.

Rose nodded, but didn’t open her mouth for fear she would vomit as timelines swam in and out of view. ‘Remember how we realised I was more sensitive to timelines than most other Time Lords?’ She said inside his mind instead. He nodded slowly as he furrowed his brow worriedly, rubbing his hands down her arms.

“We’re at a temporal tipping point.” She informed him, even though she was sure that wasn’t all it was.

He squinted down at her. ‘I know that, love. But I don’t look half as green as you do about it.’

Inside her, Rose felt the wolf howl, wanting to make herself known again in the presence the her bondmate. She bit it back vehemently and closed her eyes against the onslaught of futures bombarding her thoughts- all disconnected, none making sense. She looked up to see The Doctor giving her those guilt-filled eyes he always did whenever they were reminded of the few less-than-stellar side effects of her looking into the untempered schism. She reached her hand up to run it soothingly across his cheek. ‘Don’t give me those eyes, love. You know I wouldn’t change a thing if I could- and I could.’

The Doctor shivered as she sent him an image of her as Bad Wolf- a goddess of time. ‘Can’t keep
me from being worried about you though.’

Rose smirked. ‘Yeah I know. But don’t worry. This will pass.’ She told him, going up on her toes to kiss him quickly before pushing him back towards the Silurian leader. It was obvious he still had questions- but she left them for later. There were more important matters at hand.

She watched him as he gathered Nasreen, Amy, and Eldane at the center table, willing her heart rate to go down. She came up beside him as they sat down- Malohkeh and Mo remaining standing either side of the table, while The Doctor leaned against the head of it. “I’d say you’ve got a fair bit to talk about.” He told them seriously.

“How so?” Eldane questioned, leaning back a bit.

“You both want the planet. You both have a genuine claim to hit.” He answered quickly- easily, even as his spine visibly relaxed when Rose’s hand fell to his shoulder. He was still fighting the urge to haul Rose back into the TARDIS, run a million tests, and hide them in the vortex for at least another millenia to keep her safe from all harm ever again.

Eldane squinted at The Doctor, turning his body towards him on the bench. “Are you authorised to negotiate on behalf of humanity?”

Both him and Rose snorted at that. “Me? No!” He let out. The grinned happily as he pointed to Amy and Nasreen. “But they are!”

Both the girls heads snapped around to stare at him. “What?” Nasreen asked dryly, while Amy yelled “No we’re not!”

“‘Course you are!” He yelled back, not missing a beat. “Amy Pond and Nasreen Chaudhry! Speaking for the planet! Humanity couldn’t have better ambassadors!” He exclaimed, walking around to lay his hands on their shoulders. He did a little spin as he got to the other side of the table. “Come on! Who has more fun than us?” He said to Amy, sounding like a proper dorky dad.

Amy snorted at that, but stood up to speak to him seriously. “Is this what happens in the future, the planet gets shared? Is that what we need to do?” And she too sounded like an excited child.

Nasreen’s mouth fell open at hearing that and stood up as well. “Uh, what are you talking about?” She asked, coming up to them, and from across the table Rose smirked as she realised they hadn’t gotten around to giving her the full story.

“Oh, Nasreen!” The Doctor said, eyes lighting up. “Sorry! Probably worth mentioning at this stage that me and my wife–” he gestured over to Rose who wriggled her fingers at them with a smile– “we’re Time Lords. We travel through time. Amy, she comes with us.” He grinned, and next to him Amy giggled.

Eldane’s eyes widened, and Nasreen’s arms crossed in front of her. “Anything else?”

The Doctor looked over to Rose at that, silently asking if he was going to tell them. She nodded, and he spun around as he began explaining. “There are fixed points through time, where things must always stay the way they are… This is not one of them.” He gestured widely with his hands. “This is an opportunity- a temporal tipping point! Whatever happens today will change future events, create its own timeline, its own reality! The future pivots around you. Here. Now.” He cut himself off to point across the table Rose. “Look at Rose she’s getting nauseous just thinking about it!” He exclaimed with a cheeky grin to his wife that she rolled her eyes at. “So do good!” He looked back to them and rocked back on his heels. “For humanity- and for Earth.”
Eldane swallowed and Amy let out a loud breath at the dramatic ending. “Right. No pressure there then!” She said sarcastically, but smiled as she took her seat across from the Silurian leader.

The Doctor grinned as Nasreen took her seat as well, and he leaned against the head of the table again- mirroring Rose on the other side. “Okay,” he started, hitting the table importantly as though he had a gavel. “Bringing things to order, the first meeting of representatives of the human race and homo reptilia, is now in session.” He let out a little delighted chuckle and rocked back on his heels. “Never said that before! That’s—fab! ...Carry on!” He looked up to Rose who rolled her eyes and he took a deep breath. “Now! Mo, let’s go and get your son.” He said, pointing to the father as he left the humans and their predecessors to shoot the breeze.

Amy grabbed Rose’s hand before she could walk off with her husband. “You don’t want to stay? You’re older than both of us—”

Nasreen cut Amy off that. “Pardon me?” She asked, eyes wide.

Rose bit her lip as she looked over to the woman. “Yeah, both of us are a lot older than we look. Just turned 123, me. He’s... nine hundred and something.” Nasreen sat back as she absorbed that information, and to her side Rose felt Malohkeh studying her interestedly. Her gaze flickered back to Amy. “Anyway, I could hardly speak for Earth. Only got 19 years in up there before I left. Plus I’m hardly human anymore.” Again, Rose felt Malohkeh straighten up as he learned more about her. She couldn’t help but feel like a test subject.

Amy didn’t notice Rose’s discomfort though. “Yeah, but you and him. You’ve saved the Earth enough times now. Surely you get some say.” She argued, and Rose got the feeling she just didn’t want to be left alone with this much responsibility.

Rose reached out and tucked Amy’s hair behind her ear, giving her a reassuring look. “That’s not how it works, love. Now, you two go… be magnificent.” She said, grinning at the two women and giving a vague ‘onwards’ gesture, before turning on her heel to catch her husband up as he made his way out the door with Mo.

The Doctor felt Rose stiffen when Malohkeh followed them out, and her discomfort rolled over him like a riptide. He tugged on her hand, pulling them to stop, and gestured for Mo and Malohkeh to go on ahead. “Okay, this has got to stop.” He said sternly, tilting his chin down as his eyes studied hers. “What aren’t you telling me?”

Rose let out a long breath, closing her eyes against the storm of emotions coursing through her. “I went Bad Wolf.” She said, sotto voce - as though maybe the lack of volume could make the words less true- less terrifying.

Every muscle in The Doctor’s body tensed at the words. She hadn’t done that since The Master- since the year that never was. And that had been because they were at an epicenter of a timeline that was never supposed to happen- because they were getting tortured day in and day out. Certainly nothing like their circumstances now- was it? “What happened?” He asked her, as the memories of her pain from before came crashing back to him like a ton of bricks. He tightened his hold on her hands- sure now that it hadn’t just been decontamination. She was mostly human, and Bad Wolf wouldn’t have felt the need to protect her from that.

Rose took a couple of calming breaths, taking as much comfort from him over the bond as she could, before pulling her hands away, bringing them to the jacket’s zip at her throat. But they were shaking too badly, and The Doctor covered them with his own before pushing them away,
unzipping the garment for her.

The air caught in his lungs as he saw the first centimeters of the raised scar, and his anger built the further he pulled the zip. Her jumper was in pieces beneath the jacket- parting to reveal the red, angry mark left by the knife, the disturbed skin and dried blood maring the once smooth expanse of Rose’s torso. The Doctor’s eyes ignited with all the fire of the Oncoming Storm. “Who did this?” He growled out through clench teeth.

Rose shook her head, tears rolling down her cheeks, and he pulled her to his chest, her arms automatically wrapping around his waist as her breath came out in choked sobs, and she buried her face in his shirt. She relived the scene in her head for him instead of attempting to put it into words, and his arms tightened around her as he watched.

“My Rose,” he breathed out as he watched the golden light of time fade from her eyes. “My brave, beautiful, wonderful, fantastic, Rose.”

But still his anger at her being harmed sat heavy on his hearts, and Rose pulled back to see the storm still raging behind his tear soaked eyes. “I’m okay now.” She reassured him, reaching up to wipe the moisture from his cheeks.

The Doctor looked over to the place where Malohkeh had been standing earlier. “I should-” He started, but cut himself off. Not really sure what it is he wanted to do to the alien who’d hurt his wife.

Rose shook her head. “I already flung him into a wall, love. And I don’t think he understands how human nerve endings work. It seems they don’t really understand pain felt on the surface of the skin- on account of us not having scales and all.”

The Doctor’s shoulders relaxed at Rose’s light teasing, and he managed to smile down at her. “How are you so amazing?” He asked her genuinely, breathlessly.

Rose smiled and leaned up on her toes to plant a quick kiss to his lips in response. “Just am, I suppose.” She whispered against his lips, pulling a small laugh from him as he wrapped his arms more firmly around her.

“It’s safe. We can wake him.” Malohkeh was saying to Mo as The Doctor and Rose finally caught up, the door to the suspended animation chamber in which Elliot resided opening. Beside her she felt her husband stiffen as Malohkeh stepped into the room with the child, but she ran a soothing hand down his arm and he relaxed slightly as the reassurance.

After he’d disconnected all the wires monitoring Elliot’s systems, Malohkeh looked over his shoulder. “Come.” He said to the boy’s father, stepping out behind him.

“Elliot!” Mo whispered, rousing the boy from the sort-of sleep state. “Ell, it’s Dad”

“Hm- what?” Elliot mumbled as he woke up in the unfamiliar surroundings, but brightened as his father’s face came into focus. “Dad!” He exclaimed, flinging his arms around him. The Doctor’s hearts tightened at the reunion, and Rose held his hand more firmly. As they embraced, Elliot took in the room. “Where are we?” He asked.

Mo pulled back. “Well- I’ve, I’ve got to be honest with you, son. We’re in the centre of the Earth- and there are lizard men.”

Elliot’s mouth fell open slightly at the news, and he turned his head to see Malohkeh standing the doorway. The Doctor and Rose standing just behind him with small smiles. He shook his head.
“Wow.” He breathed out.

The Doctor took a step around Malohkeh to enter the room hesitantly. “Elliot…” He started, “I’m sorry. I took my eye off you.”

Elliot smiled up at him and nodded. “It’s okay.” He assured the alien easily. “I forgive you.” He held his hand out and The Doctor took it happily, revelling in the unselfish nature of children. He ruffled Elliot’s hair as he turned on his heel- leading them out of the chamber. He took Rose’s hand again as they walked past Malohkeh.

“You go on, Doctor. I’ll catch up.” Malohkeh said as they passed, and The Doctor nodded shortly- not finding himself in quite as much of a forgiving mood as Elliot.

They found themselves standing in the doorway to the chamber room listening to Eldane speak. “You give us space, we could bring new sources of energy, new methods of water supply, new medicines, scientific advances… We were a great civilisation. You provide a place for us on the surface, we’ll give you knowledge and technology beyond humanity’s dreams. - We work together, this planet could achieve greatness.”

Nasreen tilted her head as he finished. “Okay… Now I’m starting to see it.” She smirked.

Amy placed her hands on the table excitedly. “Oh yeah!” She grinned, and he head snapped over to see The Doctor as he began applauding them upon his entrance into the chamber.

“Not bad for a first session.” He said, smiling at the ambassadors for the two races. “More similarities than differences.” He observed hopefully with a motion between them. Behind them a sort of whooshing noise could be heard coming from down the corridor.

“Transport has returned.” Eldane informed them. “Your friends are here.”

Amy spun around to lean casually against the table while the rest of them stood up to face the door. “Here they are!” The Doctor exclaimed, holding his hand up in greeting as Rory rounded the corner.

When Ambrose appeared as well, Elliot took of running. “Mum!” He yelled, throwing himself into her arms.

Amy stood up. “Rory!” She yelled, albeit a bit sarcastically, but excitedly nonetheless. He waved a bit awkwardly at her, as behind them Tony came- carrying something large wrapped in a blanket.

Rose’s time senses were screaming at the sight. “Something’s wrong.” She mumbled, at the same time The Doctor did- both of them squinting at Tony as he came further into the room with his burden. They both took steps forward to meet him as he set the bundle on the floor in front of them.

“No.” The Doctor let out the horrified whisper. “Don’t do this. Tell me you didn’t do this.” He bit out, and then knelt down with a loud breath, jaw clenching. He reached out to flip the blanket over-knowing what he would see before he did, but feeling no less disappointed as he took in Alaya’s lifeless face. His already raw anger pulsed through him as he looked up to Tony- who at the very least had the decency to hang his head. “What did you do?” He demanded.

Tony only shook his head though, not looking up to meet his eyes, and behind him Ambrose spoke up from where her hands were still resting on her son’s shoulders. “It was me.” She said, and it almost sounded proud. “I did it.”
As the Doctor’s steely gaze fell upon Ambrose, Tony stood, and Elliot turned to push his mother’s hands from his shoulders. “Mum...” He said, sounding terrified and disappointed as he looked her up and down.

“I just wanted you back!” She insisted, leaning forward to reach her hand out for him again, but he shifted further away from her- pushing her away as he went to stand with his dad and granddad. Ambrose stood up to take in the condemning faces surrounding her.

The Doctor had no words. He turned around to walk back to Eldane. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know.” He spoke quickly. “You have to believe me, they’re better than this.” He begged, and Rose’s hand fell to the small of his back.

Behind them, Ambrose yelled to them- even as she stood on her own in the room. “This is our planet!”

The Doctor spun around angrily at that. “We had a chance here.” He bit out to her.

She ignored him. “Leave us alone!” She growled towards Eldane’s hurt and crestfallen form.

The Doctor took long strides until he was right in the woman’s face. “In the future, when you talk about this, you tell people there was a chance- but you were so much less than the best of humanity.” He practically spit back at her.

They all looked up though as the sound of hundreds of footsteps filled their ears, and before they knew it they were surrounded by the masked faces of armed warriors- all with their weapons pointed at them.

“My sister!” Restac said as she marched in, her eyes almost immediately falling to the covered mass on the floor.

She knelt down slowly, and with shaking hands pulled back the blanket to see her sister’s departed body. A sorrowful, heartbreaking noise escaped her chest, and tears filled her eyes at the sight. She took long, deep breaths as her pain was replaced by anger and she looked up “And you want us to trust these apes, Doctor?” She growled- even as tears obstructed her vision.

“One woman.” The Doctor begged. “She was scared for her family. She is not typical.”

Restac stood up, spinning to face Ambrose. “I think she is.” She hissed.

“One person let us down,” The Doctor interrupted. “But there is a whole race of dazzling, peaceful, human beings up there!” He exclaimed desperately, spinning around the room to let the anxious build up of energy go somewhere. He was so so desperate not to lose his own faith in humanity- his favorite species, his wife’s species- as he tried to convince the rest of the room of their feats with so little evidence so show for it, and so much to go against it. “You were building something here!” He despaired. “Come on! An alliance could work!” He tried desperately.

Ambrose spoke up as if she still had any right to. “It’s too late for that, Doctor.”

He and the rest of the room squinted at her. To his left he felt Rose grit her teeth as her time senses were apparently coming to a boil. They were at the tipping point. “Why?”

Ambrose squared her shoulders. “Because our drill is set to start burrowing again in fifteen minutes.” She said, holding up a stopwatch.

“What?” Nasreen yelled, looking over to Tony.
He shook his head miserably. “What choice did I have? They had Elliot.”

“Don’t do this. Don’t call their bluff.” The Doctor begged, both the room and the universe at large.

Ambrose shook her head, addressing Restac. “Let us go back. And you promise to never come to the surface ever again. We’ll walk away, leave you alone!”

Restac glared loathingly at the woman who had killed her sister. “Execute her.” She ordered.

“No!” The Doctor screamed, running to grab Ambrose and haul her out of the way from the weapon’s beams- narrowly avoiding the shot himself.

Rose had sprung into action as well, immediately herding the humans and Eldane towards the side exit. “Heads down! Everybody back to the lab! Run!” She ordered, grabbing Ambrose from her husband and shoving her out the door as well.

“Execute all the apes!” Restac screamed, and The Doctor pulled his sonic out from his pocket as he continued to guard the exit, the sound waves giving off electric shocks -sending sparks flying and weapons crashing to the floor.

“This is a deadly weapon! Stay back!” He lied, waving the sonic about madly. Rose grabbed his arm, hauling him down the corridor- both of them just barely missing a venom attack as they retreated.

‘Bit of warning before you jump in front of the line of fire next time would be nice.’ She said as they ran down the corridor.

‘Sorry, love. Wasn’t exactly planning on it.’ He threw back quickly as the turned a corner- catching sight of the people in their charge. “Take everyone to the lab!” He yelled, and Rory- who was backing the group- looked over his shoulder, and stopped momentarily until more lasers fired- nearly hitting all three of them. They pushed him further down the corridor and into the rest of the group. “I’ll cover you.” The Doctor said, pulling his screwdriver back out.

Rory looked to Rose for confirmation, and turned when she gave him a small nod. “Go! Go!” He said to the rest of them, herding them further down the corridor just as Restac and a number of her warriors stopped in front of The Doctor and Rose.

‘You should have gone with them.’ The Doctor said to her as he held out his screwdriver.

Rose rolled her eyes and grabbed his hand. ‘Not a chance.’ He sent sparks flying on the two nearest weapons, and took a step back as Restac pushed through them. “Ah, ah, ah! Stop right there! Or I’ll use my very deadly weapon!” He warned, and she stopped, gritting her teeth. “Now one warning, that’s all you get. If there can be no deal, you go back into hibernation. All of you. Now.” Restac bared her teeth, but he didn’t back down. “This. Ends. Here.” He said firmly.

“No.” Restac pressed. “It only ends with our victory.

The Doctor tilted his head. “Like I said,” he started, green eyes glinting madly. “One warning.” And with that he pushed the sonic up, the two remaining armed warriors had their now busted weapons crash to the floor in front of them. He pulled Rose around and they ran the remaining distance to the lab, with Restac hot on their heels- sonicing the door shut behind them.

“Elliot!” He said, as the door shut behind him. “You and your dad, keep your eyes on that door. Let me know if we get company.” He ordered quickly, gesturing with the sonic. “Amy, keep reminding me how much time I haven’t got.” He threw the stopwatch to her before walking off.
Amy turned the clock in her hands around a few times. “Uh- um- okay. Twelve and a half minutes until drill impact.” She announced, looking up to Rose to make sure it was actually okay what she was doing. She nodded shortly and wondered when Amy and Rory had decided they needed confirmation from her after The Doctor told them to do something.

He walked quickly around the center dashboard. “Tony Mack- sweaty forehead, dilated pupils, what’re you hiding?” He observed and questioned quickly.

Tony leaned back and pulled his shirt apart to reveal the rapidly spreading green venom expanding his veins, and behind him Nasreen gasped. “Tony! What happened?” She asked miserably.

“Alaya’s sting. She said there’s no cure.” He explained, as The Doctor scanned the bite with his sonic. “I’m dying aren’t I?”

The Doctor spun around to implant the sonic’s reading into the lab’s systems and scanned them quickly. “You’re not dying; you’re mutating.”

“How can I stop it?” Tony begged.

The Doctor watched Tony’s rapidly mutating DNA strand spin around the screen, and remembered the last time he’d seen something like that- in Rose, nearly a hundred years ago now. “Don’t know.” He answered honestly. “Decontamination program- might work.” He pointed to the only Silurian in the room. “Eldane, can you run the program on Tony?”

“Doctor!” Mo interrupted from where he was watching the video feed from outside the door. “Shedload of those creatures coming our way!” He stood up. “We’re surrounded in here!”

The Doctor spoke quickly. “So, question is, how do we stop the drill, given that we can’t get there in time? Plus, also, how do we get out given that we’re surrounded? I don’t know! I can’t think straight because my wife is GLOWING!” He yelled frustratedly as he spun around to Rose- who was indeed now giving off a faint golden glow of time energy.

Rose looked down at her hands, just now processing the tingling, and shook her head at all the eyes now on her. She looked up to Nasreen, ignoring the unspoken question about her current state, and instead answering the others. “Nasreen, how do you feel about an energy pulse?” She asked her slowly, hesitantly. “We could channel one up through the tunnels- to the base of the drill.”

Nasreen’s eyes widened. “To blow up my life’s work?” She demanded.

Rose nodded, eyes softening. “Yes. Sorry.” She answered. “It’s the only thing that could work in time.”

Nasreen swallowed and rocked back on her heels. “Right, well... you’re going to have to do it before the drill hits the city, in…” She drifted off to Amy.

“Eleven minutes, forty seconds- Doctor!” She finished exasperatedly as he started running around the room again, patting Nasreen appreciatively and kissing Rose’s forehead proudly as he went.

“Yes!” He grinned madly when he got back to the dashboard. “Squeaky bum time!”

“Yes, but the explosion is going to cave in all the surrounding tunnels so we need to be up and on the surface by then.” Nasreen told him.

“But we can’t get past Restac’s troops.” Rory added, looking between The Doctor and the gradually-more-golden Rose.
Eldane took a step forward from where he’d been helping Tony into the decontamination table. “I can help with that.” He said, gaining their attention. “Toxic fumigation. An emergency failsafe meant to protect my species from infection. A warning signal to occupy cryo-chambers.” He explained, stepping towards The Doctor. “After that, citywide fumigation by toxic gas- then the city shuts down.”

The Doctor’s jaw set at that, and he spun around. Amy stepped forward, saying what he wouldn’t. “You could end up killing your own people.”

“Only those foolish enough to follow Restac.” He answered easily, though sadly.

“Eldane, are you sure about this?” The Doctor asked, turning back around to study the man.

“My priority is my race’s survival.” Eldane shook his head. “The Earth isn’t ready for us to return yet.”

“No-” The Doctor started.

“Ten minutes, Doctor.” Amy reminded him.

“-but maybe it should be.” Rose finished.

The Doctor looked down for a second. “So! Here’s a deal!” He said, pointing and taking in the entire room. “Everybody listening! Eldane, you activate shutdown. I’ll amend the system, set your alarm for 1,000 years’ time.” He paused, and then took in the humans seriously. “One thousand years to sort the planet out. To be ready. Pass it on.” He told them. “As legend, or prophecy, or religion somehow, make it known- this planet is to be shared.”

Everyone’s shoulders straightened with the task, and Elliot, the youngest of them all, he grinned and nodded up to The Doctor. “Yeah, I get you.” He said- and The Doctor had never been more sure of a human destined to lead the world.

“Nine minutes, seven seconds.” Amy interrupted, but sounding much less frantic about it than before- even as the time continued to lessen.

At that, as series of things were said as orders were carried out.

“Yes, fluid controls, my favorite!” The Doctor mumbled as he began hitting buttons on the dash. “Energy pulse- primed, timed, and set. Before we go- energy barricade, need to cancel it out quickly…” He pulled the sonic out.

“Fumigation pre-launching.” Eldance announced from his other side.

Rory ran forward. “There’s not much time for us to get from here to the surface, Doctor.” He reminded them worriedly.

“Haha!” The Doctor laughed. “Super squeaky bum time!” He exclaimed, earning a snort of laughter from Rose- who was close to gleaming at this point. He resolutely ignored the distant howling he could now hear coming from her side of the bond as he worked to save them all. “Get ready to run for your lives!” He warned them, looking up. “Now-”

Eldane interrupted him though. “But the decontamination program on your friend hasn’t started yet.”

The Doctor face fell as they all turned to look at Tony’s slumped form on the inclined table. “Well,
The man ordered firmly, standing up best he could. “All of you! Go!”

Ambrose spoke up for the first time then. “No, we’re not leaving you here!” She argued.

Elliot ran forward. “Graddad!” He protested, wrapping his arms around him.

“Eight minutes, ten seconds.” Amy said sadly.

“Now you look after your mum.” Tony whispered into his grandson’s hair, and then pulled him back to kneel down to him. “You mustn’t blame her. She only did what she thought was right.” He told him seriously.

“I’m not gonna see you again, am I?” Elliot asked pitifully.

Tony put his fist to Elliot’s heart. “I’ll be here. Always.” He told him, effectively breaking the rest of the hearts in the room. “I love you boy.” He said through the tears, pulling Elliot into another hug. He looked up to his daughter. “You be sure he gets home safe.” He said.

“This is my fault!” Ambrose let out, voicing remorse for the first time.

Tony shook his head. “No, I can’t go back up there. I’d be a freakshow. The technology down here is my only hope.”

Ambrose sobbed again, and he pulled her into a hug. “I love you Dad.” She cried.

He only allowed a few second to pass before he gathered the courage to push her away. “Go, Go.” He ordered gently, and Mo helped pull her away from him. The Doctor nodded to Eldane, who placed his hand on the controls.

“ Toxic fumigation initiated. Return to cryo-chambers” repeated over the loudspeakers as the city went into emergency power mode.

Amy ran over to the video feed to see the warriors retreated. “They’re going! We’re clear!” She announced.

“Okay!” He said, running around the dashboard and to the door. “Everyone follow Rose! Should be easy- she’s like a Time Lord torch at the moment!” He quipped at his wife’s glowing form in the dim lighting, even as the mystery and worry was eating him alive. “Look for a blue box! Get ready to run!” He added, and pointed the sonic at the door’s lock. He walked through the humans towards Eldane as the door opened. “I’m sorry.” He said.

Eldane nodded. “I thought for a moment that our race and the humans…”

“-Yeah, me too.”

Amy stepped forward. “Doctor, we’ve got less than six minutes!” She interrupted.

He looked over his shoulder, not to Amy but to Rose. “Go! I’m right behind you.” He said, and they ran. He turned back around to shake Eldane’s hand, and then look to Nasreen who was still stood next to Tony. “Let’s go.”

Nasreen took a step forward, shaking her head. “I’m not coming either.” She told him

“What?” He asked incredulously.

She walked backwards until she was grasping Tony’s arm. “We’re going to hibernate with them.
Me and Tony.”

“Doctor, you must go.” Eldane interrupted, looking up from the controls.

Tony didn’t take his eyes off of Nasreen. “I can be decontaminated when we’re awoken. All the time in the world.” He said to her, and The Doctor knew that look. It was that same hopeful, loving look he gave Rose every time he thought of all the tomorrows he had left with her- more than they could count, more than anybody could count. *Humans*, he thought pleasantly, shaking his head a bit.

Nasreen drank that look in before she looked back up to The Doctor. “I’ve found what I was digging for. I can’t leave now that I’ve only just found it.” She told him, and he knew she was talking about more than just the city.

Amy ran back in then. “Doctor!” She yelled exasperatedly, and he glanced over his shoulder to her. “Thank you, Doctor.” Nasreen said seriously.

“The pleasure was all mine.” He nodded, smiling, before pulling her into a hug. He looked at his watch though as Rose gave him a telepathic ‘hurry the hell up,’ and his eyes widened. He pulled back from her quickly, giving her another nod and smile before turning around and grabbing Amy’s hand (why had Amy come back?) and hauling them out the door.

They passed Rory coming back for them as they entered the main city. “Other way, idiot!” Amy yelled, and he spun on his heel.

On the catwalk Rose, Mo, Ambrose, and Elliot had stopped as well. “Come on!” The Doctor yelled as they turned the corner, and they all started running again. Finally, they reached the TARDIS. “No questions! Just get in! Yes, I know it’s big! Ambrose! Sickbay- up the stairs, left, then left again! Get yourself fixed up! Come on! Five minutes and counting!” He rambled as he unlocked the door and shoved them all through it.

He turned around though to see Rose’s eyes had turned gold with the rest of her as she fearfully took in yet another crack in time and space on the cavern wall in front of them. “Not here. Not now.” He whispered desperately. “It’s getting bigger.”

“The crack on my bedroom wall.” Amy said, eyes wide.

“And the Byzantium.” He said, taking steps closer and kneeling to eye level with the white light. “All through the universe, rips in the continuum. Some sort of space-time cataclysm. An explosion, maybe.” His spine straightened as he offered that suggestion and he turned around to see the time vortex swirling around Rose. “What is it? What is exploding?” He asked her.

When Rose opened her mouth, it was Bad Wolf that spoke- her voice drowned out by the light of time that resided within her. *The center of it all. The beginning. The end.* She answered.

“Four minutes, fifty- we have to go!” Amy interrupted, but The Doctor ignored her.

“Yes, but what? What is it? ” He asked again, stepping so that he was nearly nose-to-nose with her.

“You know.” She insisted, eyes sparking.

He let out a mad chuckle at that. “No, I *really* don’t. That’s *why* I’m asking. The Angels laughed when I didn’t know, Prisoner Zero knew, you know. Everybody knows, except me!”
There was a long pause where she simply stood there, time swirling around her as she watched it break in front of her. “Everything.” She answered eventually, and Rose’s own sorrow at the word reverberated through his skull - sending off every alarm bell The Doctor had.

“Amy, Rory, get in the TARDIS.” He said quickly.

But it was too late.

Restac pulled herself around the corner, coughing on the toxic gas, she aimed her weapon at the largest target she could find- Rose’s golden form.

“NO!” Rory yelled, diving in front of the beam half a second before it could hit Rose. He went rolling into the light of the explosion.

“RORY!” Amy screamed, running to his side as his face contorted in pain.

“Rory, can you hear me?” The Doctor begged, kneeling down and scanning him. In his mind, the aborted timelines flashing through Rose’s head obstructed his vision.  One where Amy and Rory had listened to him, and Rose was hit and couldn’t regenerate. One where Rose had been able to deflect the gun. One where they’d all gotten in the TARDIS as soon as they arrived and gotten away together.

“Is he okay?” Amy asked desperately. “We have to get him onto the TARDIS.”

Bad Wolf spoke before The Doctor could. “The light has reached him now.” She said, and they both turned to see the explosion’s tendrils curling around Rory’s feet. “He is being erased.”

“Help him!” Amy begged her.

The Doctor stood up. “You can stop this.” He said, and Rose’s head snapped around.

“I will pour the breath of the time into him, and he will scatter, and we will die.” She said, eyes igniting as she referred to herself as two- Rose and the heart of the TARDIS.

The Doctor’s hearts stopped at that, and grabbed Rose’s hand as she began to raise it to do exactly that- kill herself only to accomplish scattering Rory’s memory throughout time and space, never to live a full life. “Come on.” He growled, pulling Amy up by the waist as well.

“No! I’m not leaving him!” She screamed, struggling against his hold. “We have to help him!”

“The light’s already around him. We can’t help him.” He argued right back, both women now pulling against him as Rose/Bad Wolf immediately tried to argue that point by killing herself.

“I’m not leaving him!” Amy sobbed.

“You have to.” He said, gritting his teeth as he kept his death grip on Rose’s wrists and Amy’s hips.

“NO!” She screamed, as he pulled them to the TARDIS.

“Sorry.”

“GET OFF ME!”

“Sorry.”
“NO! GET OFF ME!” She continued to scream and sob and struggle. He eventually managed the kick the door open behind him and shove both women in. Amy immediately falling back against him to pound on his back and attempt to shove him aside as he deadlocked the ship. “No! NO! Let me out! Please let me out! I need to get to Rory!” She yelled desperately, banging against the TARDIS door.

Beside her Rose’s eyes fluttered shut as the golden light faded, and she passed out, The Doctor just barely managing to catch her before she crashed to the floor. His hands were shaking as he picked up her limp form, the very real fear of nearly losing her again- and this time to herself- rattling every single cell in his body to the point that the air was trapped in his lungs. He walked on quaking legs as he carried her up the stairs to lay her across the jump seat. Silent tears making slow progression down his cheeks.

Amy continued to sob as she crashed against the door, her gaze landing on one of the circular windows. “That light…” She said, walking over to the view of her fiance’s lifeless body being taken by the light. “If his body’s absorbed I’ll forget him. He’ll never have existed.” Her breath shuddered and she turned around. “You can’t let that happen.” She begged.

He leaned against the console and let out a long breath… and then pulled the dematerialisation lever.

“What are you doing? DOCTOR! NO!” Amy screamed, running up the stairs, to push him out of the way. “NO! NO!” She sobbed, and he pulled her around to face him as he fought her frantically. “Doctor, we can’t just leave him!” She sobbed, grabbing at his lapels as he held her elbows.

“How forget him. If you forget him, you’ll lose him forever.” He told her quickly.

“No.” She argued furiously. “On the Byzantium, I still remember the clerics because I am a time traveller now, you said.”

The Doctor’s hands moved up to hold her head. “They weren’t part of your world. This is different. This is your own history changing.”

Amy shook her head. “No, no. Tell me it’s going to be okay! You have to make it okay!” She sobbed, sounding so much like a desperate child realizing that her parents aren’t superheroes.

“It’s going to be hard, but you can do it Amy!” He insisted, planting a kiss to her forehead as she cried harder. He pulled her to him and wrapped an arm around her as he walked her to the captain’s seat. “Tell me about Rory.” He ordered. “Fantastic Rory, funny Rory, gorgeous Rory!” He sat her down to see her face had gone blank now- like she was struggling to remember why she was upset. “Amy, listen to me. Do exactly as I say.” He said seriously from where he was knelt in front of her, her hands still gripping at his jacket like a small child. “Amy, please. Keep concentrating. You can do this.”

She was looking off, but she looked back to him as she shook her head. “I can’t.” She whispered, as more memories of her favorite person in the world slipped away from her.

He held her face more firmly between his hands as he willed her mind to keep hold- struggling as time fought against him in its effort to erase. He rambled as he worked, locking all the doors Amy opened of Rory in her mind. “You can. You can do it. I can't help you unless you do. Come on. We can still save his memory. Come on, Amy. Please. Come on, Amy, come on. Amy, please. Don't let anything distract you. Remember Rory. Keep remembering. Rory's only alive in your memory. You must keep hold of him. Don't let anything distract you. Rory still lives in your mind.”
The TARDIS landed with a horrific crash, and The Doctor watched in horror as all the doors he’d locked flung open, as his hands were wrenched from her temples when they fell to the floor.

Amy laughed as she sat up. “What were you saying?” She asked easily, and The Doctor’s hearts shattered.

Mo and his family came down the stairs then, all of them looking wide-eyed about the massive-on-the-inside phone box. “I’ve seen some things today, but this is beyond mad.” Mo breathed out. None of them noticed Rory’s absence.

Amy grabbed the stopwatch off the floor, and The Doctor saw the ring that once adorned her left hand was gone now. “Doctor, five seconds til it all goes up.” She said, looking up to him, and with that they all ran out the door to see the drill derrick explode on the horizon. The Doctor hovered in the doorway though as they all filed out- unwilling to stray too far from Rose.

“All Nasreen’s work- just erased.” Amy whispered as the fire in the distance reflected in her eyes, missing the irony.

Mo snorted. “Good thing she’s not here to see it. She’s going to give Tony hell when they wake up.” He commented, and then smiled down at Elliot as he pulled him away- wanting to show his dad all the work they had done before they’d ended up below the surface.

Ambrose wandered over to The Doctor as her family ran off. “You could have let those things shoot me.” She said, arms crossing in front of her protectively as she faced him. “You saved me.”

The Doctor leaned heavily against the TARDIS at that. He couldn’t save Rory. “An eye for an eye- it’s never the way.” He told her. “Now you show your son how wrong you were, how there’s another way. You make him the best of humanity... in the way you couldn’t be.”

She nodded in understanding, pain a regret finally coloring her features, and walked off without another word. The Doctor watched her go for a moment, before ducking back inside the TARDIS.

Inside, Rose was still unconscious on the jumpseat, and the TARDIS took the liberty of further reiterating the fact by dingling wildly at him and flashing the lights worriedly. “Well it’s your fault.” He said bitterly to the ship, and got what amounted to a telepathic indignant scoff in return. He sighed and went to pick Rose up again to carry her silently to the zero room.

Bad Wolf tended to wreak havoc on Rose’s telepathic centres. Sending her into the state and depleting her of all her energy was one of the many things The Master had used to torture her during the year that never was. After they’d finally escaped him Rose had stayed in a catatonic coma for nearly a week in the zero room.

The Doctor shuddered when they entered the room, as his telepathy was zeroed out in the opposing frequencies, but in his arms Rose visibly relaxed as her mind was finally able to begin healing. He moved to lay her down on the sofa just as her eyes began fluttering open. She looked around wildly though when she realized The Doctor’s presence in her mind was missing.

“Shh…” He said quickly, running his fingers through her hair. “I’m here.” He assured her quietly.

Her shoulders fell back against the sofa at his touch, and she reached out for his other hand- which he gave her readily. “What happened?” She asked, turning to face where he knelt at her head.

“What do you remember?” He asked, not stopping his fingers ministrations through her hair.
Rose let out a long breath and closed her eyes as she tried to recall. “We were… we were running for the TARDIS, you and Amy were ahead of me, I think, and I turned to see something… and then-” Rose huffed in frustration. “Nothing. Did I pass out?”

The Doctor’s hand stopped for half a second as the omission of Rory from her memories hit him. But that couldn’t be. She was a time traveller- a Time Lord, in fact, and Rory wasn’t a part of her personal history. He wouldn’t have been erased from her mind. “Was it just me and Amy there when you turned?” He asked her, momentarily grateful that she couldn’t pick up on his racing and frantic thoughts.

Rose sat up and squinted at him, clearly attempting to access the thoughts she currently couldn’t from him. “Yeah? What aren’t you telling me? What happened?”

He sucked in a breath, and raised to his feet to sit down next to her. “Bad Wolf.” He told her finally, after taking her hands back into his own. “There was another crack in time. Larger this time. Apparently, you know what it is.”

Rose’s eyes widened and her head spun at the information. “Why can’t I remember?” She asked him quietly.

“You must’ve locked your own memories while you were still merged with the time vortex.” The Doctor answered, looking to a point somewhere behind her shoulder rather than at her as he theorized that that’s what happened to her memories of Rory as well.

“Will you show me?” Rose asked, tilting her head to get him to look at her.

He hesitated at that, never wanting to tell her no- but feeling the overwhelming need to protect her. “If as Bad Wolf you decided to lock those memories- it was probably for your own safety, love.” He told her gently, and all around them the TARDIS flashed the lights in agreement as she couldn’t say so in their heads at the moment. Rose huffed in annoyance at her husband and home ganging up on her, and The Doctor smirked, raising his hand to run it gently through her hair again.

She squinted suspiciously at the sad look in his eyes though. “There’s still something you aren’t telling me.” She observed, and his eyes flickered down to meet hers in surprise.

“Rose Tyler…” He started, shaking his head at just how extraordinary his wife is.

She smirked, filling in the unspoken reverence without him having to say it. “I don’t need telepathy to read you, dear.”

He shook his head and chuckled. “Oh, I know it.” He told her, and a silence fell over them as she waited for him to answer, and he tried to figure out how. “You’ve forgotten someone.” He said eventually, as gently as he could.

Rose pulled her chin back and squinted at him incredulously. “How do you mean? I’ve forgotten someone?”

He let out a long breath. “We had another companion. With Amy. Her fiancé, actually. The light though… the light erased him.”

She shook her head in vehement denial at that. “No. No that’s not true. That can’t be true. I wouldn’t have forgotten someone. Not Amy’s fiancé. Not anyone. I wouldn’t have!” She argued, pulling away from him.

He grabbed her arms before she could get too far away. “Rose, please.” He begged her, and she
slumped at his tone, spotting the tears threatening to fall in his eyes. “You nearly killed yourself trying to save him. I had to hold you back.

“What was his name?” She asked him quietly.

“Rose…” He started.

She shook her head. “What was his name?” She asked again, more forcefully.

“Rory Williams.” He answered, voice breaking, just barely above a whisper. “He was our friend.”

Tears sprang to her eyes at the name. It sounded so familiar, but she couldn’t pull a face from it. “Why does my chest hurt?” She asked miserably.

The Doctor pulled her forehead to his lips, planting a kiss there. “Because he’s still there.” He whispered, and she collapsed into his arms.

Chapter End Notes

Ouch. Sorry. That was a bit of an emotional chapter wasn’t it? Unfortunately, Van Gough really won’t be much easier. I mean, that episode makes me cry even without Rose. BUT The Lodger comes right after and that will be loads of fun! Right before it all goes back to dramatic again with the Pandorica.

-comments keep writers writing ❤
Amy swung her feet against Rose’s desk as she watched her paint. She was in the process of mapping out the stars on her canvas when Amy finally spoke up. “You know whose art I’ve always loved but have never been able to see in person?”

Rose looked up from her easel for the first time in what was probably an hour. She had a bright splotch of blue swiped across her left cheek, and in her hair yellows and pinks had mixed and clumped together the pieces that had fallen from her messy bun. “What’s that?” She asked.

“Van Gogh!” Amy exclaimed brightly, leaning forward as she spoke. “Sunflowers was always my favorite when I was little. Well, behind Starry Night because it reminded me of…” She trailed off awkwardly, cheeks tinting pink as she realised what she was about to say.

Rose hid her smirk behind her hand. A lot of times she felt bad when she was reminded of Amy’s them-less childhood, but sometimes it was just cute thinking of little Amelia telling stories about The Doctor and her, making paper mache TARDISes, and falling in love with paintings that were just the right shades of blue and gold. ‘Amy wants to go look at Van Gogh paintings,’ she informed her husband silently.

Less than ten minutes after divulging that tidbit of information to Rose, Amy found herself being dragged excitedly through the galleries of the Musée d'Orsay towards the Van Gogh exhibit.

“Those final months of his life were probably the most astonishing artistic outpouring in history.” The curator was saying as the rounded the corner. “It was like Shakespeare knocking off Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear over the Summer hols.” He went on, earning laughs from the tour group surrounding him. The Doctor, Rose, and Amy all paused their spinning around to hear more. “And especially astonishing because Van Gogh did it with no hope of praise or reward…”

Amy looked down and picked the end of her scarf up, hitting The Doctor with it playfully. “Thanks for bringing me.” She said, looking up to both of them.

“You’re welcome.” He said easily, turning away from her to deflect attention.
She went on though. “You’re being so nice to me. Why are you being so nice to me?”

He spun back around to squint at her. “I’m always nice to you!” He argued.

Amy wrinkled her nose. “Not like this! All these places you’re taking me- Arcadia, The Trojan Gardens, now this- I think it’s suspicious!”

And it was true. Ever since they left the definitely-not-Rio mining village of Wessex, The Doctor had felt the overwhelming need to please and impress Amy. Keep her from harm. Make sure her happiness never falters. Maybe it was because she won’t be getting married now- and he’s the only one that remembers. Maybe it was to appease his own guilt. Either way, Rose went along with it. Despite having her own memories locked of the person she was meant to be mourning, she couldn’t get the heavy weight of missing someone off of her chest.

“What? It’s not! There’s nothing to be suspicious about!” The Doctor let out his string of denial quickly, effectively turning Amy’s joke into actual suspicion.

She leaned back. “Okay, I was joking… Why aren’t you?” She asked, eyes looking him up and down as he turned away- his attention back on the curator. She shifted her gaze onto Rose then, who only shrugged in response before following her husband’s lead. Amy went up on her tiptoes to see the curator over the crowd of heads.

“Each of these paintings now is worth tens of millions of pounds.” He was saying. “Yet in his lifetime he was a commercial disaster. Sold only one painting- and that to the sister of a friend… We have here, possibly the greatest artist of all time, but when he died, you could have sold his entire body of work and got about enough money to buy a sofa… and a couple of chairs.” He earned laughs from his group, and led them further along the gallery, leaving The Doctor to rock back on his heels while the girls gushed over the nearby canvases.

Suddenly, Amy was nearly yanking his arm out of his socket “Look! There it is! The actual one!” She squealed, pulling him and Rose over to the painting of The Church at Auvers.

“Yes…” The Doctor mused as he took in the work before him. “You can almost feel him painting it right in front of you… carving the colors into shapes…” He waxed poetic, but drifted on the last words as he caught something out of the corner of his eye. “Wait a minute…”

Amy’s body language immediately shifted from awed to on-edge. “What is it?” She asked, eyes darting around the canvas.

Rose sucked in her breath as she spotted it, and Amy repeated the question to her. The alien couple both pointed to the window of the church. “Look at that.” The Doctor said.

“There’s something in the window…” Rose said, leaning closer to squint at the small cluster of out-of-place brush strokes. “Something not good.” She breathed.

The Doctor scratched the back of his neck anxiously. “Something very not good indeed…”

Amy’s confused gaze shifted between the couple and the painting. “What thing very not good?” She mocked him, but looked hard at the window Rose had pointed to. “Is that a face?” She asked.

“Yes… and not a nice face all.” He answered quietly, eyes wide as he studied the creature. “I know evil when I see it, and I see it in that window.” The Doctor spun on his heel back towards the curator. “Excuse me, if I could just interrupt for one second. Sorry, everyone.” He said, speaking over the man, and pulling out the psychic paper to wave it about. “Routine inspection. Ministry of Art… and Artiness… So, um…”
“Dr. Black.” The curator filled him in helpfully, squaring his shoulders a bit.

“Yes, that’s right.” The Doctor said matter of factly, pointing at him as if he’d needed the confirmation of his own name. “Do you actually know when that picture of the church was painted?” He asked quickly, glancing over and jamming his thumb towards the painting in question.

“Ah! Well, ah! What an interesting question… Most people imagine-”

The Doctor’s already thin patience was thinner than normal. “And I’m gonna have to hurry you.” He interrupted. “When was it?”

The curator was clearly flustered. “Exactly?”

The Doctor nodded. “As exactly as you can. Without a long speech, if poss. I’m in a hurry.” He said, and behind him Rose rolled her eyes. They had a time machine, for Pete’s sake- they were never in a hurry. The Doctor was clearly just bored of art-talk already- especially when the prospect of adventure loomed so nearly on the horizon.

“Well, in that case, probably somewhere between the 1st and 3rd of June.” Dr. Black answered, and Rose nodded appreciatively at the curator’s ability to pull dates like that from the top of his head.

The Doctor was smiling slightly, catching onto Rose’s thoughts. “What year?” He pressed.

“1890.” He said quickly, and then gave a sort of half-nod. “Less than a year before… Before he killed himself.”

Now that the Doctor had the answer to the question, he was much more willing to talk slowly. He thanked him, and then his eyes finally caught the piece of cloth around the other man’s neck. “Nice bow tie.” He added, and looked over his shoulder to the girls- eyebrows raised, and a dorky smirk playing at his lips. “Bow ties are cool.” They rolled their eyes and he pouted.

The curator brightened though. “Oh, thank you! Yours is very-”

“Thank you!” The Doctor chuckled, grinning happily now, and rocking back and forth on his heels- just a bit flustered. He patted Dr. Black’s arm. “Keep telling them stuff!” He said by way of farewell, and then spun on his heel to grab Amy’s and Rose’s hands. “We need to go.” He muttered, pulling them away- Rose just barely managing to give the curator a grateful smile and short wave before her husband was pulling her back through the crowd.

“What about the other pictures?!” Amy protested, pulling on his hand petulantly, and looking longingly over her shoulder towards Sunflowers - blocked by the heads of the tour group.

“No, art can wait. This is life and death.” He said shortly, not loosening his grip as he tugged them along, finally pushing her in front of him. “We need to talk to Vincent Van Gogh!”

Less than a minute later they were stepping out of the TARDIS and onto the late 19th century dusty cobbled streets of Auvers-sur-Oise, France. The sun had already fallen beneath the horizon, and Rose squinted into the dark alleyway ahead of her. Somewhere in the distance dogs started barking, and behind her, The Doctor and Amy shuffled into the narrow space with her.

“Right so here’s the plan,” The Doctor started, not wasting any time as he turned to exit the alley.
“We find Vincent, and he leads us straight to the church and our nasty friend.”

Amy grabbed Rose’s hand and started skipping a bit as they followed him. “Easy peasy!”

The Doctor tilted his head. “Well, no… I suspect nothing will be easy with Mr. Van Gogh.” He admitted. “Now, he’ll probably be in the local cafe- sort of orangey-light, chairs and tables outside…” He told them as they turned the corner into the town.

Amy looked down to her guide book from Musée d'Orsay as the description stirred a memory in the back of her mind. She held up the picture of *Café Terrace at Night* just as the scene itself laid out before them. “Like this?” She asked, not seeing it in front of her.

Rose pushed the book down gently and nodded towards the cafe. “Or like that.” She said with a smirk.

The other two chuckled giddily as they looked up from the book with her. “Yes, exactly like that!”

The Doctor lilting, walking jauntily towards the two apron-adorned women wiping down the terrace tables. “Hello!” He called, just as the maître d' came out. “Does the name Vincent Van Gogh ring a bell?”

The formerly straight-backed man instantly scowled at the name, shaking his head angrily as he turned on his heel back into the restaurant. “Don’t mention that man to me.” He grumbled, not bothering to dignify the question with a proper response.

“Excuse me…” The Doctor breathed out, and then sighed, he turned to Rose helplessly.

She rolled her eyes and walked over to the ladies. “Do either of you two happen to know Vincent Van Gogh?” She asked them politely, aware of the overtly-proper French rolling off her tongue, and thanking the TARDIS silently for the extra help.

The younger of the two huffed. “Unfortunately.” She grunted, tossing her towel down to place her hands on her hips as she looked up to them.

Amy turned around at that. “Unfortunately?” She asked incredulously.

“He’s drunk. He’s mad. He never pays his bills.” She threw back, raising her eyebrows at them.

The Doctor shifted his weight a bit awkwardly. “Good painter though, eh?” He tried, but the women only let out loud barks of laughter- well convinced it was a joke. The Doctor huffed, rolling his eyes as he took a seat, Rose coming to run her fingers through his hair comfortingly.

Inside though they could hear an argument brewing. “Come on! Come on!” A man was begging. “One painting for one drink! That- that’s not a bad deal!”

The host shot back, holding the canvas up. “Good painter though, eh?” He tried, but the women only let out loud barks of laughter- well convinced it was a joke. The Doctor huffed, rolling his eyes as he took a seat, Rose coming to run her fingers through his hair comfortingly.

“Pay money, or get out.” The maître d' went on. “It’s bad enough having you here in person- let alone looming over the customers day and night wearing a stupid hat.” He bit out, shoving the self-portrait into the artist’s chest. “It won’t be a bad deal- if the painting were any good.”

The Doctor leaned back in his chair and looked away casually. “I’ll pay if you like.”
The angry cafe runner looked over Vincent’s shoulder incredulously. “What?”

“Well, I’ll pay for the drink. Or, if you like, I’ll pay for the painting and you can use the money to pay for the drink.” He said easily, looking to Vincent rather than to his oppressor.

Vincent squinted at the odd-looking couple. “And exactly who are you?” He asked.

“I’m… new in town.” The Doctor answered, smirking slightly as Rose’s fingers curled into his jacket in amusement. ‘New to Earth more like, spaceman.’ She added, and he had to bite back the laugh at her use of Donna’s favourite nickname.

“Well,” Vincent said, looking down to them. “In that case, you don’t know three things: One, I pay for my own drinks, thank you-” he was cut off by the laughs of the cafe’s staff, but shook his head and went on. “Two, no one ever buys any of my paintings, or they would be laughed out of town, so if you and your wife would like to stay in town, I suggest you keep your cash to yourself.” He told them rather self-deprecatingly. “And three, your friend’s cute-” behind him Amy’s eyes widened and she grinned to Rose over Vincent’s shoulder. “-but you should keep your big nose out of other people’s business.”

The Doctor scoffed at that as Vincent continued to argue with the host. ‘Big nose?’

Rose grinned down at his puppy dog pout, and placed a comforting kiss to his jutted out lip.

“Oh, look just shut up, the pair of you!” Amy said loudly to the two men, pulling Rose and The Doctor from their silent conversation to smirk at their companion as she walked over to the maître d’ easily. “I would like a bottle of wine, please, which I will then share with whoever I choose.” She told him, raising her eyebrows, before giving Vincent a significant look at the last words.

“That could be good.” Vincent let out, watching Amy carefully, admirably. Rose and The Doctor rolled their eyes at the familiar look- not remembering the last time they went anywhere with the girl and hadn’t had a local fall in love with her.

“Good.” Amy said easily, and turned on her heel to saunter into the cafe, not waiting to see if the rest of them would follow.

“That accent,” Vincent started, as they all sat down inside the cozy cafe, “are you from Holland like me?” He asked Amy.

“No,” she answered at the same time The Doctor said “yes.” They both shot him questioning looks. “She means yes.” He insisted, with a significant look towards Amy, before going on quickly. “So, start again. Hello, I’m The Doctor-”

“I knew it!” Vincent exclaimed angrily, before The Doctor could continue with his introductions.

“What’s that then?” Rose asked, squinting and tilting her head curiously.

“My brother’s always sending doctors,” he bit out, “but you won’t be able to help.” He sounded angry and crestfallen at the same time as he sat back in his chair, and Rose’s heart broke a little more.

The Doctor chuckled, “oh- no. No, I’m not that kind of doctor. My mother in law wishes though let me tell you…” He let out, grinning at the idea, but was quickly distracted from thoughts of Jackie’s disapproval as his eyes landed on the painting resting at Vincent’s side. “That’s incredible don’t
you think, Rose, Amy?” He asked excitedly, pointing to the canvas.

Vincent furrowed his brow and turned to pick up the newly finished Noon - Rest from Work, as Amy grinned. “Absolutely- one of my favourites,” she answered without thinking.

“One of your favourite whats?” Vincent snarled, sure she was mocking him. “You’ve never seen my work before.”

Amy’s eyes widened as she caught her mistake. “Ah, yes-” she let out, looking over to Rose for help. “One of my favorite paintings that I’ve ever seen- generally.” She edited, a bit brokenly as she was forced to improvise her way through the slip up. She downed the rest of her glass restlessly.

“Well, you can’t have seen many paintings then.” Vincent mumbled, picking up his work again. “I know it’s terrible.” He said, but it was less self-deprecating, and more like he believed the statement to be irrefutable fact. “It’s the best I could do.”

Rose pressed her lips together, remembering all the times she’d told herself he art was useless and terrible. It couldn’t make her money, so why should she bother? Jimmy Stone’s constant berration of her hobby had squandered her passion and had her leaving school to follow him around- sure she wasn’t good enough for anything else. Never being told otherwise until she met The Doctor. “Says who?” Rose challenged.

He squinted at her. “Says everyone.”

“We don’t.” She shot back.

His eyes narrowed impossibly further as he studied her. “You’re an artist.” He said, and it wasn’t a question. Rose only raised her eyebrows in answer. “There’s something of the wolf about you.” He mused after a pause, eyes flicking back and forth as he studied hers.

Rose and The Doctor’s backs straightened at the familiar statement. “What did you say?” The Doctor asked, sitting forward, but Vincent’s attention had already shifted back to Amy.

“Your hair is orange.” He said, far less interestingly.

Amy tilted her head smally, and leaned forward so that her forearms rested against the table, and her face was mere inches from his. “Yes. So is yours.”

“Yes.” He breathed. “It was more orange, but now is, of course, less…”

The Doctor groaned, looking around boredly at the dull turn in conversation. “So, Vincent!” He interrupted, earning an aggravated look from Amy that he ignored. “Painted any churches recently? Any church-y plans? Aren’t churches, chapels, religious-y stuff like that something you’d like to get into fairly soon?” He rambled, not subtly.

“Well there is one church…” Vincent said slowly, more confused by the people in front of him the more words that were exchanged. “I’m thinking of painting… when the whether is right.”

“That is good news-” The Doctor started, but was cut off as suddenly the screams of a woman from outside reached his ears.

“HELP! HELP ME!” The woman yelled as she came into the cafe, waving her arms wildly, as someone outside exclaimed “she’s been murdered!”
“- That on the other hand, isn’t quite such good news.” The Doctor mumbled, and the four of them jumped into action, running back out onto the cobbled streets.

“Please. Let me look. I’m a doctor!” He spoke over the terrified screams of horror as he pushed his way through the crowd towards the motionless girl. “Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no, no.” He let out, the word getting stuck on repeat as it was wont to do. Rose’s hand fell to the small of his back while her other went to hide her gasp at the shredded body before them.

The Doctor and Vincent knelt down just as another woman came running up. “Get away all of you vultures!” She growled out on a sob. “This is my daughter!” She pushed The Doctor away, and he reached out to grab Rose’s hand as both their thoughts instantly went to their own daughter without permission.

“Giselle!” She cried, and then looked over to them again. “Get away!” She screamed, and The Doctor and Vincent stood up and took a few steps back quickly. “Get that madman out of here!” She growled at Vincent, and picked up a nearby stone to launch at his face—prompting the rest of the crowd to follow suit.

“Oi! Hey!” Amy yelled at them, as The Doctor and Rose moved to block the artist from the projectiles—guiding him out of the alleyway. Rose grabbed her hand and pulled her away as the mourning mother blamed Vincent for the town’s misgivings.

“You bring this on us!” She spit. “Your madness! You!”

They turned the corner swiftly, panting, The Doctor’s and Vincent’s hands falling to their knees as Rose and Amy leant heavily against the stone wall. “Are you okay?” The Doctor asked him.

“Yes, I’m used to it.” He answered easily, and it was almost worse than had he said no.

“Has anything like this murder happened here before?” The Doctor questioned, going into Detective-Inspector mode.

Vincent nodded solemnly. “Only a week ago. It’s been a terrible time.”

The Doctor sighed, and began leading them back through the streets of Auvers-sur-Oise. “As I thought… come on, we’d better be getting you home.”

“Where are you staying tonight?” Vincent asked, looking between them all.

“Oh!” The Doctor exclaimed merrily, patting vincent on the arm. “You’re very kind!”

Vincent squinted and looked to Rose and Amy incredulously as they giggled at their unwitting host.

“Dark night… Starry night…” The Doctor mused cheekily, earning a telepathic eye roll from Rose, as they made their way towards Vincent’s small farmhouse dwelling, picking their feet up high against the overgrown grass.

“It’s not much…” Vincent said as they came through the gate. “I live on my own. But you should be okay for one night.” He looked over his shoulder. “One night.” He emphasised, and unlocked his door. “Watch out— that one’s still wet.” He warned them, gesturing vaguely to the loose canvas hanging by the entrance.
“What?” Amy asked, but then stopped in her tracks, eyes widening as she took in the freshly painted *La chambre de Van Gogh à Arles* -just hanging casually by the front door. Rose chuckled, and walked past her into the house.

“Sorry about the clutter.” Vincent apologised as he lit a lamp.

The Doctor looked around at all the art. *Road in Etten*, a sketch of *The Harvest*, and *Moulin de la Gazette* were strewn haphazardly across the nearby desk- corners bent. *Doctor Paul Gachet* sat collecting dust in a dark corner. *The Old Tower in the Fields* (one of The Doctor’s personal favourites) was at an odd angle on the floor- a pair of old boots (not the painting) thrown next to them. “Some clutter…” He let out, as he took in the dozens more artworks crowding the room.

“I’ve come to accept the only person who’s going to love my paintings is me.” Vincent said boredly, as he set about making a fire.

Amy entered the room then, eyes widening as all the art hit her. “Wow…” She breathed, and The Doctor chuckled. “I mean really- wow.”

Vincent, of course, misinterpreted the interjection. “Yeah, I know. It’s a mess. I’ll have a proper clear-out. I must, I really must.”

“Oh, don’t you dare.” Rose said, spinning around the room breathlessly.

Vincent squinted at her, but eventually shrugged. “Coffee, anyone?” He asked, bringing the kettle down.

The Doctor peeked back around the corner just as Vincent was placing the coffee-stained kettle on *Six Oranges*. “You know, you should be careful with these.” He said quickly, unable to help himself as his stomach turned at the sight. “They- they’re… precious.” He stuttered, and drifted off as Vincent haphazardly brushed the coffee from the canvas.

Vincent scoffed. “Precious to me. Not precious to anyone else.”

Amy called from the next room over. “They’re precious to me!” And her head came to join The Doctor’s at the doorway.

“Well, you’re very kind.” Vincent looked up to her, eyes glowing. “And kindness is most welcome.”

Rose stood on the far side of the room, arms crossed in front of her as she studied the timelines spinning, twisting, and knotting around Vincent Van Gogh. It was more than just the way time always acted around significant historical figures… there was something else. The stars were whispering to Vincent.

She blinked and tuned back in just as Vincent was speaking very seriously to the Doctor again. “-It seems to me that there is so much more to the world than the average eye is allowed to see.” He said, and in Rose’s mind she saw the timelines spark around him. “I believe, if you look hard, there are more wonders in this universe than you could ever have dreamed of.” He spoke reverently, and Rose’s breath stuttered as around him the universe agreed.

The Doctor sent her a significant look and glanced over to Amy. “Well, you don’t have to tell us,” he said knowingly.
Later, after Amy had wandered off to look at more paintings, Rose and The Doctor sat listening to
Vincent speak animatedly about colour -about how he could hear the colours- and how nature was
shouting at him every time he stepped outside.

Rose looked around confusedly while The Doctor was telling Vincent he should have cup of tea as
the artist held him passionately by the lapels- having just finished screaming at him to listen to the
colours. “Where’s Amy?” She asked.

And right on cue, from outside came the redhead’s all too familiar scream.

They all bolted for the door, The Doctor on his usual rant: “No, no, no, no, no- Amy? Amy!” They
ran out to find her knocked to her backside in the the dirt just under the line of hanging canvases.
He ran to inspect her quickly, and stood up straight once making sure she was still breathing.
“What happened?” He asked, looking around wildly.

“I don’t know.” She answered, still breathing heavily as she came to her feet. “I was just out here
having a look at some of the paintings when something hit me from behind.”

“It’s okay.” The Doctor soothed her automatically, even as he still looked around for the danger.
“He’s gone now, and we’re here.”

Vincent nodded, hands on his hips, until he looked up to see the creature that had attacked her, a
scream escaping him as he stumbled back a few steps. “No! NO!” He yelled, sure he was having
another episode. The Doctor yelled for him to take it easy while Amy begged for an explanation.

Rose’s feet were locked in place as she saw the creature too- approaching them slowly from the
other side of the garden.

Behind her Vincent grabbed for the wooden pitchfork resting against the hay- aiming it towards
the creature stood just behind The Doctor and Amy. Neither one of them had turned to see the
thing yet, and just stood wide-eyed as Vincent charged for them, moving out of the way just in
time. He hit the creature, but it seemed only annoyed. “Run! RUN!” Vincent yelled to the others as
the creature started thrashing.

“Yeah, yeah, that’s not a bad idea!” The Doctor answered frantically. “Amy, get back! He’s having
some kind of a fit! Rose!” He grabbed for her hand, but she pulled away.

“Can you not see it?” She asked them, even as she already knew the answer.

“See what?” He insisted, spinning around again. Vincent was still waving the pitchfork at the
creature, trying to get it to back off, but it seemed unaffected.

Neither had time to answer before the creature’s tail was waving wildly in The Doctor’s direction.
“LOOK OUT!” They both screamed in unison, but it was too late. The Doctor was thrown into the
air and onto his side by what was apparently an invisible force to him.

Amy screamed as the sharp quills of the tail ripped the canvas in front of her face. She looked wide
eyed towards The Doctor and Rose. “I can’t see anything! What is it?” She yelled frantically.

The Doctor only ran to the nearest stick in response and started waving it wildly about. “Let me
help you!” He yelled, coming to Vincent’s side where he was fighting back the creature once more.

“You can see it?” He asked, still sure he was imagining the odd thing before him.

Rose backed up until she was standing at the artist’s other side. “I can. He can’t.” She answered,
and The Doctor went on to prove her point by running in the exact opposite direction of the creature, and waving his stick around wildly to no avail—looking a lot like a child with a toy lightsaber.

“Why did you marry him again?” Vincent threw over his shoulder.

Rose sighed and picked up the shover next to her. “It’s endearing when not incredibly stupid.” She answered, and together they were able to push the creature back, struggling against its weight as it thrashed and growled. Until finally they managed to push it over the garden wall, and it retreated into the woods.

They let out long breaths, breathing heavily, and turning to see Rose’s husband still batting the stick around in thin air. Amy stepped up behind them. “He’s gone, love.” Rose called, a smirk playing at the edge of her lips.

He spun around, stick above his head, and let his arms fall limply to his sides—breathing heavily despite the lack of battle. “Right. Yes. Of course.” He let out, and the three of them rolled their eyes.

“We should go back inside before he comes back, yeah?” Amy said, and they all nodded, The Doctor walking quickly ahead of them to lead them back into the house.

“Right. Yes, so he’s invisible.” The Doctor said as they turned the corner back into the sitting room. “What did he look like?”

“I’ll show you.” Vincent said, and was already grabbing a nearby painting of violets and brushing white paint over it before any of them could stop him. “Oh! No, no, no, no, no!” The Doctor let out, as Amy gasped—hand going to her mouth, and Rose’s heart stopped at the sight.

“What?” Vincent asked incredulously, looking around to all their distraught faces.

“It’s just…” The Doctor answered, sighing. “That was quite a good…” He sighed at the sight, giving up on speech, and Vincent just rolled his eyes and continued painting over what he considered a shoddy job to begin with. Rose shook her head minutely. Guess that explains why she hadn’t seen that one before.

‘I could have just showed you…’ Rose whispered inside his mind, not wanting to say it outloud.

He looked up to her at that while Vincent grabbed some charcoal and got to sketching. ‘Why could you see it?’ He asked, like she’d know.

‘Can you not see the timelines around him?’ She asked instead of answering. He squinted at her in return—answer enough. ‘The universe favors him.’ She told him.

The Doctor couldn’t help the snort that came out of him at that—earning looks from Amy and Vincent that he promptly ignored. ‘Oh yeah, because when people talk about Vincent Van Gogh they’re always sure to mention what a charmed life he led.’ He said sarcastically, giving a significant look to the rundown farmhouse they currently sat in, filled with all his unappreciated art.

Rose rolled her eyes at his cheek. ‘I just mean that time and space hovers around him. Shows him more.’ She attempted to explain the phenomenon.

In response, The Doctor sent her an image of what he saw when he looked at Rose’s timelines. How they danced and twirled and spun around her—turning her into a golden hurricane of time and
space. It wasn’t quite what Bad Wolf brought, but it was stunning and beautiful and obviously special. ‘Like this?’ He asked.

Rose’s breath caught in her throat at the sight. She couldn’t see her own timelines in her head, much less how they spun around her. And The Doctor wasn’t as sensitive to timelines as she was- it must be the bond that made it so he could see hers, but not Vincent’s. At that thought he sent her the affirmative, and she nodded understandingly. ‘Sort of like that… just not as…’

‘Breathtaking?’ He supplied, with a small smirk and love filled eyes.

Rose couldn’t help the blush that stained her cheeks. ‘Wouldn’t be the word I’d use to describe Vincent’s timelines, no.’ She said, drifting off as she took in the artist while he worked, the golden motes sparked around him as he recalled the image of the creature. ‘More like… electric…’ She supplied after a moment.

The Doctor squinted at him at that, having to focus much harder to see anyone’s timelines than Rose did, but still not seeing much more than he could manage from Winston Churchill. ‘So what is this creature then? That means only those blessed by time can see it?’ He asked her curiously.

Rose sent him an image in response, and he shook his head. ‘I have no idea.’ He answered honestly.

Vincent turned the canvas around then, pointing it towards Rose for her approval. She nodded at him- it was messy, but overall a pretty good rendering of the bird-like dinosaur-esque alien. “Yeah. That’s it.” She answered, looking to The Doctor as though maybe the drawing would jog his memory better than the image she’d shared with him.

“Right… Okay… Okay.” He whispered as his eyes scanned the canvas, but still nothing came to him. He was getting too old. The Doctor cleared his throat and took it from Vincent’s hands. “Right. Amy, make Mr. Van Gogh comfortable.” He said, turning towards the door. “Don’t let any invisible monsters in through the front door-”

Amy stood up and grabbed his arm, cutting him off. “But it could be outside, waiting!” She protested.

He rocked back on his heels- a little confused at the worry on his behalf. This was his life after all. “Don’t worry, I’ll risk it.” He answered, eyes wide and teasing. “What’s the worst that can happen?”

Rose groaned as the words escaped his lips. ‘Really, Doctor? The one thing I ask you not to say-’

“You could get torn to pieces by a monster you can’t see.” Amy shot back easily, raising her eyebrows.

“Right. Yes. That.” He mumbled as the assaults from both women hit him at the same time. “Don’t worry- Rose will come with me.” He said, holding his hand out for his wife. “One sighted for each of the blind, yeah?” He smirked, and Amy let out a long breath- knowing it wasn’t an argument she was going to win. Especially not without Rose.

They walked hand-in-hand carefully through the wheat fields and back onto the cobbled streets of Auvers-sur-Oise. “So, theorize to me,” Rose started, swinging their hands between them. “What about an alien could make it invisible to everyone else?”

“Well, plenty of species are invisible to other incompatible races. It’s both the perfect defense
mechanism, and the perfect offensive tool.” He rambled off quickly, looking around despite knowing he wouldn’t see anything. “Tends to only be a trait found in species that run in packs, though… It was alone, you said?” Rose nodded, and he tilted his head. “He could have been abandoned, then…”

Rose’s brow wrinkled and her lip jutted out a bit at that, The Doctor squeezing her hand as he felt her emotions shift. “We’ll get him home.” He reassured her, placing a kiss to the top of her head. She let a few more moments pass as they crossed the street before speaking again. “Then what about being slightly more time-sensitive makes me and Vincent able to see him, then?”

“It’s not that you’re time-sensitive, it’s like I said- you’re blessed by time. For you, Bad Wolf exists to keep you safe- that includes opening your mind to threats others may not be able to perceive, like a survival override.” He explained. “For Vincent… well, you heard him ranting about art and the world earlier.”

Rose blushed and shook her head, she hadn’t actually been paying attention- too busy watching the fireworks show around the artist as he spoke so passionately. She sent The Doctor the image by explanation, and he nodded in understanding.

“Ah yes, well. That’s why. He was trying to explain how he saw the universe- those timelines he’s got spinning around him are why he sees it that way. He’s about 108 times more sensitive to everything around him than the rest of us. He sees more- as it were.” He smirked, and they turned the corner of the alley leading to the TARDIS. He let go of Rose’s hand to dig around in his pockets for the key- placing the sonic, a spare banana, a paper bag of jelly babies, a random biscuit, a jar of jam, and a packet of crackers in Rose’s hands before finally pulling the key out with a triumphant grin towards his wife.

She just wrinkled her nose as the assortment of foodstuffs in her hands though. “Did you shove the entire pantry in your pockets?” She asked him incredulously. “You don’t even eat that much.”

“One never knows when they’ll need a banana!” He called over his shoulder as he stepped into the TARDIS, and Rose rolled her eyes, following him up the stairs, dropping the food in the jump seat, and grabbing the sonic before watching him turn the corner into the corridor.

“Where are you going?” She called, quickening her pace to catch up with his much longer strides.

A storage-closet door appeared next to her as she asked, and she stopped to open it, finding an expansive room full of cardboard boxes and wooden chests stacked on top of one another. “-I put it somewhere in here ages ago, I know I did!” The Doctor was yelling back to her from somewhere way further off in their ship.

“Love, get back here! She brought the room to me!” She yelled back, stepping into the room slowly.

“Of course she did!” He huffed, spinning on his heel to head back to the front of the ship where he could see Rose hovering in a doorway. When he reached her he let out a low whistle at all the stuff in the room. “You’d think she could tell us which box…” He mumbled.

The telepathic indignant and exasperated huff they got from the TARDIS in response communicated something along the lines of ‘Yeah right. Look at all this garbage.’

Rose patted his arm. “I think you have a problem, dear.” She said, and around them their ship chimed in agreement. The Doctor rolled his eyes- trying to remember the last time he didn’t have a
number of women constantly ganging up on him, and followed his wife into the room.

Hours passed and still they were sat on the hard wooden floors of the storage room, sifting through and endless sea of boxes. Rose had found his old papers from the Academy.

“Oh my God!” She gushed, pulling up an old, worn out photograph of him at only 8 years old—before he’d even reached his first decade—wearing the traditional scarlet robes and high golden collar. Rose grinned widely and held it out to her husband. “You were adorable!” She squealed.

The Doctor flushed at that as he flustered over his reply. “Rose, you’re supposed to be looking for the gizmo!” He protested, pointedly ignoring the photo she was still holding up to him with that cheeky tongue-touched smile of hers.

She chuckled and flipped open another file of his school reports in response. She held up an essay written completely in linear Gallifreyan—but of course with a century of practice had no trouble reading it. “The Time of Empires” she read out loud in Gallifreyan, and then quickly scanned over the introductory paragraph. “Ha! I always knew you were magick!” She grinned up at him, and he rolled his eyes, huffing and pulling another leather chest towards him.

He started throwing random old jackets, books, and toasters over his shoulder as soon as the image of a mirror caught his eye. “Aha!” He exclaimed, pulling the ‘gizmo’—as he called it—out, and gaining his wife’s attention back as he jumped to his feet with the device. “I can’t apologize enough!” He exclaimed, talking to the thing as she led them out of the room and back to the console. “I thought you were just a useless gadget! I *thought* you were just an embarrassing present from a dull godmother with two heads and bad breath—Twice! Oh! How wrong can a man be?” he let out a silly little chuckle as he hopped up the steps, and Rose held back her snort. This regeneration’s penchant for talking to inanimate objects was just one of the many (quite frankly adorable) habits that came with the new body.

If he’d caught that thought, he didn’t feel the need to comment on it, as he hooked up the heavy machine to the TARDIS console. Rose watched from behind as it lit up, and her husband stuck his tongue out for a goofy face in the mirror that the gizmo then scanned and dinged. He leaned over and hit the spacebar on the typewriter/printer/telegram/computer he’d rigged and hooked up to the console a few weeks earlier (much to Rose’s dismay), and it began printing off pictures of all his former faces, along with a species description, while the mirror flipped through the same images itself.

“Good! Okay, you’re working!” He told the gizmo, and then leaned over the grab the canvas he’d set down when they’d come in. “Now! See what you make of this!”

He held up the sketch to the mirror and after a few seconds it dinged again, bleeping a bit before pulling up an image of a macaw. The Doctor sighed. “No, I know it’s not that. There are thousands of them, and you can see them plain as day.” He told it, so it bleeped and dug some more before showing a polar bear.

“No. Definitely not.” He huffed, looking up to Rose in exasperation. “This is the problem with the impressionists! Not accurate enough! This would never happen with Gainsborough or—one of those… *proper* painters.” He said ironically, with a significant look towards Rose, and then felt the immediate need to apologize to the man who wasn’t here. “Sorry, Vincent.” He added, and picked up the sketch. “You’ll just have to draw something better!” And with that The Doctor threw the canvas behind him without ceremony, and Rose couldn’t help but wince.
Rose was about to recommend she try drawing the alien, but they’d already spent entirely too long looking for this gadget now, and she was pretty sure the sun had already begun its accent outside the doors. “Well, let’s head back to them then. Maybe it’ll figure it out on the way there.” She suggested.

The Doctor nodded in agreement, and began buckling the leather straps of the gizmo around his shoulders like a sort of steampunk baby bjorn. Resting just below his two hearts sat the round metal center of the machine’s controls, complete with a orange-lit dial, a series of buttons, and a number of overly-large tubes, and protruding from his chest the sort of rear view mirror was attached.

“You look ridiculous.” Rose said dryly, and he pouted at her.

He tapped the mirror. “This will let me see whatever is behind me- invisible or not.” He informed her smartly, and ignored the sarcastic nod she gave him in return to instead turn on the spot (awkwardly- with a mirror coming out his chest) and lead them out of the TARDIS.

Rose stood where she was for a moment, looking like a giant dork, before shaking her head and finally moving her feet once the door had shut behind him. “That’s better, old girl. Time delay, but you always get it right in the end. Good. Let's find out who this is, then…”

Well, well, there you are.” She could hear him rambling on the other side of the door, and her mind heard the word ‘Krafayis’ whispered. “Oh, you poor thing. You brutal, murderous, abandoned thing. I hope we meet again soon so I can take you home.”

Rose stepped out at that, and immediately screamed as she saw the Krafayis in question standing directly behind her husband, prompting him to look in the mirror and finally see it for himself. “Well, maybe not that soon.” He let out, and grabbed Rose’s hand- starting them running down the alley, the Krafayis close on their heels.

Rose kept looking over her shoulder while The Doctor glanced in the mirror as it stumbled over a parked bicycle and crashed into some signage. They rounded a corner and The Doctor knocked over a flag pole and a table of empty baskets to slow the Krafayis down. The creature tripped over the obstacles, and in the commotion it’s top horn crashed into the keystone of the archway overhead- knocking him backwards as the stones fell in on him. He huffed and turned away, and Rose and The Doctor sighed heavily, leaning against the wall as they caught their breath.

The Doctor started to turn the corner again and ran directly into Amy. Both of them letting out terrified and unnecessary screams. “Amy! Never do that!” He yelled loudly over her high pitched surprise. “You scared the living daylights out of me.” He reprimanded her.

Rose rolled her eyes, and Amy huffed while he adjusted his bowtie. “Sorry, I got bored.” She let out, still attempting the catch her own breath after the fright. “As much as you can admire his command of colour and shape, it is hard to get fond of Vincent Van Gogh’s snoring.” She informed them dryly.

“Wakey, wakey!” The Doctor exclaimed loudly as he flung open the door to Vincent’s familiar bedchamber. Vincent startled awake and began battling with the covers as The Doctor came into his room. “Rise and shine! Breakfast is served in the courtyard!” He threw open the shutters to let the bright mid-morning sun flood the room. “Whoa! What a morning!” He said happily, holding his arms out to the cloudless sky before spinning on his heel and clapping a few times at Vincent. “Come on! Amy’s got a little surprise for you!” He yelled, as he made his way back out the door and down the stairs- quick as he’d come.
Vincent yawned and shuffled his way over to the window to see Amy sitting at the picnic table below—surrounded by hundreds of sunflowers in pots. “I thought I’d brighten things up to thank you for saving me last night.” She said cheekily, leaning forward to rest her chin in her hand as Vincent grinned down at her—taking in the sight. “I thought you might like, you know, possibly to perhaps paint them or something?” She suggested, ignoring the look Rose was giving her on the other side of the table as The Doctor stepped up to them.

“Yes, well, they’re not my favourite flower.” Vincent said, looking around with a slightly wrinkled expression. Rose and The Doctor turned to stare at him.

“You don’t like sunflowers?” Amy asked incredulously, but with amusement hiding within her tone—glancing toward the alien couple knowingly as she bit back her grin.

“No, it’s not that I don’t like them.” Vincent answered, reaching out to hold a nearby head of the flower in question. “I find them complex… Always somewhere between living and dying… Half-human as they turn to the sun… A little disgusting.” He mused, but tilted his head and his thumb ran along on the petals. “But you know… they are a challenge.”

“And one I’m pretty sure you’ll rise to.” The Doctor let out on a chuckle. “But! Moving on! There’s something I need to show you!” He said, getting right back to business with purposeful strides back into the house.

When Vincent joined them downstairs in the front room Rose handed him the print out of the creature from the gizmo. “That’s him!” Vincent exclaimed, taking the strangely-perfect rendering from her, and running his paint and charcoal lined fingers over the image—almost as though it was taken directly from real life. “The eyes… without mercy…”

The Doctor nodded. “This is a creature called the Krafayis. They travel in space. They travel as a pack, scavenging across the universe. And sometimes one of them gets left behind. And because they are a brutal race, the others never come back. So, dotted all around the universe are individual, utterly merciless, utterly abandoned Krafayis. And what they do is, well, kill, until they’re killed. Which they usually aren’t. Because other creatures can’t see them.” He explained quickly, attempting to sit down in the middle of it, only to stand back up again with the build up of energy brought on with relaying the information, pointing and waving his hands about as he paced.

Vincent squinted up to Rose. “But we can…” He said, and clearly it was a question.

The Doctor went on though before Rose could even think of an answer the artist could accept. “Yes. And that's why we are in a unique position today, my friend, to end this reign of terror.” He sat down in the seat next to him. “So, feel like painting the church today?” He asked.

Vincent blinked at the seemingly non-sequitur and turned towards him. “But what about the monster?” He insisted.

“Take my word for it. If you paint it, he will come.” The Doctor answered vaguely, eyes widening a bit.

Vincent nodded, taking that dubious answer without further question as he stood up. “I’ll get my things.” He told them, making his way towards the door with a renewed sense of purpose.

“In your own time.” The Doctor replied politely. “And I promise you we’ll be out of your hair by this time tomorrow.” He added as afterthought.

Vincent paused in the doorway at that, shoulders falling as the definite ‘whyfor’ sense that had
followed the three of them suddenly fluttered away at the prospect of their leaving. No one noticed 
though, and he shuffled away towards his room- the darkness making itself known in his head and 
heart once more.

“This is risky.” The Doctor whispered once he heard Vincent’s door shut from upstairs.

Amy sat forward, brow quirked at that. “Riskier than normal?”

He stood up as all the reasons why coursed through him. “Well, think about it.” He let out, still stage-whispering, “This is the middle of Vincent Van Gogh’s greatest year of painting. If we’re not 
careful, the net result of our pleasant little trip will be the brutal murder of the greatest artist who 
ever lived. Half the pictures on the wall of the Musée d’Orsay will disappear…” He sat down 
heavily next to Amy and looked up to Rose. “And it will be our fault.”

When nearly an hour had passed and still Vincent had not returned, The Doctor wandered up to his 
bedchamber to check on him. “Vincent?” He called, rocking back on his heels before rapping on 
the door lightly. “Vincent!” He tried again, and when still there was no response he opened the 
door, movements grinding to a halt as he took in the artist- laid on his stomach across his bed, 
having only managed to get on his trousers before collapsing onto the linens to sob. The Doctor 
stuttered out a long breath and folded his hands behind him. “Vincent, can I help?” He asked 
quietly.

Vincent sniffled some more before mumbling into his pillow. “It’s so clear you cannot help.” He 
said miserably. “And when you leave, and everyone always leaves, I will be left once more with an 
empty heart and no hope.” He flipped over to face The Doctor with tear stained skin.

The Doctor wandered forward as Vincent spoke, and knelt down at the bedside. “My experience is 
that there is, surprisingly, always hope.” He told him.

“Then your experience is incomplete!” Vincent bit out angrily. “I know how it will end. And it will 
not end well.” He told him, tears falling freely down his nose and onto the pillow that he gripped 
tightly, knuckles turning white in the effort.

The Doctor let a long silence pass over them as he tried to figure out how to respond to that. “Come 
on.” He tried, patting Vincent’s arm. “Come on, let’s get you out—”

“OUT!” Vincent interrupted him loudly, shoving his hand away and pointing forcefully towards 
door. “You get out! What are you doing here! What are you doing here?” He sobbed as he 
screamed and The Doctor backed up slowly.

“Very well. I’ll leave you.” The Doctor said, and watched as Vincent curled back up around 
himself on choked sobs, pulling at his hair, before turning for the door.

Rose stood up suddenly as The Doctor’s emotions went haywire, and Amy, catching the look, 
immediately ran out the door to the steps leading to Vincent’s room where The Doctor stood, 
leaning heavily against the railing. “What’s happened?” She let out, just as Rose came up behind 
her with an equally worried expression.

“We’re leaving.” The Doctor answered gravely, not able to meet either of their eyes. “Everyone 
knows he’s a delicate man…” He went on, mentally chastising himself for every tactless thing 
he’d said since they’d landed in 1890. “Just months from now he’ll—” He cut himself off to blink
up at them before finishing the statement quietly, “...take his own life.”

He pushed off the railing to walk around Amy and stand in front of Rose as her emotions washed over him. Amy followed his movements as her own chest filled with lead at the thought. “Don’t say that. Please.” She choked out, and they both looked over to her with years of heartbreak in their eyes, and with empathy for her naivety. Rose held her hand out and Amy took it gratefully as they led her back down the stairs.

“Come on, then.” The Doctor said a while later as they were all back to studying the beautifully tragic art that surrounded them in the sitting room. “We have to do this on our own. Go to the church at the right time and hope the monster still turns up.”

But Vincent walked in then- bright eyed and bushy tailed as ever. “I’m ready,” he said simply, “let’s go.” And without further explanation he grabbed a nearby paint brush on his way out the door- easel, canvas, and paints already tucked under his arm.

“I’m sorry you’re so sad.” Amy said to him later as they walked arm-in-arm up the dirt path towards the church- pulling Rose and The Doctor out of their silent conversation to listen to the exchange from where they walked hand-in-hand behind the two gingers.

Vincent looked over to her thoughtfully before answering. “But I’m not.” He said, “sometimes these moods torture me for weeks- for months. But I’m good now.” He spoke honestly, for he had no reason to lie. “If Amy Pond can soldier on, then so can Vincent Van Gogh!” He added, shifting his hand down to grab hers and swing it between them jovially.

“I’m not soldiering on.” Amy said with a smirk. “I’m fine!” She laughed, not seeing the suddenly rigid posture of The Doctor behind her.

“Oh, Amy...” Vincent let out, looking to her deeply. “I hear the song of your sadness.” He told her, and The Doctor looked at Rose sideways at that. Rose nodded in answer- Amy’s timelines were mourning the loss of Rory, even if she didn’t know it herself. “You’ve lost someone, I think.” Vincent added wisely after a moment, and Rose had to admit she was impressed- unsure if she would have been able to draw that conclusion had The Doctor not told her.

“I’m not sad.” Amy insisted, pointing at him for emphasis, with a small smile.

Vincent sighed. Sure she was just holding back- lying as most were wont to do in times of pain. “Then why are you crying?” He threw back, almost boredly, and Amy’s eyes widened as she suddenly felt the moisture on her cheeks, reaching up to wipe away the tears she hadn’t realized were falling. She could feel the inexplicable weight on her chest now and she stared down at her wet finger tips in confusion. “It’s all right.” Vincent consoled easily. “I understand.”

Amy shook her head. “I’m not sure I do,” she whispered.

“Okay...” The Doctor mumbled, and then again, louder, “okay!” Bringing the grievous conversation to an abrupt end. “So, now, we must have a plan, when the creature returns-”

“The Doctor shall fight him again!” Vincent interrupted him passionately.

The Doctor squinted at him as they stopped in the middle of the road at that. “Well, yes, *tick.*” He said slowly, making a little checkmark in the air as he did. “But last night we were lucky. Amy could have been killed.” He went on, taking a few steps forward. “So this time, for a start, we have to make sure I can see him too.”
“And how are we meant to do that, suddenly?” Amy asked incredulously, brow furrowed.

The Doctor let go of Rose’s hand to pat the box with the gizmo he held in the other. “With this!” He said, and began walking on around them. “I had an excellent, if smelly, godmother.” He informed them happily, but his steps faltered as just over the hill a small funeral procession became visible.

“Oh no, it's that poor girl from the village.” Vincent mumbled, and they all stood aside respectfully as they passed. A bouquet of sunflowers rested on the coffin.

Once they’d gone, Amy turned to Rose. “He does have a plan, doesn’t he?” She asked worriedly.

The Doctor answered her before Rose could respond with the honest negative. “No… It's a thing-it's like a plan, but with more greyness.” He said cheekily, earning small laughs from the girls as they started back on the path, Vincent trailing along behind them now as he was clearly lost in thought.

Soon, Vincent was jamming the spikes of the easel legs into the soft earth in front of the church, and taking his place in front of the blank canvas- palette and brush in hand.

“And you’ll be sure to tell me,” The Doctor started, placing his hands on Vincent’s shoulders, “if you see any, you know… monsters.”

“Yes, while I may be mad,” Vincent answered, looking up to give the alien a significant look, “I’m not stupid.”

“No, quite.” The Doctor agreed, patting his arm before kneeling down beside him. He let out a long breath. “And to be honest, I’m not sure about mad either… It seems to me that depression is a very complex-”

“Shhhhh…” Vincent interrupted what was bound to be a very long spiel about the complexities of mental illness, the war, and his departed baby daughter. “I’m working.” The artist said simply, pointing to the blank canvas.

The Doctor cleared his throat. “Well, yes,” he let out awkwardly, standing. “Paint! Do painting!” He exclaimed, and Rose giggled, holding her hand out to pull him towards her.

The next few hours were insufferable.

As Rose and Amy sat by patiently watching Vincent work, The Doctor paced back and forth-completely incapable of sitting still, going on about one thing or another.

Vincent added shades of blue to the sky and The Doctor walked around in small circles in front of the easel. “You know, I remember watching Michelangelo painting the Sistine Chapel.” He rambled. “Wow! What a whinger. I kept saying to him, look, if you're scared of heights, you shouldn't have taken the job mate.”

Amy shushed him and sent Rose a significant look, and all she could do was shrug helplessly in return. In his previous regenerations he hadn’t been quite this bad- used to sit in her studio and watch her paint all the time. That past time was actually what inspired them to go visit Michelangelo at the chapel. But that just wasn’t a reality this body could take on- too much manic
energy constantly coursing through him. He was a hard man to get to calm down and relax on the best of days, much less while waiting for a killer alien to attack.

“Mind you though, he was a incredible teacher.” The Doctor spoke up again moments later, having only managed to go about five minutes before he felt the need to fill the silence again. “Have you been to the British Museum recently, Amy? There’s a fantastic statue of the Goddess Fortuna there if I do say so myself.” He winked at his wife at that and she rolled her eyes before shifting her attention back to Vincent’s brush- earning a long suffering sigh from her husband.

As the sun was setting he brought up another artist- one Vincent hadn’t the faintest of. “And Picasso. What a ghastly old goat. I kept telling him, concentrate, Pablo. It's one eye, either side of the face.” He babbled, placing his hands on Vincent’s shoulders.

Amy hit him with her scarf. “Hush.” She said, and he went to go pout on the nearby wall.

After the last rays of light had finally descended behind the horizon, he spoke again. “Is this how time normally passes?” He complained. “Really slowly... in the right order...” The Doctor sneered, like it was the most disgusting thing he’d heard in the last 900 years. He stood up, spinning around angrily. “If there’s one thing I can’t stand, it’s an unpunctual alien attack!”

Rose and Amy shared a look over Vincent’s shoulders and turned to follow The Doctor. “Are you okay?” Amy asked exasperatedly. “You seem a bit... well, if I didn’t know you better, I’d say nervous.”

The Doctor squared his shoulders at that. “Yes, there's something not right and I can't quite put my finger on it.” He said, looking over to Rose who nodded- she’d felt it too. Ever since the Krafayis had chased them through the street. There was something they were missing.

“There!” Vincent yelled, pulling the three of them from their quiet conversation. “He’s at the window!” He exclaimed, and Rose turned around to see the Krafayis was indeed peeking out through the stained glass of the chapel.

The Doctor grabbed her hand. “Come on- we’re going in.” He said quickly, grabbing the trunk with the gizmo as they walked past Amy and Vincent.

“Well, I’m coming with you!” Vincent told them, setting his brush down and making to join them on the other side of the easel.

“No!” The Doctor said, holding his hand up to stop the artist before he could take another step. “You’re Vincent Van Gogh. ” He said by way of explanation.

Vincent, of course, didn’t understand how his name was any argument. “Buy you’re not armed.” He argued incredulously.

“I am.” The Doctor insisted with a short nod.

“Overconfidence, this, a small screwdriver, and my wife.” He listed off quickly, with a tap to the case and a nod towards Rose. “I'm absolutely sorted. Just have to find the right crosaetic setting and stun him. Sonic never fails.” He explained very quickly and vaguely to the artist before turning to his companion seriously. “Anyway, Amy, only one thought- one simple instruction. Don't follow us under any circumstances.”

Amy nodded, pointedly keeping eye contact with him instead of looking to Rose who could read
her so easily. “I won’t.” She said, and he pointed between the two of them before giving a thumbs up and grabbing Rose’s hand again to lead them into the chapel.

Vincent leaned over to her as they rounded the corner. “Will you follow them?” He asked.

Amy snorted. “Of course!”

“I love you.” Vincent breathed, and Amy grinned.

‘Where is he?’ The Doctor asked her as they made their way into the church. He was walking backwards beside her, flipping the mirror from side to side anxiously.

‘Still at the window- just shifted over a bit.’ She answered, stepping lightly as they came closer. ‘Give me the sonic.’ She said, holding out her hand until she felt the device hit her palm. She scanned the Krafayis quickly and set the screwdriver to start dialing in on the right crosactic setting to knock him out.

But as both of their attentions went to the sonic, neither one of them saw the creature turn towards the noise- nor the clawed extremity coming right towards them. They both screamed as they were knocked to the stone floor with the pieces of the now destroyed gizmo.

They heard Amy yell their names from outside, but didn’t process it. “Well now it’s just an old pile of junk!” The Doctor moaned, slipping the straps from his shoulders as they ran.

“It was always just an old pile of junk.” Rose threw back cheekily as they turned the corner- “Doctor!” Amy yelled as they crashed into her, and he yelled in surprise again.

“Ahrgh! I thought I told you-” He started reprimanding her again for scaring him and not following instructions, but gave up as he heard the quickly approaching footsteps. “Nevermind. We’ll talk about it later- quickly in here.” He said, pulling them towards the small confessional next to them. Rose and him squeezing into the left side while Amy took the right.

They stood chest to chest, but The Doctor managed to get his hand up to pull back the curtain- letting small amounts of light peek through the latticed door. ‘This feels a little blasphemous’ Rose said in his mind from where her body was pressed completely against his in the confessional- her arms trapped between them.

The Doctor smirked at that, but didn’t answer as Amy’s heavy breathing was getting on his nerves. He reached over to pull back the small door separating their faces. “Could you breathe a little quieter please?” He stage-whispered.

Amy looked through the lattice partition and rolled her eyes. “No.” She said, and pulled back the curtain on her side. “I think he’s gone passed.” She added.

“Shh!” The Doctor hushed her, and silence fell again- just before the Krafayis ripped into the door on Amy’s side with a vicious roar. “I think he heard us.” The Doctor let out, wide-eyed, and a second later the Krafayis clawed on their side of the confessional- tearing a hole to reveal Rose’s hip. “That is impressive hearing he’s got.” He mused, and a hole was punched through right next to his head. “What’s less impressive is our chances of survival.” He added dryly as the structure around them continued to shake violently and Amy screamed.

Rose shook her head against the onslaught of thoughts in her head coming from both her and her
husband. Before she could put them all into anything discernible through, another voice rose above the commotion. “Are you looking for me, sonny?” Vincent yelled, “Come on, over here. Because I'm right here waiting for you!” He continued to egg on the monster, and Rose opened the confessional door to see the artist holding up his chair to the Krafayis and it squawked and growled at him—taking the occasional swipe around the seat. “Come on! Quickly! Get behind me!” He yelled to their gobsmacked faces.

Rose paused behind Vincent with The Doctor to aim the sonic at the Krafayis. “Doing anything?” Her husband asked.

“No.” Rose and Vincent answered together shortly. Vincent jabbed the creature back with the chair, and they all took off running in the same direction Amy had gone.

When they came into a small courtyard The Doctor spun around wildly. “Where is he?”

Vicent, who was still holding his chair out to fend off the Krafayis, snapped at the alien over his shoulder. “Where do you think he is, you idiot? Use your head!”

If the situation wasn’t so dire Rose would have laughed, instead she just attempted to sonic the Krafayis on a higher frequency. The Doctor came up behind her—looking in the general direction that she and Vincent were. “Anything?” He asked again.

“Nothing.” Vincent answered. “In fact, he seems to rather enjoy it.” He added, with a look to Rose for confirmation that the odd look the Krafayis made when she used the device was being interpreted the same way to her as well. She tilted her head in acknowledgement.

The Doctor pulled his chin back at that “ooo” he let out, somewhat distractedly, and then the Krafayis growled and leaped around the chair.

“DUCK!” Vincent yelled as the monster bat at The Doctor. “LEFT!” He said, as the tail came around— but The Doctor was flung into the stone wall as soon as he listened to that direction.

“Oh, sorry- meant right. You’re right, my left.” Vincent apologized as he moved to stand between them and the beast again. Amy and Rose knelt down at The Doctor’s side.

“This is no good at all.” The Doctor let out, the room still spinning as what felt like a pretty major bruise bloomed across his back. “Run like crazy and regroup!” He told them, standing up quickly as they resorted back to the usual ‘plan.’

They all followed him up the stairs and behind the door to the crypt, and slammed it in the creature’s face.

They all breathed heavily as they use their combined weight against the door to keep it closed. “Alright…” The Doctor started, looking around. “Okay, here’s the plan. Rose, Amy, Rory—”

“Who?” Amy cut him off

He glanced over to Rose who looked at him miserably as they caught his mistake as well, but no matter— they didn’t have time. “Sorry. Er, Vincent.” He edited awkwardly, the door rattling behind him as the Krafayis struggled to gain access.

“What the plan?” Amy urged him to go on exasperatedly.

The Doctor swallowed. “I don't know, actually. My only definite plan is that in future I'm definitely just using this screwdriver for screwing in screws.” He wrinkled his nose as he took the sonic back
from Rose and shoved it in his jacket pocket.

“Wait… hold on.” Rose mumbled, taking a step back from the door, Vincent followed her lead, but was clearly about to run off to retrieve something—she grabbed his hand before he could go.

“Listen.” She whispered to him.

Vincent paused, and the Krafayis’ screeching and growling filled the crypt as it continued to paw at the door. He stared at her incredulously. “I know. It’s trying to attack us. If you’ll let me-”

“Sh, no.” Rose shook her head, and squeezed the artist’s hand tighter. “Listen.” She said again, ignoring the looks she was receiving from The Doctor and Amy. “His song…”

Vincent pulled his chin back and blinked at the door as he finally heard it. “It’s… sad.” He realised, looking over to Rose for an explanation she couldn’t give him.

She nodded, and let go of his hand to take a tentative step back towards the door. “Can you understand me?” She called, and heard the frantic footsteps slow in response. To her surprise, the TARDIS began roughly translating the crude grunts and unprocessed telepathic frequencies coming from the Krafayis. Rose looked over to her husband, both wide-eyed as they received the TARDIS’s help.

The Doctor flipped around on the door to press his forehead to the wood. “Listen, I know you can understand us, even though I know you won’t understand why you can understand us.” He empathised. “I also know that no one’s talked to you for a pretty long stretch, but please, listen. I also don’t belong on this planet. I also was alone.” He told the creature, reaching out behind him for Rose’s hand. “But I… I found out where I did belong… And I’m sure, I’m sure Rose could help you too.”

Rose squeezed his hand at that, and placed her other hand on the door. “Why are you so afraid?” She asked the Krafayis quietly, as the telepathic frequencies were only projecting that one emotion, superimposed over his loneliness. But all he sent back to her question was… darkness.

The Doctor and her both gasped as they understood.

“What? What is it?” Amy and Vincent asked from behind them.

“Oh we are so stupid.” Rose moaned, hitting her head against the door.

“Is this really the time to be re-evaluating your self-esteem?” Amy asked them incredulously.

“No, I am really stupid.” The Doctor insisted—though because he’s him, kept Rose out of it. “And I’m growing old.” He turned around to face Amy as Rose stayed at the door, projecting as much comfort to the creature as she could. “Why does it attack but never eat its victims? And why was it abandoned by its pack and left here to die? And why does it stop attacking whenever we’re quiet?” He asked her the series of questions quickly, as he was wont to do right before he was going to reveal the answer to all of them. “Because he can’t see! He’s blind!” He yelled, somewhat angrily as he can’t believe that he hadn’t gotten that one earlier.

Outside the door, the Krafayis called out angrily as well.

Rose snorted. “I’m going to open the door now.” She said quietly—prompting both Vincent and Amy to take a step back, while The Doctor stepped forward worriedly.

“Are you sure?” He asked her.
Instead of answering, Rose pulled the door open.

To Amy and The Doctor, the move was somewhat anticlimactic— as it appeared to them that only an empty courtyard sat on the other side. Vincent gaped though, as he took in the previously-viciously-attacking creature, now stood in the entryway, head bowed toward Rose. “He was frightened, and he lashed out. Like humans who lash out when they're frightened. Like the villagers who scream at me. Like the children who throw stones at me.” Vincent observed wisely, and they all looked over to him in melancholy agreement. The Krafayis let out a low whine, and shuffled closer to Rose.

He thought he could see this faint golden glow around Rose though, as she reached out to place her hand on the creature’s head. “She’s…” He started, but drifted off as he couldn’t think of a word powerful enough.

The Doctor nodded, watching the timelines swirl around Rose. “Yeah, I know.” He breathed out.

Later—after Rose had taken the Krafayis back to the TARDIS and set him in an expansive open-air room provided by the ever-accommodating ship— in the field outside Vincent’s house they all laid together in a loose circle to watch the stars.

Vincent reached out and took Amy’s hand, and held his other hand out as well. “Take my hand, Doctor,” he said, “and try and see what I see.” The Doctor obliged, with a small smile reaching out for both his and Rose’s hands until they were all linked together.

“We are so lucky we are still alive to see this beautiful world.” Vincent told them. “Look at the sky. It's not dark and black and without character. The black is in fact deep blue. And over there-lighter blue. And blowing through the blueness and the blackness, the wind swirling through the air and then, shining, burning, bursting through, the stars! Can you see how they roll their light? Everywhere we look, the complex magic of nature blazes before our eyes.”

The Doctor looked between the stars above him and the reverence in the artist’s eyes. “I've seen many things, my friend. But you're right. Nothing quite as wonderful as the things you see.” He said, squeezing Rose’s hand as he did.

Vincent breathed deeply. He looked over to the still-golden Rose behind him, the only person who ever saw things the way he did. He placed a kiss to Amy’s hand, the only person who ever made him feel as though his passion was a talent. And she grasped The Doctor’s hand tightly, the only person who ever told him he mattered. “I will miss you all terribly.” He whispered.

When the sun began to climb over the eastern side of the house, Vincent knew he now had to say goodbye, and he met the three friends of his in the sitting room. He held his arms out to his fellow redhead. “Amy Pond, the blessed, the wonderful.” He epitomised, pulling her towards him to place a kiss either side her face.

Amy giggled and hugged him tightly. “Be good to yourself, Vincent. Be kind to yourself.” She whispered, and it felt like a plea.

Vincent nodded. “I will try my best.”

Amy smirked and rubbed at her face. “And maybe give the beard a little trim before you next kiss someone.” She teased him.
Vincent chuckled at that. “I will, I will,” he promised, and then glanced at The Doctor and Rose. “And if you tire of these parents of yours- return, and we will have children by the dozens!” He proposed brightly, earning a tingling laugh from Amy and indignant scoffs from the alien couple.

‘Parents? Are we starting to look our age?’ The Doctor asked her, smirking despite the blow to his ego.

Rose wrinkled her nose. ‘I suppose you do act like her father sometimes-’

The Doctor snorted, cutting her off. ‘Me? What about you?’

Vincent turned to Rose then, cutting off whatever witty reply she had to the familiar epithet. “My Golden Rose,” he started, not noticing the suddenly stiff-backs of them at the familiar epithet. “The universe sings to you, as it does me. How can I continue on my own now?” He begged of her.

Rose smiled and pulled Vincent into a hug. “Oh, you’ll be amazing. Just like always.” She told him, her heart feeling heavy.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels when Vincent turned to give him his goodbyes. He’d never liked goodbyes. “Doctor, my friend,” Vincent said, holding his hands out to him. “We have fought monsters together and we have won… On my own, I fear I may not do as well.” He told him honestly.

His hearts broke at the truth in that statement, but he managed to make a dismissive sound anyway, giving the artist an encouraging smile as he pulled him into a hug that may have lasted longer than normal.

When they finally managed to get away from the teary goodbyes, The Doctor turned to the girls just before they reached the gate at the edge of the garden. He wasn’t ready to say goodbye to Vincent yet. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” He asked them, eyes glowing with excitement at his idea.

Rose snorted. “I’m always thinking what you’re thinking.” She answered, tapping her temple smartly.

“I was thinking I may need some food or something before we leave.” Amy offered, looking between them hopefully.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose at her- that was far more boring a thought than his, and he didn’t think it warranted a response. He spun on his heel to yell up to Vincent’s open window. “Vincent!” He called, and smirked when he appeared- shirtless with a paintbrush between his teeth. “I’ve got something I’d like to show you! …Maybe just tidy yourself up a bit first.”

They rounded the corner of the alleyway leading to the TARDIS a few moments later. “Now, you know we’ve had quite a few chats about the possibility there might be more to life than normal people imagine?” The Doctor said, looking over his shoulder as he walked quickly towards the ship.

“Yes…” Vincent answered hesitantly.

The Doctor grinned manically over to him. “Well, brace yourself, Vinny.” He told him, and then
unlocked the TARDIS doors.

Vincent walked in, not noticing anything wrong at first- just weird with the flashing lights and glass floors and copper walls, but then… how did… He stepped out to walk around the odd blue box, brow quirked, as he looked over to the three grinning idiots watching him. He shook his head and stepped back in, accepting it. “How come I’m the crazy one?” He complained, “and you three have stayed sane?”

They chuckled as they followed him in, The Doctor snatching his hat off his head to hang on the nearby rack- almost like it was some sort of proper home, just a bigger-on-the-inside, light-up one instead of a farmhouse. Vincent squinted at the console. “What do these things all do?” He asked.

“Oh, a huge variety of things!” The Doctor exclaimed, spinning around him. “This one here for instance-” He said, flipping a switch, “plays soothing music.” He took Rose by the waist and started twirling them around the console- both of them typing in coordinates and hitting button surreptitiously as they went. “While this one makes huge amounts of noise…” He went on, pulling the lever sending the cloister bell going- causing Vincent to wince. “And this one-” He continued with a cheeky smirk, placing his hand on the dematerialisation lever, “-makes everything go absolutely tonzo.” He pulled the control back and instantly the TARDIS rocked forward, sending all their knees buckling to grab onto the console.

Vincent though, having not expected it, tripped over his feet and spun around a bit until he could get hold of the monitor’s handle with a delighted laugh. He glanced down to the nearest control switch as the odd machine continued to rattle around them. “And this?” He asked, reaching down to hit it.

“That’s a friction contrafibulator!” The Doctor and Rose both yelled frantically together, reaching forward to stop his hand.

Vincent didn’t know what any of those words meant, but he caught the tone. Instead he pointed to a big red button. “What about this one?”

“That’s ketchup!” The Doctor answered in a sort of delighted tune of a tone, and then motioned to the bigger, yellow, button beside it. “And this one’s mustard.” He told him, and Amy held her hand out to the buttons, presenting, with a small giggle.

“Mmm, nice.” Vincent chuckled, shaking his head at the odd family. “Come now though Doctor,” he said, turning to them, seeing his opportunity to keep them with him for at least a bit longer. “Back to the cafe, and you can tell me all the wonders of the universe.” He implored him.

The Doctor, Rose, and Amy all shared knowing looks over the artist’s shoulders- he couldn’t have known that all that racket was them flying through space-time. “Good idea.” The Doctor chuckled. “Though, actually, there’s a little something I’d like to show you first.” He grinned, and walked around him to lead them all out of the TARDIS doors and onto the streets of modern day Paris.

Vincent looked around wide-eyed at their suddenly new, much colder, surroundings. “Where are we?” He asked breathlessly, gripping his hat tightly in his hands.

“Paris, 2010 A.D.” The Doctor answered, holding his arms out grandly. “And this is the mighty Musée d’Orsay, home to many of the greatest paintings in history.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful!” Vincent smiled warmly, but was instantly distracted as two lads walked by, playing weird music through some sort of weirder device.
“Ah, ignore that.” The Doctor said dismissively. “I’ve got something more important to show you.” He smirked and pulled Vincent along through the snow towards the museum.

As they made their way through the galleries, Vincent kept stopping to take in all the magnificent art they passed, and grew more and more confused when each time one of them tugged on his arm to keep him going. What was it here that he was meant to be seeing if not all the beautiful art they were so keen to run right past?

But just as he began to truly wonder, he found himself standing in a separate gallery- different from the ones they’d come through, more exceptional, more… considerable. With a small gasp and a sudden tightness in his chest he realised that the canvases surrounding him, all in ornate frames, hung in prominence, with lights shining down on them… *all of them were his*. He felt the tears forming behind his eyes as he spun around to see all the people looking at and *enjoying* his art.

He felt Amy’s hands fall to his arms and tug him around. The Doctor was talking to some other gentleman in a bowtie. “-Oh yes, glad to be of help.” He was saying. “You were nice about my tie.”

The Doctor chuckled. “Yes. And today is another cracker if I may say so.” He looked over to Vincent for a second before continuing to the man. “But I just wondered, between you and me, in a hundred words, where do you think Van Gogh rates in the history of art?” He asked him, and Vincent held his breath on impulse- ready for the offense.

The man tilted his head as he considered that. “Well, big question…” He started, but then took a deep breath as he continued. “To me, Van Gogh is the finest painter of them all. Certainly, the most popular great painter of all time- the most beloved.” He began rhapsodising, and Vincent felt the tears begin to fall as he turned in a small circle again, taking in his own art as the kind man behind him spoke such wonderful things. “His command of colour- the most magnificent. He transformed the pain of his tormented life into *ecstatic* beauty. Pain is easy to portray, but to use your passion and pain to portray the ecstasy and joy and magnificence of our world… No one had ever done it before. Perhaps no one ever will again… To my mind, that strange, wild man who roamed the fields of Provence was not only the world's *greatest* artist, but also one of the greatest men who ever lived.”

Vincent choked back a sob as the man finished, and his three wonderful friends ran over to him in an instant. “Vincent!” The Doctor exclaimed worriedly. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.” He said, pulling him close. “Is it too much?”

Vincent let out another sob and shook his head vehemently. “No, no- they are tears of joy.” He assured him, and then stepped over to the wonderful stranger who’d said such kind things- things he’d never had said to him before. “Thank you, thank you, sir.” He sobbed, kissing him either side of the face before pulling him into a hug.

“Oh- uh- you’re welcome… you’re welcome.” He answered confusedly.

Vincent turned away. “Sorry about the beard,” he apologised awkwardly, looking over to Amy, who sent him an encouraging smile, and held her hand out for him. He took it gratefully as he watched The Doctor wrap an arm around Rose. He took one last reverent look around the gallery before allowing them to lead him out again.

He stepped back out onto the field of Provence feeling like a new man. He sighed deeply and revelled in how different the air breathed. “This changes everything. I'll step out tomorrow with my
easel on my back a different man.” He told them, grinning. “I still can't believe that one of the haystacks was in the museum. How embarrassing.” He added though as an afterthought.

The Doctor chuckled and grinned back at him, taking his hand to shake passionately before hugging him again. “Oh… Vincent. It’s been a great adventure, and a great honour.” He told him.

Vincent laughed as they pulled back. “You've turned out to be the first doctor ever actually to make a difference to my life!” He exclaimed delightedly.

“I’m delighted.” The Doctor nodded. “I won’t ever forget you.” He promised, and Rose came up to hug him one last time.

As they turned away he tilted his head at Amy. “You’re sure marriage is out of the question?” He tried again.

Amy laughed, “this time.” She said, and pulled him close, tucking her face into his shoulder. “I’m not really the marrying kind.” She whispered, and then pulled back before she could convince herself to stay with him in in the 19th century. Refusing to say goodbye, she smiled and turned on her heel to join The Doctor and Rose in the TARDIS.

“Come on,” she said, closing the door behind her. “Let’s go back to the gallery right now!”

The Doctor set the coordinates back on impulse before asking. “Why’s that?” Rose asked, tilting her head a bit towards the girl as the ship went through the time vortex.

Amy laughed and held onto the railing, running for the door as soon as they landed. “There will be hundred of new paintings!” She called over her shoulder, missing the worried glances they sent to each other.

“I’m not sure there will be…” The Doctor called back as they followed her out onto the street.

“Time can be rewritten!” She insisted, trotting up the stairs and flinging open the heavy door of the museum. “Come on! …Oh, the long life of Vincent Van Gogh!” She went on, leading them back through the now-familiar route towards the Van Gogh exhibit.

The Doctor and Rose looked to each other dolefully as they followed.

Amy stopped in her tracks after only getting a few feet into the gallery- the same old, nothing new, gallery. She closed her eyes as behind her Dr. Black confirmed her fears as he stood in front of Wheatfield. “We have here the last work of Vincent Van Gogh, who committed suicide at only thirty seven. He is now acknowledged to be one of the foremost artists of all time…”

She fought back tears as her eyes flickered around the room, eventually landing back on the couple who were watching her worriedly. “So you were right…” She said miserably. “No new paintings… We didn’t make any difference at all.” She looked down dejectedly.

“Oh, I wouldn't say that.” The Doctor said, stepping up to her, tilting his chin down to get her to look up to him. “The way I see it, every life is a pile of good things and bad things.” He started, and then cut himself off to pull Amy into a hug as more tears ran down her cheeks. “Hey- The good things don't always soften the bad things, but vice versa, the bad things don't necessarily spoil the good things or make them unimportant.” He whispered, and pulled back to take Rose’s hand in one hand, and Amy’s in the other. “And we definitely added to his pile of good things.” He told them.

Amy sniffled and nodded, leaning her head on Rose’s shoulder.
“And,” The Doctor added, looking over to *The Church at Auvers*, “if you look carefully… we may have indeed made a couple of little changes.” He pulled them over to the now monster-less painting.

“No more Krafayis.” Amy mumbled.

“No more Krafayis.” The Doctor repeated, grinning.

Rose tapped Amy’s shoulder, and she looked around to her. She pointed to the finally-free painting of *Sunflowers*, for once not blocked by a hoard of tourists, and Amy walked over to it slowly, feeling almost as though she were floating as tears continued to fall without her permission.

Written on the vase of twelve sunflowers, Vincent had added ‘*For Amy*’ in dark brown paint, and then signed it- like a letter.

Amy’s breath caught in her chest, and behind her The Doctor walked up, letting out a low whistle. “If we had gotten married, our kids would have had very, very red hair.” She joked through the tears.

They both chuckled, Rose wrapping her arm around Amy’s shoulders. “The ultimate ginger.” She said.

She let out a little half-hearted laugh and bumped The Doctor’s shoulder next to her as she leaned into Rose. “The ultimate ginge.” She smirked, and they all laughed.

Amy sighed heavily and let one more tear fall as she took in the painting. “Brighter than sunflowers.” She whispered.

Chapter End Notes

This episode was horribly historically inaccurate, but I won't go into it for fear of ruining your suspension of disbelief. I just feel like it should be noted that this is one of my favorite episodes, but it gave me a headache to rewrite as every bit of research I did didn't fit- and that's why it took me a bit longer than normal to post.

Thanks to Amy for being my encouraging little sunflower through this one and staying up with me on the phone until 3 AM while I write and rant.

- comments keep writers writing 🖤
Rose woke up with a pulsing headache just behind her temples, blurring her vision and making the room spin and tilt sideways as she turned.

In his sleep, The Doctor’s brow furrowed at Rose’s discomfort before his eyes snapped open to look at her worriedly. “Wha’s the matter, love?” He murmured sleepily, sitting up as he ran his fingers through his sleep-mussed hair.

Her lip jutted out and her eyes scrunched closed against the discomfort as she pulled herself into the fetal position- effectively amplifying his worry. He reached down and ran the back of his hand across her cheek before checking for a temperature- she was burning up, even more than usual. She tucked her face more firmly into his cool palm. “TARDIS doesn’ feel well either.” She mumbled, and around them their ship made a sort of groaning noise in confirmation.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows at that and reached over to grab the sonic. He scanned Rose quickly- apologizing when she wrinkled her nose and attempted to scoot away from the noise, and squinted down at the results. “Some sort of temporal distortion messing with the TARDIS…” He said quietly, and then looked down at his wife. “Must be affecting your connection to the time vortex…” He mused worriedly, brow furrowing as the vague answer still left him with many questions. “Think you could make it to the sick bay?” He tried.

Rose groaned at that and shoved her face more firmly into her pillow. “No.” She answered determinedly- mostly because she truly believed she’d pass out if she tried to move, but also because she really didn’t feel like having a bunch of tests run on her.

The Doctor let out a long suffering sigh. “Rose, I’m worried-”

“Then go bloody well fix whatever is doing this!” She interrupted him grumpily, pulling the covers around her for emphasis.

He sighed again and held back the impulse to roll his eyes at her grumpiness. It was hardly the first time Rose felt ill and snapped at him for it. Granted, last that happened was when she was pregnant- and it could be argued then that it was, technically, his fault.

Rose reached her hand out though as she sensed his thoughts. “Please,” she added, a bit pitifully, holding his hand tightly.

His hearts broke at that and he leaned down to place a kiss to her temple. “Alright, love. I will.” He promised her softly.
“Oh, you look awful.” Amy said as she descended the stairs to find The Doctor leaning heavily against the console, scanning something on the monitor with a surly expression- hair stuck up in about a thousand different directions, tweed jacket thrown haphazardly across the jump seat.

“Oh, thanks.” He snapped backed sarcastically, not looking away from the monitor.

Amy looked around confusedly as she noticed Rose’s obvious absence- usually their bickering earned some sort of giggle. “Is Rose cross with you or something?” She asked, coming to lean her hip against the console.

“She’s ill- and so’s the TARDIS and it’s someone’s fault, but I can’t bloody well find them.” He ground out angrily, hitting the monitor in frustration.

“Well, hitting her isn’t going to solve that problem, is it?” She said, petting the TARDIS soothingly on impulse, and earning a sort of agreeing ding in return.

Before The Doctor could reply -either with an apology or some other indignant remark- the dematerialisation lever pulled itself and they were sent into flight- sending The Doctor crashing into the jump seat while Amy spun to grab onto the console.

As soon as they landed The Doctor grabbed his jacket and ran for the doors- he doesn’t see the console erupt in a shower of sparks as he stood in the doorway. “Are we on Earth? I think I can see a Ryman’s…” He observed- rather bitterly squinting around the familiar British surroundings. Suddenly an explosion goes up behind him though- knocking him out onto the dirt and the doors slamming behind him. “Amy! Amy!” He yelled as the TARDIS disappeared without him.

Amy held onto the monitor as the TARDIS swung around madly- sparks showering down from over head and the lights going in and out. “Doctor? Doctor! It’s saying we’re on Earth! Essex, Colchester!” She yelled over the noise- looking at the map on the screen. When the shaking stopped and still there was no reply, she spun around confused by her empty surroundings. “Doctor?” She called, but he was gone.

Her eyes widened as she realised what happened, and she bit her lip as she looked guiltily up to the bedroom door where she knew Rose was- bothering her now being the last thing she wanted to do.

Fortunately, Amy was saved from having to make that decision as the door opened and Rose stepped out, hair a mess and wrapped in a massive TARDIS blue robe. “I swear I have to do everything myself.” She grumbled, making her way down the stairs.

‘Rose…’ The Doctor started hesitantly as he stared at the place where the TARDIS had been only moments before.

‘What did you do?’ She said, and he could tell by her tone that whatever flight the TARDIS had just sent them on had not been a smooth one.

‘The TARDIS sort of… ran away from me.’ He answered sheepishly. “Think she was getting cross with my methods. Kicked me out and went back into the time vortex with you and Amy.”

He waited a bit for her response, and he could tell she was moving around- apparently to go down to the console room. ‘We’re locked in a materialisation loop.’ She told him eventually.
‘So she didn’t kick me out?’ He asked hopefully.

Rose snorted. ‘No, she definitely did. She knew she wouldn’t be able to land here, but apparently you weren’t working fast enough from the vortex for her liking. Figured she’d drop you off and suffer the consequences of getting that close to the distortion.’

The Doctor winced at that. He could feel that Rose’s headache and nausea had only gotten worse now. ‘I’m so sorry, love.’

‘Mm, I know.’ She said, giving him the telepathic equivalent of a pat on the head. ‘Just come back safe, yeah?’

He nodded and swallowed, spinning around in a small circle to take in his surroundings. ‘What’s the worst that could happen?’ He said without thinking, and then immediately winced along with Rose.

As The Doctor made his way down the nearby street, a note in a paper shop window caught his eye. It was Amy’s handwriting.

Doctor-- This one! 79a Aikman Road! -Amy xx

He looked over to the advert for a flatmate right next to it, and pulled it off, spinning around in the direction of the address, remembering to stop by an ATM only after seeing the £400 PCM after all the bits about kitchens, bathrooms, gender, age, and smoking.

Paper bag of money in hand, he was about to ask Rose if he passed for 27 and how exactly it is that humans decide if other humans can live with them, when he realised all the telepathic frequencies probably weren’t helping. He dug around in his pockets for the earpiece he knew would come in handy someday (never mind that it was a few decades old now), and shoved it into his ear just as he came upon 79a. Looked like he’d be winging it anyway. How hard could it be? He was married to a human after all-

“I love you.” The stranger said as he opened the door, and The Doctor, only slightly taken aback, grinned up at the 27-year-old-male-non-smoker.

“Well that’s good because I’m your new lodger!” He said easily, eyes glancing down to the keys in the man’s hands and snatching them from him. “D’y’know- this is going to be a lot easier than I expected!” He mused giddily.

The man took half a confused step out of the doorway. “But I only put the advert up today… I didn’t even put my address.” He protested confusedly, looking at The Doctor oddly.

“Well! Aren’t you lucky I came along?” He said quickly, glancing up to the odd signals coming from the flat above them. “More lucky than you know…” He added, and then snapped back down to look at the man again. “Less of a young professional, more of an ancient amateur…” He told him, referencing the advert’s request. “But frankly, I’m an absolute dream!” He exclaimed cheekily, ignoring the snort Rose gave him as she was apparently listening in.

He shook his head though. “Hang on a minute, mate. I don't know if I want you staying.” He looked down to the keys The Doctor was still holding and snatched them back “And give me back those keys! You can't have those!”

“Yes, quite right.” The Doctor agreed, and then handed him the paper of money. “Here, have some
rent. “That’s probably quite a lot, isn’t it? Looks like a lot. Is it a lot? I can never tell.” He rambled, and then pushed past the tennant into the building. “Don't spend it all on sweets, unless you like sweets. I like sweets!” He continued over his shoulder as he watched the lights flicker over the upstairs door to 79b.

“You haven’t introduced yourself, love.” Rose reminded him gently.

“Oo!” He spun around. “Sorry!” And he grabbed the man by the shoulders, kissing the air either side of his face in greeting. “That's how we greet each other nowadays, isn't it?” He asked, but didn’t wait for a reply from either him or Rose. “I'm the Doctor! Well, they call me the Doctor… I don't know why.” He paused and looked behind him. “I call me the Doctor, too… Still don't know why.” He spoke quickly, losing quite a lot of control over his words as he often did when he wasn’t quite sure what it was he was supposed to be doing.

“Craig Owens.” He replied, shaking his head against the onslaught of information. “The Doctor?” He questioned incredulously.

“Yes.” He answered shortly, preferring to skip over his slip up in not saying John Tyler. “Who lives upstairs?”

Craig shrugged, still studying The Doctor oddly. “Just some bloke.”

“What’s he look like?”

“Normal. He’s very quiet.” Craig answered, and right on cue a load crash came from upstairs. “Usually…” He added, and then looked down to this man that he found himself inexplicably trying to sell his home to without his own permission. “Sorry, who are you again?” He asked, but then The Doctor walked right past him again and into the open door of his flat. “Hello?” He protested indignantly as he followed him. “Excuse me!”

The Doctor had stopped just inside the door and was staring the black-ish stain making it’s way across the corner of the ceiling in the sitting room. “Ah. I suppose that’s dry rot?” He asked.

“Or damp. Or mildew.” Craig shrugged.

“Or none of the above.” The Doctor let out.

“I’ll get someone to fix it.” Craig said, again making promises to make him stay without his own permission.

“No, I'll fix it. I'm good at fixing rot. Call me the Rotmeister. No, I'm the Doctor, don't call me the Rotmeister.” He rambled off quickly, and then shook his heap at his own loose tongue as he spun around. “This is the most beautiful parlour I have ever seen. You're obviously a man of impeccable taste.” He said, hauling himself up to sit on the kitchen counter. “I can stay, Craig, can't I? Say I can.”

Craig stared at him for a second as is had only taken him about five seconds to say all of that. “You haven’t even seen the room.” He protested, once he finally caught up.

The Doctor furrowed his brow quizzically. “The room?”

“Your room.”

“My room?” And then it clicked. “My room! Oh yes!” He smirked a little. “Take me to my room.” He said, feeling a bit now like he was playing house.
Craig led him to a room of rather 1980s decor. “Yeah, this is Mark's old room. He owns the place. Moved out about a month ago. This uncle he'd never even heard of died and left a load of money in the will.” He explained as they went in.

“How very convenient.” The Doctor mused, adding it to the list of things he’d need to do once they got this sorted. “This’ll do just right- in fact-” he cut himself off to lick his finger and hold it up to test the air- the electric pulses coming from upstairs were much stronger here than in the parlour. “No time to lose- I’ll take it.” He said, ignoring the weird look Craig was sending him at his actions.

“Ahh! You’ll want to see credentials!” The Doctor remembered, and pulled the psychic paper from his pocket. “There. National Insurance number.” He passed the paper behind his back and held it out again. “NHS number.” He passed the paper back around. “References.”

Craig pulled his chin back at the quick succession of information, and shook his head as he glanced at the list of references. “Is that a reference from the Archbishop of Canterbury?” He asked incredulously.

“I’m his special favourite.” The Doctor answered easily flipping the wallet closed, and then held his finger to his lips in a shushing motion. He snapped his head up. “Are you hungry? I’m hungry.” He said, walking out of the room.


The Doctor flung open the fridge anyway, smirking at the brochure for the Van Gogh exhibit, and glancing at the photo below it. “You've got everything I need for an omelette fines herbes, pour deux.” He slipped into French accidentally, forgetting the TARDIS wouldn’t be translating for him either. “So, who's the girl on the fridge?” He asked, setting the pan on the stove and cracking the eggs.

“My friend, Sophie.” Craig answered, looking over to the photo in question.

“Girlfriend?” The Doctor raised his eyebrows, grating cheese.

“A friend who's a girl.” Craig answered, but he shuffled his feet awkwardly. “There’s nothing going on.”


Craig kept talking about her though- clearly unable to help himself. “We met at work about a year ago, at the call centre.” He told him.

“Oh really, a communications exchange? That could be handy.” The Doctor said back, throwing ham into the pan.

“Firm's going down though. The bosses are using a totally rubbish business model. I know what they should do. I got a plan all worked out. But I'm just a phone drone, I can't go running in saying I know best.” Craig continued on as The Doctor walked around him to grab things from the fridge and back to the stove. He caught himself suddenly though. “-and why am I telling you this? I don't even know you!”

The Doctor looked up to him. “Well, I've got one of those faces. People never stop blurting out their plans while I'm around.” He explained boredly.

“Right…” Craig replied awkwardly, and then clapped his hands together. “So, where’s your stuff?”
He asked.

“Oh, don’t worry- it’ll materialise. If all goes to plan.” He answered vaguely, vigorously stirring the omelettes.

Rose closed her eyes as her husband started cooking- blanching at the very idea of food, and retreated from the bond as much as she could without making either one of them uncomfortable. She looked up to Amy who was leaning against the console worriedly. “You look awful.” She said, but less harshly than she had to The Doctor that morning.

Rose smirked. “I feel awful,” she mumbled, and tucked her feet under her on the captain’s seat. All around them the TARDIS groaned in agreement as she continued on through the endless materialisation loop.

“Go back to sleep… I can- I can handle things here.” Amy looked around the flashing and smoking console room a bit anxiously even as she said it though.

Rose let out a little half-hearted laugh at that. “Actually, I’m sure you could, Amy.” Rose old her truthfully, smiling at the glow that it brought to the girl’s eyes.

“Yeah!” Amy exclaimed, more confidently this time. “Besides, I could always shout if I need you.” She offered casually, on the inside though revelling a little at the simple statement- remembering all those years in her childhood when she’d wished she could just call for The Doctor and Rose every time she got upset and felt like she couldn’t do something. She used to pretend that they were there with her anytime she needed them- they became like her imaginary friends.

Rose, not getting any of this, nodded thankfully, and stood to retreat back to her bedroom.

“Oh!” Craig exclaimed, setting his empty plate down and plopping down heavily on the sofa. “That was incredible! That was absolutely brilliant! Where did you learn to cook?”

The Doctor, who was sat in the armchair with his hands and legs folded neatly in front of him, answered easily. “Paris! In the… 18th century.” He squinted though, as he realised his fumble again. He really didn’t like having to do things without Rose anymore. “No, hang on. That’s not recent, is it? 17th? No, no, no- 20th! Yes, in the 20th century. Sorry- I’m not used to doing them in the right order.”

Craig stared at him as he finished his ramble. “Has anyone ever told you you’re a bit weird?”

The Doctor raised his eyebrows at that and smirked. “They never really stop.” He said, sure that Rose would be laughing herself silly if she wasn’t ill and asleep. He sighed at the thought and moved on. “Ever been to Paris, Craig?”

“Nah,” Craig answered, leaning back. “I can’t really see the point of Paris. I’m not much of a traveller.”

“I can tell from your sofa.” The Doctor observed dryly.

“My sofa?”

“You’re starting to look like it.” The Doctor explained, sort of matter of factly.
Craig let out a surprised laugh at that. “Thanks, mate- that’s lovely.” He chuckled a bit and then shook his head. “No, no- I like it here. I’d miss it. I’d miss…”

The Doctor looked down to see Craig was still holding the keychain from earlier- the pink one with a fuzzy ball on the end. “Those keys?” He supplied.

Craig looked over to him. “What?”

“Those keys you’re sort of… fondling them.” The Doctor told him, eyebrows raised.

“I’m- holding them.” Craig argued, and then stood up quickly- ignoring The Doctor’s sarcastic ‘right’ as he dropped Sophie’s keys and went over to the bowl by the door. ‘Anyway, these-’ he picked up the spare set with a little wrench keychain on the end of them “-these are your keys.” He said, grinning as he held them out to The Doctor.

The Doctor stood up excitedly. “I can stay?”

“Yeah, you’re weird and you can cook. That’s good enough for me.” He laughed and then held up each of the keys in turn. “Outdoor- front door- your door.” He explained.

The Doctor grinned. “My door! My place! My gaff! Haha! Yes! Me with a key!” He exclaimed giddily- what an odd prospect! Living in a normal flat!

Craig laughed. “Yeah, and listen. Mark and I, we had an arrangement where if you ever need me out of your hair, just give me a shout, okay?” He added seriously, and then winked.

The Doctor winked back on impulse, but then shook his head, not getting it. “Why would I want that?”

Craig tilted his head slightly and raised his chin a bit. “Well, in case you want to bring someone round…” He explained. “A girlfriend or… a boyfriend?”

Every cell in The Doctor’s body screamed in protest at the very thought that someone could think that there would be anyone other than Rose, but the more rational side of his brain just shoved his ringed left hand into his pocket. “Right… yes… I’ll…” He cleared his throat awkwardly, and couldn’t get the rest of his agreement out. He looked around for an escape, and his eyes landed back to the stain on the ceiling. “By the way, that. The rot. I’ve got the strangest feeling we shouldn't touch it.” He whispered, giving Craig a serious look before turning away to retreat to ‘his room.’

He turned the earpiece on once the door was closed behind him, and collapsed on the bed. “Earth to Pond, Earth to Pond” he said- calling though the TARDIS’s speaker system that Rose had made fun of him for.

Second later Amy shouted over the microphone on her end “DOCTOR!” She said, but not in a distressed way- just in an exceptionally too-loud way. He winced and grabbed at his ear as feedback screamed over the signal along with her shout. “Sorry…” Amy added more quietly.

“Could you not wreck my new earpiece, Pond!” He reprimanded her angrily.

“Oh, someone’s grumpy without Rose isn’t he?” She mocked him, unaffected by the outburst.

He sighed and leaned back against the pillows. “How are they doing?” He asked.
Amy hummed. “See for yourself.” She said, and held the handset out so he could hear the series of rasping, groans, and occasional dings the TARDIS was making.

The Doctor sat up at the sounds. “Ooo, nasty. She's locked in a materialisation loop, trying to land again, but she can’t…” He said, as if these weren’t all things Rose had already informed her of.

“Mmm and whatever is stopping her is in that flat.” Amy finished boredly. “So go upstairs, and sort it!” She told him, unable to keep the pleading miserable tones from her voice. “This is not what I meant when I asked you two for driving lessons…” She pouted, and turned the dial Rose had told her to as the TARDIS rattled horribly again.

“Mmm… don’t know what it is yet.” The Doctor answered, mocking her slightly, and stood up on the bed as he heard noises coming from upstairs again. “Anything that can stop the Tardis from landing is big. Scary big.”

“Wait…” Amy said, eyes moving back and forth rapidly as she felt like she was being told all over again that Father Christmas isn’t real. “Are you scared?” She asked him, not wanting to believe it.

The Doctor rolled his shoulders. “I can’t go up there until I know what it is and how to deal with it.” He said instead of answering. “And it is vital that this man upstairs doesn't realise who and what I am. So no sonicking. No advanced technology. I can only use this because we're on scramble.” He rambled, and began bouncing up and down on the springy bed as he spoke. He jumped off though. “To anyone else hearing this conversation we’re talking absolute gibberish.”

Amy hummed in bored understanding as he wandered over to the chest of drawers, picking up a random thing of hair gel and poking his own floppy hair with it- wondering why on Earth he used to mess with this stuff in his last regeneration. “Now all I've got to do is pass as an ordinary human being. Simple. What could possibly go wrong?” He said, throwing down the gel and picking up a pair of aviators.

Amy snorted. “Have you seen you?” She asked dryly.

He shoved on the sunnies as he walked over to the mirror. “So, you’re just going to be snide? No helpful hints?”

Amy wandered around the console as he spoke. “Hmm- here’s one. Bow tie. Get rid.” She said shortly, picking up a stethoscope and clacking it together on the syllables.

“Bow ties are cool.” The Doctor insisted, pulling the sunnies down his nose to see the neck piece in question better and adjust it smartly.

Amy huffed, closing her eyes and banging the stethoscope to her forehead in exasperation. “Come on, Amy!” The Doctor implored her, shoving the aviators in his pocket. “I’m a normal bloke! Tell me what normal blokes do!”

“They… watch telly, they play football, they go down the pub…” Amy listed off boredly, seeing The Doctor doing absolutely none of those things.

He flipped through a book quickly, finding the middle a bit slow. “I could do those things. I don’t, but I could.” There was a bang upstairs though before he could ask her to elaborate what those things actually entailed. “Hang on. Wait, wait, wait! Amy?” He let out, and on the other end Amy was gasping as she struggled with an out of control time machine. He looked around wildly toward the two clocks in the room and his watch- the hands were spinning about madly. “Interesting… localised time loop…”
“Ow… What’s all that?” Amy yelled over the noise of the TARDIS as she flung about it, struggling to keep herself upright.

“Time distortion. Whatever's happening upstairs is still affecting you.” He told her, and he could hear a scream coming from upstairs along with Amy’s.

Finally, the TARDIS stopped shaking, and Amy breathed a sigh of relief as she leaned heavily against the console. “It’s stopped… ish.” She told him, as the noises were now twice as bad as they had been. “How about your end?”

The Doctor looked down at his watch to see that the gears had stopped spinning. “My end’s good.” He told her.

“So… doesn’t sound good, but nothing to worry about, yeah?” He asked her hopefully, wondering if it was time already to call Rose back down.

“No, no, no, not really.” He said quickly, and Amy, unfortunately, knew that tone. “Just keep the zigzag plotter on full- that’ll protect you.”

Amy ran over to the the shift in question and started pulling at it the way she’d seen Rose do earlier, but the TARDIS lurched forward, sending her hips crashing into the console. “Ow!” She let out.

“Amy, I said the zigzag plotter!” He yelled at her.

“I pulled the zigzag plotter!” She yelled back, mimicking the south English accent for good measure.

“What, you’re standing with the door behind you?” He asked, as he started throwing random things from around the room onto the bed.

Amy squinted at the speaker. “Yes.”

“Okay, take two steps to your right and and pull it again.” He told her, looking up and doing the movements himself as he did.

Amy huffed, but did as she was told, standing to the other side of the plotter and pulling it again- the same switch, mind you- but this time the TARDIS stabilised (as much as it could anyway) and the noise died back down. She rolled her eyes- so much for wanting to learn to fly this thing. How did these two manage to freaking dance while piloting such a picky ship?

“Now,” The Doctor said, starting back at digging around the room as he heard the TARDIS noise fade back. “I must not use the sonic. I’ve got work to do… Need to pick up a few items.” He told her by way of farewell.

“No! Wait! Hey!” Amy yelled, but it was too late- he’d already switched off the communicator. She huffed, crossing her arms, and leaned heavily against the console as the lights continued to flash around her.

“La donna è mobile, Qual piuma al vento, muta d’accento, e di pensiero!” The Doctor sang loudly in Italian the next morning as the shower water beat down on him- delighting in the small giggles he was getting from Rose on the other end of the bond.
Craig knocked on the bathroom door though. “Doctor?”

“How long are you going to be in there?” Craig asked, prompting Rose to give him a small ‘Rude’ as she overheard.

“I’m just going to go upstairs and see if he’s okay!” Craig yelled back, but The Doctor didn’t hear it.

“I’m sorry?” Craig asked, and then squinted when there was no reply, he pulled the curtain back. “What did you say?” He tried again, but still there was no answer.

It was Rose who put the pieces together in his mind of the banging and Craig’s telling him that he was going upstairs.

Craig had casually come back down the stairs as The Doctor skidded around the corner- damp hair fluffed out around his head, and wildly pointing Craig’s electric toothbrush towards 79b.

“What happened? What’s going on?” The Doctor asked quickly.

“I thought you might be in trouble.” The Doctor let out.

Craig let out a confused laugh and tilted his head at him. “Thanks. Well, if I ever am, you can come and save me… with my toothbrush.” He joked, and then pushed passed him as the flat’s landline started ringing.

The Doctor pushed his hair out of his eyes finally, and started walking up the stairs hesitantly- bent forwards as he tried to see through the stained glass door. His towel slipped from his hips just as
the door behind him opened. “Oh! Hello.” The newcomer squealed awkwardly.

“Ah!” He jumped up, pulling the towel back around him quickly. “Hello!” He trotted back down the stairs towards the familiar-looking girl. “You must be Sophie! I’m The Doctor.” He introduced himself, kissing either side of her face while she made surprised and slightly uncomfortable noises that he didn’t process.

He turned on his heel with one last suspicious glance up to 79b before he went into the flat. Craig was on the phone. “…No, Dom’s in Malta, there’s nobody else around.” He was saying as The Doctor came in, and then shoved the phone to his shoulder. “Hang on a sec- we’ve got a match today, pub league. We’re one down if you fancy it.” He told him.

The Doctor looked sideways as he tried to put that string of sentences together. “…Pub league… a drinking competition?” He asked, eyes widening- Amy had mentioned something about pubs- and he was quite good at not getting drunk on human alcohol.

Craig squinted at him though. “No. Football.” He explained, more quietly so that whoever was on the phone couldn’t hear. “Play football.”

The Doctor mumbled the word to himself quietly at first as he tried to figure it out -ignoring Rose’s giggles- and then it finally clicked “Football! Yes, blokes play football!” He exclaimed, repeating what Amy had said the night before. “I’m good at football, I think.” He added.

Craig laughed. “You've saved my life.” He said, and then brought the phone back to his ear. “I've got somebody. Yeah, all right, I'll see you down there.” He told them- patting The Doctor on the cheek, which he returned before retreating to the fridge as Craig hung up and greeted Sophie.

“Hey, I thought I’d come early and meet your new flatmate.” She said, eyes following the still only towel-clad Doctor.

He grinned over to her as he took the quarter gallon of milk out. “Do you play, Sophie?” He asked her.

Both her and Craig laughed at that. “No, Soph just stands on the sidelines.” Craig answered. “She's my mascot.”

Sophie pulled her chin back at that though. “I’m your mascot?” She repeated. “Mascot?”

Craig fumbled awkwardly over his reply. “Well, yeah, not my mascot. It's a football match. I can't take a date.” He said, looking at The Doctor instead of to her in mild deflection.

“I didn’t say I was your date.” Sophie defended.

“Neither did I.” Craig rocked back on his heels.

The Doctor’s eyes flickered between the two of them as he processed the conversation. ‘Oh, bless them.’ Rose was saying in his mind, and he was glad she’d reached the same conclusion. Instead of telling them to get a grip on their short human lives though, he just said “better get dressed,” and handed Craig his toothbrush back before retreating to his room.

“The spare kit’s just in the bottom drawer!” Craig called after him, making to follow him in.

The Doctor kept his head poked out but the door firmly blocking the room. “Bit of a mess.” He said, and then closed the door in Craig’s face.
‘Wait, hold on!’ Rose said, so he stayed pressed against the door to hear whatever Sophie was saying -to satisfy his wife’s curiosity (and maybe his own, a little bit).

Keys jangled a bit and then sophie whispered, “you didn’t say he was gorgeous.”

In his head Rose snorted, and The Doctor rolled his eyes before flinging the door back open to confirm his own suspicions on the keys. “You unlocked the door. How did you do that? Those are your keys. You must have left them last time you came here.” He sniffed, letting out his observations quickly, squinting at her.

“Yeah, but I…” Sophie started to answer, but then drifted off. “How do you know these are my keys?” She asked him, but looked over to Craig.

“I’ve been holding them.” He answered awkwardly, closing his eyes against his own stupidity. Sophie seemed unphased by it though, still confused by The Doctor. “I’ve got another set.” She told him, holding up her other (not pink) keychain for emphasis.

“You’ve got two sets of keys to someone else’s house?” He asked, at the same time Rose did from the TARDIS.

“Yeah?” Sophie answered, waiting for the explanation to the interrogation.

The Doctor inclined his head. “I see…” He smirked, as he was sure they were pining after one another now. “You must like it here too.” He said simply, and then shut the door again as Rose’s giggles filled his head.

‘You seem like your doing better today.’ He mused, and he rummaged around for the ‘kit’ Craig has mentioned.

‘Yeah… My head’s still killing me, but I’ve adjusted to the nausea.’ She answered vaguely, and then got distracted by something for a moment as he shoved his pants on. ‘Turn on your earpiece, Amy’s getting annoyed.’ She told him when he was pulling the shorts on.

He did as he was told and yanked the jersey around his head. “Craig asked me to play football. So, I’m going out. If I hang about the house all the time, him upstairs might get suspicious and notice me.” He filled in by way of greeting to Amy.

“Football.” Amy repeated, leaning against the console as she messed with a magnifying glass. “Okay. Well done. That is normal.” She gave him.

“Yeah, football.” He agreed, checking his athletic reflection in the mirror and spinning around as he flipped the collar up. “Now… football’s the one with the sticks isn’t it?” He asked, but didn’t get an answer as both women only laughed in response.

As they made their way to the park (the same one the TARDIS had attempted to land in the day prior), Sophie noticed the ring. “Are you married?” She asked him, quirking her brow, prompting Craig to turn around and finally see the ring himself.

He spun his wedding ring around his finger anxiously- he’s considered taking it off last night, but couldn’t bring himself to do it in the end. In his head, Rose was rolling her eyes at him as she caught that incredibly romantic thought process. “Um…” He let out awkwardly. “Yes… well… it’s just…” No matter how hard he tried though he couldn’t get himself to say he wasn’t. “She’s…
not here.” He finished eventually, swallowing. It wasn’t exactly a lie, but he realised too late how它 would be interpreted by the two humans.

Sophie sucked in a little breath at that and her hand went up to her heart. “Oh, I’m so sorry.” She breathed, and he nodded awkwardly.

“Yeah, mate…” Craig added, suddenly understanding The Doctor’s response to the ‘bringing someone round’ conversation from last night. “I’m sorry. That’s rough.” He said, patting his arm.

The hysterical cackling from Rose in his head was in fierce juxtaposition from the somber situation in front of him. He managed to nod again though, and start them walking back down the path towards the pitch. ‘You could have just said no, love.’ She told him, still giggling.

He wrinkled his nose at that though. ‘No. No. Definitely not.’ He said firmly, and looked up as they came to Craig’s mates.

“All right, Craig. Soph. All right, mate.” One of them was saying grabbing Craig’s hand firmly and nodding towards Sophie.

The Doctor stepped forward, shaking his hand. “Hello, I’m Craig’s new flatmate. I’m called the Doctor.” He gave some more air kisses, and felt like the were even less well received than before.

He nodded, “alright, Doctor. I’m Sean.” He introduced himself. “So, where are you strongest?”

“Arms.” The Doctor answered quickly without really thinking about it.

Craig shook his head. “No, he means what position on the field.”

“No…” He said, furrowing his brow and sticking his lips out. “The front? The side? … Below?” He tried, still having no proper idea what they were talking about.

Sean stared at him incredulously for a moment, mouthing ‘what’ to Craig, until finally holding his hands up to him. “You any good though?” He asked.

In response, The Doctor took the football out from under his arms and twirled it round his fingers. “Let’s find out!” He grinned, and then dropped the ball to high-knee it back up, head butt it forwards, and then kick it on the arch elegantly dribbling it out onto the pitch.

The ensuing two hours of football are the most fun two hours The Doctor had ever had in the last 900-and-however-many years of his life.

Who knew he could be so good!

At sports no less!

If he was being honest, he wasn’t really even sure what he was doing- but if the crowd was anything to go by he was doing it fantastically.

He easily snaked around the defenders, faking them out with side-steps and spinning around the ball as he made his way down the field. He scored goal after goal after goal- sending the other team’s goalie into the dirt every time. Reveling in the applause and cheers from the crowd and his teammates.

At one point he falls onto the ground after scoring again with what he’s been told is something
called a bicycle kick, and the team huddles around him celebratorily—all of them covered in dirt and mud and grass. “I LOVE THIS GAME!” He yelled happily as they all rejoice their win.

‘Oh no, it turns out I have married a standard British bloke afterall.’ Rose tells him amusedly as he makes his way off the pitch.

‘Rose Tyler, absolutely nothing about me is standard and you know it.’ He shot back cheekily, downing the rest of his water bottle as he came up to the team.

“You are so on the team!” Sean exclaimed, clapping him on the shoulder and handing him a beer. “Next week we've got the Crown and Anchor. We're going to annihilate them.”

He stood up straight at that though and came chest-to-chest with Sean. “Annihilate? No. No violence, do you understand me? Not while I'm around. Not today, not ever. I'm the Doctor, the Oncoming Storm- and you basically meant beat them in a football match, didn't you?” He started out strong, and the petered off as he realized his mistake.

“Yes.” Sean said awkwardly.

“Lovely.” The Doctor answered, mood shifting easily back to pleasant. “What sort of time?”

Before Sean could answer though, behind him Craig’s beer can exploded on him, and they all turned around to laugh and such, but then it happened again- and again- and again. As The Doctor stood in the middle of the repeat pandamonium Rose’s pain reverberated through his skull. He walked out of the replaying group quickly, rubbing at his temple and trying to soothe Rose, and switching in on the earpiece. “Amy?” He called anxiously.

“It’s happening again!” Amy yelled back, holding onto the shaking console and sending a glance to Rose who was keeled over and near passing out. “Worse.” She added at the sight.

“What does the scanner say?”

Amy groaned and pulled the monitor towards her. “A lot of nines. Is it good that they're nines? Tell me it's good that they're all nines!” She begged.

The Doctor’s eyes shifted back and forth quickly. “Yes, yes, it’s good, it’s good.” He lied, closing his eyes. “Zigzag plotter, Amy- zigzag plotter.” He reminded her quickly.

Amy huffed and fiddled with the plotter again- only for a loud bang to go up seconds later. She screamed and hung onto the monitor- it flinging her around the console and onto the floor. “Amy? Are you there?” The Doctor called frantically. “Amy?”

Amy let out a long breath as she pulled herself back to standing. “Yes. Hello.” She let out, chest heaving as the TARDIS went back to (what was now the new) normal.

The Doctor sighed gratefully. “Oh, thank heavens. I thought for a moment the TARDIS had been flung off into the vortex. Lost forever.” He breathed out.

Amy’s eyes widened at that, and she glanced over to Rose who was pulling herself back up as well now. Amy was sure that if it wasn’t for her that statement would have scared her a lot more- which is saying something. “You have got to get us out of here.” She growled out.

“How are the numbers?” The Doctor asked instead of replying to such an obvious statement.

Amy rolled her eyes and pulled the monitor back to her. “All fives.”
“Fives?” The Doctor looked back over his shoulder to see that the time loop had finally stopped. “That’s even better.” He told her. “Still, it means the effect's almost unbelievably powerful and dangerous, but don’t worry…” He glanced over his shoulder again. “Hang on- I’ve got some rewiringing to do.”

“Hey!” Amy called, but again he’d cut off the connection before she could protest. She pouted and turned to Rose. ‘Tell your husband I hate him.’

Rose nodded and gave her a thumbs up as she rubbed at her temple.

Later, The Doctor was talking to Rose as he attached another traffic cone to his device. ‘Feeling any better, then?’ He asked her, throwing a phone cable over his shoulder.

‘Can’t tell if I’m feeling better or if I’m just getting used to feeling like shite.’ She answered honestly.

‘I’m sorry, love… but look!’ He stepped back so he could give her the full view of the non-tech scanner he was working on.

Rose bit back a surprised laugh at the ridiculous half-built contraption sitting on the bed frame in poor Craig’s spare room. Her husband had rigged together a series of bicycle parts, an old umbrella, a rotary clothesline, a lampshade, some boat oars, a rake, a broom, a number of digital and analog clocks, some wristwatches, faerie lights, and what appeared to be a traffic cone on top of the whole spinning mega-gizmo. ‘It looks like a pile of junk to me.’ She told him dryly.

The Doctor let out an indignant sound at that, but didn’t have time to reply as there was a knock at the door- sending his still unattached traffic cone to the ground. He huffed and picked it up before opening the door with a wide smile. “Hello, flatmate!” He greeted Craig brightly.

“Hey, man.” Craig glanced down to the traffic cone for a second, but shook his head- deciding not to comment. “Um, listen, uh- Sophie's coming round tonight and I was wondering if you could give us some space?”

The Doctor stared at him for a moment as he processed that, but gave up attempting to discern the implications that humans always insist on using over actual words. “Oh, don’t mind me! You won’t even know I’m here.” He told him, and then a loud thud sounded from upstairs- taking his attention back. “… that’s the idea…” He mumbled, already doing calculations in his head, before shutting the door in Craig’s face once more.

He stepped back into the room to find that the scanner had already started gathering readings from the upstairs flat at the thud. “Yes! Perfect!” He exclaimed, pulling the typewriter closer to him to put in a few more numbers. “What a beauty!”

‘Craig wanted you out of the flat so he could make a move of Sophie.’ Rose informed him cheekily.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose at that. ‘Was I better at reading things like that last regeneration?’ He asked her- sure he felt more behind on social cues this time around.

Rose gave him the telepathic equivalent of a noncommittal shrug. ‘Maybe a bit.’

He nodded distractedly, poking his tongue out a bit as he started splicing some of the few wires he could get away with having. ‘Well, no matter. I’m too busy to be leaving just for Craig to canoodle.’ He told her, and Rose giggled.
‘Canoodle?’ She mocked him, but he promptly ignored her cheek.

The Doctor was on the floor behind the armchair rewiring the television set when Sophie came in. They didn’t notice him, and if he’s being honest he didn’t really notice them either, so he just kept buggering on.

“Are we going out?” Sophie asked Craig as he joined her on the sofa.

Craig huffed. “I’ve had a bit of a weird day. Can we do pizza booze telly?”

“Great, love it.” She agreed, and then reached for her bag. “Wait- No Melina, no crises, no interruptions.” She told him, turning off her mobile.

‘Ugh. She’s so into him.’ Rose whispered in The Doctor head- causing him to fumble with the (not-sonic) screwdriver in his hand.

‘Huh? What?’ He asked her confusedly, but Rose shushed him, and he realised she was eavesdropping on Craig and Sophie. He rolled his eyes and continued working keeping half an ear on the humans’ conversation for curiosity’s sake.

Craig was fumbling over his words. “Um... Soph.... I've- ... I think…”

Sophie shook her head at his stuttering. “Where's this going?” She asked quietly- hopefully.

Craig swallowed and tried again “I think that we... should…”

The Doctor rolled his eyes as Craig drifted off again awkwardly, and shuffled forward on the floor until he was at the outlet behind the sofa. When he fumbled with the stupid human screwdriver again though he popped his head up to interrupt the incredibly uncomfortable silence above him. “Hello.”

Craig jumped and yelled “What?” angrily at him while in his head Rose reprimanded him with a disgruntled ‘Rude!’ -as if she was anyone to be talking as she’d been spying on the private conversation.

“Oops. Sorry.” He apologized, eyes flicking between the two of them. “Don't worry, I wasn't listening. In a world of my own down there.” He half-lied.

Sophie laughed, but Craig snapped at him. “I thought you were going out?”

He had never said that- he was sure he never said that, but instead of correcting Craig on his assumption he just explained. “I’m just reconnecting all the electrics. It's a real mess.” The Doctor said, motioning vaguely to all the wires draped across his shoulders with the screwdriver- which reminded him. “Where’s the on switch for this?” He asked them.

Sophie furrowed her brow at that and Craig sighed- looking to her. “He really is just going out.” He assured her, and The Doctor stared at him confusedly- (why would he be doing that?)

“No, I don’t mind if you don’t.” Sophie answered.

“I don’t mind.” Craig denied quickly.

Sophie smirked and looked back to The Doctor. “Then stay. Have a drink with us.” She offered
happily with a nod, and beside her Craig sucked his lips in and looked up to the ceiling in silent exasperation.

“What?” He asked—thoroughly lost now in the human interaction. “Do I have to stay now?” He let out bewilderedly, meaning to only ask Rose, but accidentally whispering it out loud to Craig as well. He felt Rose facepalm in his head.

“Do you wanna stay?” Craig asked back, eyes closed.

“I don’t mind.” He whispered again—as if maybe the lack of volume would soften what was undoubtedly the wrong answer. (But the honest one).

He licked his lips awkwardly as Rose informed him that he had, in fact, mucked that one up, and the two humans agreed excitedly to his staying— which just proved to confuse him even more.

The Doctor just sat on the armchair fiddling with wires while the humans ate pizza and drank wine that he forgot about as he got lost in the cable connections. Rose nudged him back to listening when Sophie started talking to him.

“Because life can seem pointless, you know, Doctor.” She was saying. “Work, weekend, work, weekend. And there’s six billion people on the planet doing pretty much the same.”

The Doctor snorted at that. “Six billion people… Watching you two at work, I’m starting to wonder where they all come from.” He said dryly, earning a giggle from Rose.

Sophie squinted at him though. “Huh? What do you mean by that?”

He deflected the question. “So, the call centre. That’s no good, then. What do you really want to do?” He asked her.

Sophie sighed, and shifted so that she was facing him more before she answered. “Okay, don’t laugh. I only ever told Craig about it.” She started. “I want to work looking after animals. Maybe abroad? I saw this orangutan sanctuary on telly.” She told him excitedly.

“What’s stopping you?” The Doctor asked, already knowing the true answer even though he was sure she wasn’t going to say it.

Craig spoke up for her though. “She can’t. You need loads of qualifications.”

Sophie nodded, “yeah true… Plus it’s scary—everyone I know lives around here.” She added, looking between the two of them. “Like, Craig got offered a job in London. Better money. He didn’t take it.” She informed The Doctor.

“Yeah, What’s wrong with staying here?” Craig said. “I can’t see the point of London.”

The Doctor glanced up to them, and continued fiddling with the plug in front of him as he spoke casually. “Well, perhaps that’s you, then. Perhaps you’ll just have to stay here, secure and a little bit miserable, till the day you drop. Better than trying and failing, eh?”

“You think I’d fail?” Sophie asked him, sounding somewhere between hurt and offended.

Everybody's got dreams, Sophie. Very few are going to achieve them, so why pretend?” He kept on, holding up his previously untouched glass of wine, trying it, and immediately remembering
why he’d left it alone- damn the effect, he spit it back into the glass. Sophie and Craig gave him
disgusted looks that he ignored. “Perhaps, in the whole wide universe, a call centre about is where
you should be.” He told her.

“Why are you saying that?” Sophie demanded angrily. “That’s horrible!”

The Doctor raised his eyebrows. “Is it true?” He challenged.

“Of course it’s not true!” Sophie threw back vehemently. “I’m not staying in a call centre all my
life! I can do anything I want!”

The Doctor only grinned at her in response- until finally realisation passed over her features.

“Oh! Oh yeah! Right!” She exclaimed, laughing at his tactics as he made similar noises and
offered her a fist bump she accepted. She turned to Craig excitedly. “Oh my god, did you see what
he just did?”

Craig shook his head as he tried to catch up. “No. Sorry- what’s happening? Are you going to live
with monkeys now?” He asked incredulously.

The Doctor spoke up again. “It’s a big old world, Sophie. Work out what’s really keeping you here,
eh?” He said wisely. Unsurprised by the uncomfortable squirming from both humans at the
question.

“I don’t know.” Sophie denied- unconvincingly. “I don’t know.”

‘Jesus Christ.’ Rose whispered exasperatedly in his head- and he was inclined to agree.

Rose was asleep again (she kept drifting in and out of consciousness), and Amy, meanwhile, hadn’t
slept in nearly 48 hours.

Rose had sent her back to her room plenty of times, of course, but she just couldn’t.

She’s been having trouble sleeping the last few weeks anyhow- kept waking up in tears from
dreams she couldn’t remember. Blurry faces fading with the rest of it as soon as she opened her
eyes. A heavy weight on her chest for the rest of the day.

Needless to say, being in a loud, half-crashing TARDIS, was not helping her insomnia.

“Right. Shields up.” The Doctor came over the speakers, pulling her out of her thoughts. “Let’s
scan.”

Amy blinked tiredly and stood up to walk over to the monitor. “What are you getting?” She asked.

“Upstairs there is…” He drifted off and Amy heard something start spinning. “No traces of high
technology.” He finished, in the tone of someone reading something off. “Totally… normal?” He
questioned, and then banged on something, annoyed. “No, no, no, no, no! It can’t be! It’s too
normal!” He argued.

Amy closed her eyes. “Only for you could too normal be a problem.” She observed tiredly, and
sighed. “You said we could be lost forever. Just go upstairs.” She implored him.

“Well, Rose could probably fly the TARDIS out of the vortex eventually, and possibly attempt to
land her on the other side of the universe- maybe.” He offered, and Amy could tell he was moving
around the room— not really paying attention to just how unhelpful that consideration was to her worries. “Hold on!” He said all the sudden though, standing up straight. “Use the data bank. Get me the plans of this building. I want to know its history, the layout, everything.” He ordered.

Amy nodded, pulling the monitor around to the English keyboard as she got to work.

“Meanwhile, I shall recruit a spy…” He added, and then severed the connection before she could ask what the hell he meant by that.

The Doctor spent the night in town wandering through the streets and down random alleys for the cat with mild telepathic capabilities that he’d noticed two nights previous.

When he finally got back in it was around six, and Craig still hadn’t woken, so The Doctor got to work making breakfast for his flatmate in the way he often did in the TARDIS when Rose and whatever companions were with them were sleeping on nights he didn’t feel the need to (-most nights).

When seven o’clock rolled around and The Doctor had prepared a full English breakfast of fried eggs, sausage, pudding, bacon, mushrooms, baked beans, hash browns, toast, and tomato halves—and still Craig had not shown up, he decided to make it breakfast-in-bed then and pulled out the tray from the cupboard along with the commemorative 1981 Royal Wedding teapot.

Carrying the tray of food, toast, tea, pepper, and jam rather precariously down the hall, The Doctor called out “Craig!” and then knocked on the door with his elbow. “Craig. Breakfast.” He said through the door, then muttered more to himself, “it’s normal.”

Still, moments passed without answer. “Craig?” He tried again, and then threw the door open as he realised something was wrong. “Craig!” He yelled. Now that he was listening, he could tell the man’s heartbeat was entirely too slow. “Craig, Craig, Craig. I told you not to touch it!” The Doctor ranted, tossing the tray down as he made his way over to his unmoving sweat-drenched flatmate.

He picked up the arm that already had black spots forming in a rash and turned it over to see the pure black line running up Craig’s median cubital vein. “Look what’s that!” He mocked angrily as he quickly studied the reaction. “It’s an unfamiliar and obviously poisonous substance. Oh, I know what’d be really clever- I’ll stick my hand in it!” He bit out, shifting Craig onto his back. “Come on, Craig. Breathe!” He muttered, and then slammed his fists down on the human’s chest- grateful when he sat up slightly on a gasp before lolling over again. It was something at least. “Oh come on, Craig! Breathe! Thems are healthy footballer’s lungs!” He yelled, and then grabbed the teapot and dashed out of the room.

“Right, reverse the enzyme decay. Excite the tannin molecules.” The Doctor muttered to himself, shoving all of the tea bags into the pot and bashing them around with a wooden spoon. He grabbed a bit of garbage and shoved it in there for good measure as well as he ran back to the room.

“Come on, drink this.” He ordered, getting Craig to sit up before he poured the super-strong tea straight from the pot and into his mouth.

“I’ve got to go to work.” Craig rasped pathetically after her swallowed nearly the last of it.

“On no account.” The Doctor told him. “You need rest.” And then glancing in the pot to see there was still a bit left. “One more.” He ordered quietly, tipping the spout back into Craig’s mouth.

Craig squinted and swallowed. “It’s a planning meeting. It’s important.” He argued.
“You’re important.” The Doctor threw back seriously, and then patted his head. “You’re going to be fine, Craig.” He said quietly, and Craig’s eyes drifted shut again.

‘Guess what, love.’ The Doctor said a few minutes later as he was skipping jauntily towards Craig’s work.

‘You figured everything out and you’ll be home soon?’ She offered, rather hopefully, as she could tell by the pounding in her head that that obviously was not the case.

The Doctor chose to ignore it however, in favor of keeping the tone light. ‘I’ve got a job!’ He told her excitedly. ‘In a proper office and everything!’

Rose was too tired to analyse the implications of the statement, and thus chose not to question the information. ‘Well… that’ll be interesting.’ She answered vaguely instead, smirking a bit at the idea of her dorky, overly-excitable, overtly-alien husband in a standard human desk job. ‘Try not to blow it up.’

The Doctor rolled his eyes at the call-back and pushed open the heavy doors leading to the call centre.

Nearly right before the end of the work day Craig apparently finally woke up as he came frantically running through the office doors in a sheen of ill-sweat and worry.

“Oh, afternoon.” The boss said, turning towards him with a raised brow and pulled chin.

“I'm so sorry, Michael. I don't know what happened. I've got no excuse.” Craig panted desperately, as he came to a stop in front of his boss.

Before Michael could inform him that he really wasn’t all that bothered by his employee’s unexcused tardiness- the reasons for that particular disregard popped up from behind Craig’s desk with his floppy hair and slightly askew bowtie.

“I think that’s not what my screen is telling me Mr. Lang.” The Doctor said into the standard company-issued headset. He looked up and grinned happily when he saw Craig- who only looked back at him with a gobsmacked expression.

“What’s he doing here?” Craig asked, and then leaned forward angrily. “What are you doing here?” He demanded.

The Doctor answered the phone rather than Craig though. “If that’s your attitude, Mr. Lang, I suggest your custom elsewhere.” He said, and then spit into the mouthpiece like a child would to their annoying older sibling.

“No, no, no!” Craig protested frantically. “That’s one of my best clients!” But behind him Michael gave the OK gesture with a nod and a wink.

“Hello, Craig! How are you feeling?” The Doctor finally addressed Craig as he hung up on Mr. Lang. “Had some time to kill, I was curious- never worked in an office! Never worked in anywhere!” He explained brightly. In front of him a straining spoon he’d rigged to spin about on the desk made an odd robotic sound, as if solidifying the point.
Craig shook his head, properly annoyed. “You’re insane.”

“Leave off The Doctor! I love The Doctor!” Michael interrupted, gesturing between Craig and his new favorite unpaid-employee. “He was brilliant in the planning meeting.” He informed them matter of factly.

That only served to make Craig angrier however. “You went to the planning meeting?!” He demanded.

The Doctor, as usual, didn’t really catch the tone. “Yes, I was your representative.” He answered. “We don’t need Mr. Lang anymore. Rude Mr. Lang.”

Sophie interrupted before Craig could argue further. “Here you go,” she said, setting down a cup of tea. “And I found some custard creams,” she added, passing him the plate of sweets.

“Sophie, my hero.” The Doctor told her earnestly, sipping the tea.

Sophie smiled and turned to her friend. “Hi, Craig. I went on the web, applied for a wildlife charity thing. They said I could always start as a volunteer straight away. Should I do it?” She asked him, though she kept having to move her head around to get him to look at her rather than sputter confusedly in The Doctor’s and Michael's directions as the boss continued to watch The Doctor with a bright smile painted on his face.

“Yeah, great. Yeah, good. Go for it.” He answered distractedly, not really having heard her as his ears were ringing.

“You look awful.” The Doctor said, looking up to him seriously. “About turn. Bed. Now.” He ordered, and Craig had no choice as Michael waved him goodbye and Sophie walked off as well. The Doctor answered another call as Craig turned away. “Oh, yes. Hello, Mr. Jorgenson! Can you hold? I have to eat a biscuit!” He told the client casually before stuffing the custard cream in his mouth. Craig looked over his shoulder incredulously as Michael grinned down at him and handed him another biscuit.

The Doctor’s spy was waiting for him on the stairs when he got back.

“Oh, hello! Have you been upstairs?” The Doctor asked the siamese cat as he closed the door behind him.

The cat meowed in answer.

“Yes?” He translated, and as she began to purr he sat down next to her. “Show me what's up there? What's behind that door? Try to show me.” He told her, petting behind her ears. She purred louder and telepathic frequencies began straightening out in his head.

Flashing lights. Screams. All coming from behind the door leading to 79b.

“Oh, but that doesn’t make any sense.” The Doctor muttered, thinking of the ‘normal’ readings from the scanner. “Ever see anyone go up there?” He asked, and the cat meowed. “Lots of people?” He translated and received an affirmative. “Good, good. What kind of people?”

The frequencies cleared into images again. A young bespeckled boy on his way back home from school. A crying woman in heels and a short skirt late at night back from clubbing. An older woman lured in by the distressed calls of a little girl through the buzzer.
“People who never came back.” The Doctor said out loud, as the cat showed him the people going in, along with the flashing lights and screaming. “Oh, that’s bad… that’s very bad…”

Craig opened the door rather forcefully then- glaring down at The Doctor, who looked up to him slowly. “Oh, hello.” He said, a bit awkwardly, as he stroked the cat.

“I can’t take this anymore.” Craig said seriously, by way of greeting. “I want you to go.” And he turned into the flat- The Doctor following confusedly after him. Craig grabbed the paper sack full of money and held it out to him. “You can have this back and all.”

The Doctor grabbed the bag and stared at Craig. “What have I done?” He asked incredulously.

“For a start- talking to a cat.” Craig answered exasperatedly.

The Doctor tossed the bag over his shoulder- three thousand pounds flying out casually behind him. “Lots of people talk to cats!” He argued.

Craig went on though, becoming increasingly more petulant as he ranted. “And everybody loves you, and you're better at football than me, and my job, and now Sophie's all ‘oh, monkeys, monkeys!’” He broke off to stride over to The Doctor’s room, twisting the handle and letting the door fly open to reveal the still-spinning assortment of junk. “And then there’s that!” He yelled, pointing angrily into the room.

The Doctor ran after him. “It’s art!” He claimed, rather desperately, as he joined Craig in the doorway. “A statement of modern society!” He exclaimed, gesturing grandly towards the scanner and taking the step towards it to stop it spinning. “Oh, ain’t modern society awful?” He added for unconvincing emphasis, turning back to Craig.

Craig was still shaking his head though. “Me and you, it’s not gonna work out.” He told him quickly, panting a bit. “You've only been here three days! And they’ve been the three weirdest days of my life!”

“Your days will get a lot weirder if I go.” The Doctor fought back, taking steps forward to stay in Craig’s personal space even as he back away.

“I thought it was good weird!” Craig continued on frantically though. “But it's not, it's bad weird! I can't do this anymore!”

“Craig, I can’t leave this place.” The Doctor begged. “I'm like you, I can't see the point of anywhere else. Madrid? Ha! What a dump! I have to stay!” He lied desperately.

Craig huffed. “No you don’t! You have to leave!”

“I can’t go!”

“Just get out!”

The Doctor grabbed Craig by the shoulders. “Right. Only way.” He sighed, grinding his teeth together in order to psych himself up. “I’m gonna show you something- but shhh- really shhh!” He rambled, shaking Craig a bit as he got up in his face and growled. “Oh, I’m going to regret this- Okay, right. First, general background.” He said, and then without further preamble head butted Craig.

Before their eyes, a montage of The Doctor’s life flew past- embedding with it the information for Craig. *Time Lords. Gallifrey. All his regenerations. The TARDIS.*
The groaned in unison at the pain, but Craig gasped and pointed as the report set it. “You’re a-”

“Yes.”

“From-” He pointed up in a vague indication of ‘space.’

“Shhh!”

“You’ve got a TARDIS!” Craig yelled.

“Yes! Shhh!” The Doctor spoke over him, and then circled his own face. “Eleventh.” He explained vaguely, and then grabbed Craig’s lapels. “Right. Okay. Specific detail.” He grit out, and then slammed their foreheads together again.

*Rose. The ill TARDIS. Amy. The note. The scanner.*

Craig panted as they jumped away from each other and pointed at him wildly again. “You- you saw my ad in the paper shop window!”

The Doctor turned to pick up the note. “Yes. With this right above it. Which is odd… because Amy hasn’t written it yet.” He explained vaguely again, filling in the gaps left by the frankly crappy mode of telepathic communication. “Time travel- it can happen.” He whispered.

Craig pointed to the spinning pile of junk. “That’s a scanner! You used non-technological technology of Lammasteen!” He yelled.

The Doctor slapped his hand against Craig’s mouth. “Shut up!” He shouted angrily over him, and then fell back to lean heavily against the bed frame and rub at his forehead- Craig doing the same. “I am never doing that, ever, ever again.” He panted, and then clicked on his earpiece. “Amy,” he let out, leaning heavily against his knees.

“That’s Amy Pond!” Craig exclaimed, and then clapped his own hand over his mouth in surprise, feeling a bit starstruck- and immediately wondering where Rose was.

“Oh, you can understand us now.” The Doctor mused, still breathing heavily. “Hurrah.” He said boredly, directing his attention back to the women in the TARDIS. “Is Rose there?” He asked, angry he had to, but the psychic head-butting got his frequencies all tangled up.

Rose groaned from somewhere in the distance in response, and The Doctor winced as Rose probably felt all of that- both the head butt and the onslaught of psychic drain it caused. “Sorry, love.” He breathed out, and Rose managed to give him a diluted sort of telepathic thumbs up in response. “How are those plans coming?” He directed back to Amy.

Amy was typing away frantically. “Still searching for them.”

The Doctor wrung his hands together. “I’ve worked it out- with psychic help from a cat.” He told them.

“A cat?” Amy repeated incredulously while Rose exclaimed “Is that what that was?!”

The Doctor nodded, a bit giddy despite the conversation matter. “Yes, I know,” he replied amusedly before straightening out again. “He’s got a time engine in the flat upstairs.” He told them, referring back to the neighbor. “He’s using innocent people to try to launch it, and whenever he does they get burnt up.” He looked back over to Craig who was pacing frantically now. “Hence the stain on your ceiling.”
“From the ceiling!” Craig repeated excitedly like he’d just made that discovery all on his own.

“Yes, well done, Craig.” The Doctor nodded shortly. “And you two nearly get thrown off into the vortex.” He added to the girls again.

“Lovely.” Amy replied distractedly, still searching the TARDIS’s literally endless and slightly muddled data banks.

A loud crash came from upstairs and both The Doctor and Craig’s heads snapped up. “People are dying up there! People are dying up- People are dying- People are dying- People are dying- People are-” Craig was stuck on a loop as the sounds from upstairs increased.

“Amy, Rose!” The Doctor warned them, side-eyeing Craig, and the girls both screamed as the TARDIS started crashing again- bouncing wildly back and forth between materialising and dematerialising.

Craig was able to close his eyes and catch himself in the loop. “They’re being killed!” He blurted out, finally able to turn back to The Doctor.

“Someone’s up there!” The Doctor told him, and turned on his heel to run out of the flat. Suddenly, the unknown not as scary when armed with the knowledge that a life was at stake.

Amy hung onto the monitor in the violently shaking TARDIS, and managed to look up to the screen even as she screamed. “Doctor!” She yelled, as she took in the results.

“Hang on!” He yelled back, as he ran up the stairs, but pausing still when behind him Craig did. “Craig, come on. Someone’s dying up there…” He said, but drifted off as he saw what Craig did: Sophie’s keys in the lock.

“Sophie.” Craig breathed, and then immediately jumped into action as he flew up the stairs after The Doctor. “It's Sophie that's dying up there! It's Sophie!”

“DOCTOR! STOP!” Amy shouted over the noise of the TARDIS as emphatically as possible, finally getting the Time Lord to listen.

“Where’s Sophie?” Craig asked desperately, as he crashed into The Doctor stopped dead in his tracks at the landing in front of the door.

“Wait, wait.” He muttered, holding his hand out as he focused on the earpiece. “Amy?”

“Are you upstairs?” She asked.

“Just going in.” He told her, wondering where this was going.

“But you can’t be upstairs.” She said.

“Of course I can be upstairs.” He argued, more on impulse than anything, and wishing she’d just skip the dramatic build up and get to the bloody point.

“No, I’ve got the plans.” Amy said, still too slowly. “You can’t be upstairs- it’s one-storey building.” She informed him finally. “There is no upstairs!”

The Doctor and Craig turned to the apparently-not-there stairs perilously, but went through the door anyway, stopping in their tracks again though as the definitely-not-a-flat stood before them.

“What?” Craig asked, brow furrowing at the run-down but futuristic metal display set against
garish pink floral wallpaper.

In the center of the room a giant spider-like console of four panels with glowing electric orbs sat ominously against a tube of lights vaguely resembling the cloister bell of the TARDIS. “Oh… Of course!” The Doctor breathed out, as that comparison yielded dawning realisation. They walked further into the spaceship/flat. “The time engine isn't in the flat, the time engine is the flat. Someone's attempt to build a Tardis!”

Craig shook his head in protest though. “No! There’s always been an upstairs.”

“How there?” The Doctor challenged. “Think about it.”

“Yes!” He insisted, but paused. “No- I don’t…”

“Perception filter. It's more than a disguise. It tricks your memory.” The Doctor explained quickly.

Sophie came out from the shadows then, bent over in pain as a long stretch of electricity pulled her hand towards the console orbs. She screamed as she struggled against the force.

“Sophie! Oh my god, Sophie!” Craig yelled, as they both ran towards her.

“Craig-” Sophie cried out desperately and he came to hold her waist and pull at her arm to no avail.

“It’s controlling her! It’s willing her to touch the activator!” The Doctor told them, scanning with the sonic.

“It’s not going to have her!” Craig growled, but Sophie’s hand landed on the console anyway-forcing a scream out of her.

The Doctor attempts to use the screwdriver to break the connection but of course, it’s deadlocked sealed. “You’ve got to do something!” Craig pleaded, and a second later the electricity cut off, and Sophie fell back onto the floor- alive.

“What, why’s it let her go?” The Doctor asked, looking down to her unconscious form and over to the burnt-out corpse in the corner.

Rose, of course, already had the answer. ‘Someone’s scanned you, Doctor.’ She told him, biting her lip worriedly, even as she was still on a crashing TARDIS. Looks like he’d been right about not being able to use any alien tech while undercover downstairs.

The Doctor groaned inwardly at that, and a hologram materialised in front of him. “You will help me.” The shadowy image of an old man said.

“Right. Stop. Crashed ship.” The Doctor mumbled to himself quickly as he thought through tactics. “Let’s see… Hello! I’m Captain Jack Harkness of International Rescue. Please state the nature of your emergency.” He bluffed, saying the first name and relevant occupation he could think of.

“The ship is crashed. The crew are all dead. A pilot is required.” It told him.

“You’re the emergency crash program.” The Doctor summed up. “What? You’ve been luring people up here so you can try them out?” He asked, pulling out the sonic to set the hologram spinning through its multiple forms. An old man, a younger one, a little girl…

“ You will help me. You will help me. You will help me. ” They all said in turn.
Sophie woke up finally. “Craig? What is this? Where am I?” She asked, looking around frantically.

The Doctor hushed her shortly without looking over. “Human brains aren’t strong enough.” He told the autopilot. “They just burn. But you’re stupid, though- you just keep trying!” He bit out angrily.

“Sheventeen people have been tried. Six billion four hundred thousand and twenty six remain.” It replied emotionlessly.

“Seriously, what’s going on?” Sophie interrupted again.

“Oh, for goodness sake! The top floor of Craig’s building is in reality an alien spaceship intent on slaughtering the population of this planet. Any questions? No, good.” The Doctor explained to her quickly and clearly annoyed by the fact that he was having to. Sure that if Rose wasn’t otherwise occupied with a crashing TARDIS he would get a ‘Rude’ for his tone.

“Yes, I have questions!” Sophie let out, but Craig pulled her back and The Doctor ignored her as the hologram spoke up again.

“The correct pilot has been found.” It said.

“Yes, I was a bit worried you’d say that.” The Doctor let out dryly, but instantly lost the facade as the electricity started pulling him towards the console.

“The correct pilot has been found. The correct pilot has been found. The correct pilot has been found.”

“What’s happening?” Amy yelled while next to her Rose fell to her knees.

The Doctor held onto a nearby support beam for dear life with the hand not being held hostage by the makeshift time machine. “It’s pulling me in.” He gritted out. “I’m the new pilot.”

“Could you do it?” Amy asked hopefully. “Could you fly the ship safely?”

He lost his grip on the beam and stumbled towards the console, just barely managing to hold his hand an inch above the control orb. “No, I’m way too much for this ship. My hand touches that panel, the planet doesn’t blow up- the whole solar system does.” He said frantically, hand shaking with the effort.

“The correct pilot has been found.” The autopilot insisted.

“No. Worst choice ever, I promise you. Stop this.” He pleaded desperately.

The TARDIS was wrecking incredibly fast now, and with Rose nearly incapacitated, Amy knew she didn’t stand a chance. “DOCTOR! IT’S GETTING WORSE!” She yelled over the alarms.

The Doctor’s mind was racing frantically for an answer. “It doesn’t want everyone. Craig, it didn’t want you.” He managed the half-thought, looking up to the human.

“I spoke to him and he said I couldn’t help him.” Craig offered quickly.

“It didn’t want Sophie before, but now it does. What’s changed?” His eyes flitted back and forth as he chased the thoughts. “Argh- No. No, I gave her the idea of leaving. It’s a machine that needs to leave. It wants people who want to escape. And you don’t want to leave, Craig. You’re Mister Sofa Man!” The Doctor looked back up imploringly. “Craig, you can shut down the engine. Put your hand on the panel and concentrate on why you want to stay.” He told him.
Sophie took a step towards him. “Craig, no!” She said, shaking her head tearfully.

Craig wasn’t paying attention to her, instead looking dead onto The Doctor. “Will it work?” He asked.

“Yes.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Is that a lie?”

“Yes!” The Doctor sputtered out, shifting his weight as his hand was pulled closer to the console- the most simple threat to human civilisation he’d ever seen.

Craig tilted his head. “That’s good enough for me.” He said determinedly. “Geronimo!” He let out, clenching his jaw, and slamming his hand down on the console- screaming out in pain as soon as he made contact.

The Doctor was released from the force and ran over to Craig- smoke was coming off his hand and it was impossible to tell if it was Craig’s skin or the machine that was burning. “Craig, what’s keeping you here? Think about everything that makes you want to stay here. Why don’t you want to leave?” He rambled, looking at Craig seriously, and then slapping him when he didn’t answer.

“Ah! Sophie!” Craig let out, making The Doctor grin triumphantly while behind them Sophie gasped. “I don't want to leave Sophie! I can't leave Sophie! I love Sophie!”

She took a step forward, pushing The Doctor out of her way. “I love you too, Craig, you idiot.”

Amy couldn’t help but wrinkle her nose and make a general noise of disgust at that. It was all too cheesy ‘true love saves the day’ for her tastes.

Craig, still though needed further confirmation. “What about the monkeys?”

“Oh, not now, not again. Craig, the planet's about to burn!” The Doctor yelled exasperatedly. “For God's sake, kiss the girl!”

“Kiss the girl!” Amy and Rose both yelled over the speaker, desperately hanging onto the TARDIS.

Finally, the two humans’ lips met, and their hands fell away from the console. Neither one of them could think of leaving now. Not when everything they’ve ever wanted was in their arms.

Amy’s eyes widened as the TARDIS finally stopped shaking, both her and Rose standing up slowly. “Doctor, you’ve done it!” Amy breathed, looking up to the monitor. “You’ve done it! Ha
ha! Now the screen’s just zeros- minus ones, minus twos, minus threes…”

‘Something still isn’t right.’ Rose whispered while Amy rambled. The Doctor stared wide-eyed at the still-smoking console and the snogging couple in the corner and sent back his confirmation.

“Big yes!” Amy yelled triumphantly, not seeing Rose’s face.

The hologram appeared again- flipping wildly through it’s images as the distorted voice pleaded. “Help me. Help me. Help me. Help me. Help me…”

“Big no.” The Doctor mumbled right back.

Craig and Sophie finally broke apart as the room started shaking again. “Did we shut it off?” Craig asked.

“Emergency shutdown. It's imploding. Everybody out, out, out!” He ordered, shooing them out of the room as the autopilot continued to flicker and beg emotionlessly.

They all ran out the door, and down the stairs- The Doctor jumping the last six steps. They managed to get out onto the street just in time to watch the top floor faze into a spaceship, and then out of existence.

They all let out long breaths.

Craig looked incredulously to a man with his child walking casually past flat 79 as if nothing had just happened. “Look at them. Did they not see that? The whole top floor just vanished!”

The Doctor didn’t bother to look down to the humans in question, or the one he was answering. “Perception filter. There never was a top floor.” He told them, and then snapped his head around as he could feel Rose landing the TARDIS. He ran off towards his wife without further word.

Rose met him on the grass just outside the ship and let out a surprised laugh as he grabbed her by the waist and spun her around merrily.

“I never, ever, want to go that long without you ever again.” He told her seriously as he set her down, planting a desperate and frantic kiss to her lips.

Rose giggled as they pulled apart. “Mm, yeah. I missed you too.” She said, pushing his hair out of his face. “So as much as I’m loathe to say it- you should probably go say goodbye. At least return their keys.” She gave him a knowing look, not saying the ‘rude’-but definitely implying it.

He wrinkled his nose at that. He really didn’t like goodbyes. Why couldn’t he just disappear this time like they usually did? But deep down he knew it wouldn’t be right this time- not with Craig and Sophie. They’d cared too much- meant to much. “Will you come with me?” He tried instead of arguing, pulling her closer.

Rose shook her head though. “Probably best not to introduce your definitely-not-dead wife and then leave.” She said, and then leaned up to kiss the pout off his lips. “Go,” she ordered lightly, pushing his shoulder as she pulled away. “We’ll be here when you get back.”

He huffed and kissed her one last time before turning away again.
The Doctor walked back into the flat to find Craig and Sophie snogging on the sofa. He immediately did an about turn, placing the keys as quietly on the table as possible before attempting to slip back out.

“Oi!” Craig caught him, just before he could open the door. The Doctor turned back around to see them both standing up.

“First you run off and now you’re just gonna sneak away?” Sophie asked, though more lightheartedly than with accusation.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels. “Yes, well… you were sort of… busy…” He said awkwardly.

Craig just laughed though and picked up the keys. “I want you to keep these.” He said, handing them back to The Doctor.

The Doctor smirked at the gesture and took them again. “Thank you.” He said honestly, but then went on with good intentions. “Because I might pop back soon, have another little stay.”

Craig laughed again at that and shook his head. “No, you won't.” He said knowingly. “I've been in your head, remember. I still want you to keep them… Who knows, maybe Rose will want to meet us.” He added with a smirk.

“Rose?” Sophie squinted. “Who’s Rose?”

The Doctor went up on his toes and grinned. “My wife!” He said proudly, holding up his left hand. “Yeah, she’s not dead! Was just trapped in the time vortex on our ship!”

Sophie shook her head, choosing not to ask the hundred questions that came to her at that.

The Doctor placed a hand on both of their shoulders. “Thank you, both of you.” He said instead of goodbye, and they nodded. “Now then! Six billion four hundred thousand and twenty six people in the world. That's the number to beat, eh?” They laughed in response and The Doctor grinned, turning on his heel and slipping out the door to 79a for the last time.

Chapter End Notes

This is one of my favorite 11 episodes, but it didn't leave a lot of room for editing. Just a lot of Rose fluff added in between ;)

Which reminds me, I'll be starting another part to this Universe either this week or next. And it will basically just be a series of one-shot outtakes. As much as I'm enjoying the episode-by-episode format, it doesn't always leave a lot of room for extras and I have a file of scenes written for the Universe that just don't fit, so I'm giving them a home.

--Please leave thoughts, feelings, reviews, and analyses in the comments! It is my fuel ❤️

Lot's of changes ahead! Get pumped!
Everything

Chapter Summary

The Pandorica Opens

Chapter Notes

Previously...

“Rose Tyler you are…” He drifted off and shook his head as words failed him in his effort to describe just how wonderfully and truly amazing his wife is to him. “Everything” He finally settled on, feeling the timelines sing in agreement.

---

“What is it? What is exploding?” He asked her.

There was a long pause where she simply stood there, time swirling around her as she watched it break in front of her. “Everything.” She answered eventually, and Rose’s own sorrow at the word reverberated through his skull -sending off every alarm bell The Doctor had.

---

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[Auvers-sur-Oise, France, 1890]

The dreams. The visions.

They haunted him every night. Like a ghost they crept through the crevices of his mind, burning and screaming- destruction and the end.

The End.

The End of Everything.

Vincent painted with tears flowing down his cheeks the nightmare. The worst possible thing. He dropped his paint brush with shaking hands and stared at the horrific scene before him on the canvas. He collapsed onto the couch with a scream as the vision overcame him again. He reached desperately out- but there was nothing he could do. Not here. Not now. Not ever.

[Cabinet War Rooms, London, 1941]
Bracewell strode quickly down the corridor towards Churchill’s office, framed canvas gripped tightly under his arm. He set it down on the chair and leaned against the desk as Churchill stood up at the site.

“It was found behind the wall, in an attic in France. It's genuine. It's a Van Gogh.” He told the Prime Minister as he joined him on the other side of the desk.

Churchill puffed his cigar as he studied the painting. “Why bring it to me?” He asked.

“Because it's obviously a message,” Bracewell answered, “and you can see who it's for.”

Winston shook his head. “Can’t say I understand it.”

“Well, you're not supposed to understand it, Prime Minister. You’re supposed to deliver it.” Bracewell informed him matter of factly, giving the painting one last reverent look before leaving the room.

[Luna University, Earth Moon, 3742]

Melody’s cell phone started ringing as she was deep into her research on the lost moon of Poosh. She glanced over to it- already deciding she wasn’t going to answer, when she saw the TARDIS’s number staring back at her.

“Doctor?” She answered, furrowing her brow as he never used the TARDIS phone to make calls.

“No, and neither are you.” A gruff voice answered back. “Where is he?”

Melody huffed and threw her pen down- sure now that she wasn’t going to be getting any of this work done anytime soon. “You’re phoning the time vortex.” She explained to the man who she assumed was a friend of The Doctor and Rose if he had their number. “It doesn't always work. But the TARDIS is smart. She's re-routed the call.” She rubbed at her eyebrow- trying to remember a time before the ship had insisted on interrupting her life, and drawing a blank. But she straightened her back and nodded along anyway as the man on the other end (Winston Churchill- okay, yeah that was cool) explained his limited knowledge on the situation to her.

She called Rose as soon as she hung up with the former Prime Minister, but of course it went straight to voicemail. “Not that smart though.” She mumbled, hitting end before the pick-up message finished, and twirling the notecard of coordinates around in her fingers.

She looked around slowly to her vanity- where sat the birthday present from one Captain Jack Harkness- and grinned.

[The Royal Collection, Starship UK, 5245]

For her first time using the vortex manipulator, could really anyone blame her for going 2000 years forwards instead of backwards? …

No matter though- the painting should still be with the British government somewhere. It’s just that instead of casually taking it from Mr. Churchill, she’ll have to steal it from the Queen. That’s fine. That’ll do. Melody sighed as she changed into her all-blacks, and prayed her parents never found out about this particular adventure.
She snuck down into the Royal Collection, and easily found the Van Gogh archives. Her breath caught in her throat as she took in the painting. Mr. Churchill had described the painting to her of course but… seeing it in person, like this…

Melody shook her head and tore the canvas from it’s frame. She had a job to do. Then maybe she could get some studying done.

She only made it halfway up the stairs though before the lights came on and a gun was pointing at her. Melody gasped and fell back a stair- not at the weapon, but at the person holding it.

“This is the Royal Collection, and I’m the bloody queen.” Elizabeth X bit out. “What are you doing here?”

Melody held the rolled up canvas and her torch light up in surrender. “It’s about The Doctor and Rose, ma’am.” She explained quickly, eyes wide. “You met them once, didn’t you?” She asked, thinking of the stories from her parents. “I know they came here.”

Liz’s gun fell at the names. “The Doctor and Rose?” She asked breathlessly, eyes lighting up with a nostalgic smile.

“They’re in trouble.” Melody said, nodding, and purposefully skipping over her own credentials. “I need to find them.” She told her, coming up the stairs to the Queen, and privately wondering at her privileged childhood where she didn’t have to resort to such lengths to see the people that came round for dinner every Sunday- she definitely hadn’t appreciated it enough.

“Then why are you stealing a painting?” Liz asked suspiciously.

Melody handed her the canvas. “Look at it.” She whispered as Liz took it and unfurled it. “I need to find them. And I need to show them this.”

Liz X frowned at the sad, sad painting in her hands, holding back her tears as she looked slowly back up to the young girl.

[Planet One, The Beginning of History]

Admittedly, the very beginning of the universe may have been a bit of an overshoot.

But well, graffiting the oldest cliff face in the universe? That’ll get their attention.

She felt like the rebellious teenager she never really was as she carved the short message and coordinates into the diamond with the hand-held industrial laser she’d gotten for Christmas last year.

She was still sixteen despite being at University already. Maybe she could still count this as her ‘acting out.’

Melody shook her head and sighed, leaning back on the rope she was dangling from to admire her handiwork- double checking the coordinates with the painting, before typing them into her vortex manipulator and disappearing herself.

---
“I can’t believe I never thought of this before!” The Doctor exclaimed, spinning around the console. “It’s genius!” He said, earning an eye roll from Rose as she helped him land the TARDIS. “Right. Landed. Come on.” He said, making to start towards the door.

“Where are we?” Amy asked, standing up from her place on the jump seat.

The Doctor spun around and grinned at her. “Planet One. The oldest planet in the universe.” He told her. “And there’s a cliff of pure diamond, which according to legend, on the cliff there’s writing. Letters fifty feet high. A message from the dawn of time- and no one knows what it says, because no one's ever translated it.” He smirked mischievously. “Till today.”

Amy tilted her head curiously. “What happens today?”

Rose strode right past the both of them. “Us!” She shouted, and flung open the TARDIS doors.

And there, fifty feet in the air on the oldest cliff face in the universe- the message from the beginning of time...

\textit{What up, Gramps? -- ΘΣ. ΦΓΥΔζ}

Rose and The Doctor huffed exasperatedly while behind them Amy grinned.

Seconds later they were stepping out into a field.

“Right place?” Amy asked, shutting the TARDIS doors behind her.

The Doctor walked forward while he looked down at his watch. “Yep. Just followed the coordinates on the cliff face. Knowing River she probably just got stuck here and wants a ride…” He tapped his watch face. “Earth. Britain. 1:02 AM- no, PM.” He sighed and looked up finally-only to see a Roman legion laid out before him. “No… AD.” He edited again, and squinted out at the scene incredulously.

“Well…” Rose let out. “The Romans did invade Britain several times during this period.”

“Oh, I know.” Amy said, coming up behind them. “My favorite subject in school. Invasion of the hot Italians.” She looked up to The Doctor who was staring at her. “Yeah, did get marked down for the title.” She admitted.

A Roman soldier came running up to them then, falling down to his (rather chubby for a Roman) knees. “Hail, Trajan!” He let out, breathless from his run up the hill.

“Hi.” The Doctor let out awkwardly, while behind him the girls giggled.

“Does that make me Pompeia then?” Rose smirked.

The soldier didn’t answer that, but he did bow in her direction. “Minerva will see you now.” He told them, and stood to lead them down the hill.

Amy laughed and bumped Rose’s shoulder. “Of all the Roman royal couples to be mistaken for, Trajan and Pompeia are probably of the best ones. Imagine if he’d thought you were Caesar and Livia!” She whispered conspiratorially.
“What?” Rose laughed. “You don’t think I could poison him?” She joked, and The Doctor smirked over his shoulder as they entered the grand tent the soldier had led them to.

They found River Song inside, draped across a chaise is gold jewelry and silk robes being fed grapes. Rose shook her head at the site. “A goddess, River? Really?”

River sat up at her voice and grinned madly over to them. “You were taking entirely too long to get here.” She said by way of explanation. And then shrugged, “besides, I’ve been told it runs in the family.” She added vaguely in reference to the facade- more for her own amusement than anybody else’s.

The Doctor took a step forward at that. “You graffitied the oldest cliff face in the universe.” He reprimanded her, but was unable to hide his smirk.

“You wouldn’t answer your phone.” She threw right back, shooing away a soldier/servant as she came to her feet, grabbing the rolled up canvas next to her things and handing it to him.

“What’s this?” He asked, taking it and eyeing her suspiciously.

“It’s a painting.” She said, rolling her eyes. “Your friend Vincent. One of his final works.” She told him, coming to stand beside them. “He had visions didn’t he?” She asked, eyes glowing a bit. “A number of people decided you ought to know about this one.” She explained, crossing her arms in front of her. “I was given the unfortunate task of actually delivering it.”

Amy patted her arm sympathetically- knowing full well what it felt like to try and find The Doctor and Rose, and River smiled up at her. The Doctor huffed and unfurled the canvas.

Their breath caught as they took it in. It was like the sky of Starry Night but in the center was the TARDIS- exploding into a massive ball of light that swirled outward into the stars.

“But that’s the TARDIS…” Amy whispered, eyes wide. “Why’s it exploding?”

River shrugged. “I assume it’s some kind of warning.”

Amy’s eyes widened impossibly further at that though. “What, something is going to happen to the TARDIS?” She asked disbelievingly.

“It might not be at that literal…” River said hopefully, squinting down to the canvas as The Doctor laid it out on the table. “Anyway, this is where he wanted you- date and map reference on the door sigh, see?” She said, pointing to where it should have said ‘pull to open’ a series of numbers, letters, and roman numerals were listed.

The Doctor sat down heavily on the chair behind him. “Does it have a title?” He asked quietly.

“There’s some debate.” River answered. “His doctor, Gachet- he was there when Vincent finished the painting. He wrote down in his journal that Vincent kept muttering one thing over and over again: The Pandorica Opens.”

“The Pandorica?” Amy repeated. “What’s that?”

The Doctor stood up and started pacing as River answered. “A box, a cage, a prison. It was built to contain the most feared thing in all the universe.”

“And it’s a fairytale!” He argued loudly. “A legend! It can’t be real.”
River nodded minutely before catching herself. Rose saw, but decided not to wonder out loud on the young girl’s knowledge of the Gallifreyan children’s story. “You said their was debate?” Rose asked, folding her arms in front of her. “What’s the other option?”

River sighed. “Just one word. Scribbled on the back of the canvas.” She said quietly, and flipped the painting over. *Everything* was written in large frantic scrawl, nearly faded now in time but still clearly visible.

The Doctor let out a long breath at the word, and looked over to his wife. The time energy was swirling around her frantically now- worse than it ever has before. Something was coming. Something big. ‘*Bad Wolf said that to me.*’ He told her quietly.

Rose nodded, that explained why the word was thrumming in her pulse- singing loudly through the timelines. ‘*When?*’ She asked though, trying to pull up the memory.

‘*After the Silurian. When I asked what was exploding.*’ He told her, and the memory nudged at her but wouldn’t come into focus.

‘*The TARDIS?*’ She asked.

He didn’t answer though. Biting the inside of his cheek as something about that still didn’t sound right. He signed and turned around to pull out the maps from the nearby shelves.

River squinted at him as he started laying the maps out over the canvas. “If it is real, it's here and it's opening, and it's got something to do with your Tardis exploding.” She told him, shaking her head. “Hidden, obviously. Buried for centuries. You won't find it on a map.”

“No… but if you buried the most dangerous thing in the universe,” he started, scanning over the landmarks, “you'd want to remember where you put it.”

They raced on horseback towards the Stonehenge.

As soon as they dismounted The Doctor and River Song (who’d changed back into normal clothes) began scanning the stones with the sonic and the communicator respectively, while Amy furrowed her brow at the already aged stones. “How come it’s not new?” She asked Rose.

“Because it's already old. It's been here thousands of years. No one knows exactly how long.” Rose answered easily, taking a few steps forward until she stood in the middle of the structure. Time was moving differently there… like it was circling the place somehow.

Her husband heard that and ran his finger down the nearest stone before bringing it to his mouth to taste. “Oh… 3000 BC at least- earlier probably.” He said casually before scanning another with the sonic.

Rose looked over to Amy and River with a significant look. “He thinks he’s so impressive.” She said, shaking her head.

The Doctor made a clicking noise with his tongue at that and sent Rose a cheeky wink. She rolled her eyes, but couldn’t help but smirk at his antics. Amy laughed indulgently, and River took the opportunity to wander over to The Doctor.

“So where’s Rory?” She asked, not meaning for it to be such an earth-shattering question. Figuring maybe he was just… off visiting his parents or something. Perhaps Martha and Mickey needed a
babysitter.

The Doctor sucked in his breath anyway though, fumbling with his sonic and dropping it into the grass. “How do you know that name?” He demanded quietly, once he’d recovered, looking wildly over his shoulder to Amy and Rose before taking River’s arm and dragging them further away from the pair.

River squinted at him, and had to bite her tongue to keep from saying the obvious answer. “He’s your friend… Amy’s husband-”

“He’s been erased from history.” The Doctor interrupted her, scanning her eyes wildly.

To his surprise she snorted at the information. “Well I know that isn’t true.”

It was his turn to squint at her now. “How could you know that?” He’d been willing to accept the idea that her brief stints at time travel kept her immune, that the future didn’t have her and Rory meet until much later in her timeline, but the easy confidence in which she said that...

Again, River held back the impulse to gesture down to herself in obvious indication of her own existence. “I saw him last week.” She said instead, raising her eyebrow at the Time Lord.

The Doctor’s hands came up to run through his hair as the puzzle pieces didn’t fit together. “That doesn’t make any sense. I saw him get absorbed into the crack in space and time. Amy doesn’t remember him. Rose doesn’t remember him.”

River pulled her chin back at that. “Rose doesn’t remember him?” She repeated incredulously. “You mean the literal time goddess over there? -Well there’s your first clue.”

He shook his head. “Bad Wolf locked the memories.”

River stared up him. “She was Bad Wolf when he was absorbed as well? Are you really daft enough to think she wouldn’t do anything? Or does the name Jack Harkness mean nothing to you?”

The Doctor straightened up at that, looking down to the young girl curiously. “How do you know so much?” He asked her, not for the first time.

River’s eyes widened as she realised she’d said entirely too much in the shock of him thinking Rory was not only dead, but erased, and her hand flung to her too-quick lips. “No, no, no. I’ve said too much.” She muttered, making to turn on her heel. “I don’t even know why I’m still here I should get back home-”

“Melody.” The Doctor said seriously interrupting her ramble and making her stop dead in her tracks. She spun back around slowly. “That is your real name isn’t it? Melody?”

She shook her head vehemently. “Don’t call me that.” She said, some precarious place between begging and demanding.

The Doctor tilted his head and spoke quietly. “Why not? Why do you use the fake name, Melody?”

She shook her head more vehemently though. “Because you say it wrong.” She muttered, and it sounded close to miserable. “You don’t know me yet. You can’t- You aren’t-” She huffed and shrugged helplessly. “You say it wrong.” The Doctor didn’t know how to respond to that.

Sometimes it was easy to forget just how young she was when she always acted so brave. The pleading, helpless, miserable green eyes she was giving him right now was a sharp reminder of her age. She looked over her shoulder through his silence. “Just don’t- don’t tell Amy alright?”
He caught the automatic ‘why’ before it could come out and just nodded solemnly in promise.

She gave a sort of half-smile in return, and looked down to her communicator as it beeped for her attention. She squinted down at the readings. “I’m picking up fry particles everywhere.” She told him, loud enough to gain the other women’s attentions back, making small circle as she did. “Energy weapons were discharged on this site.”

He ran over to jump onto the center stone at that. “If the Pandorica is here, it contains the mightiest warrior in history.” He told them, spinning around. “Now, half the galaxy would want a piece of that. Maybe even fight over it.” He went on, eyes searching the monument for obvious answers.

“So we need to get down there then.” Rose said, nodding to the stone The Doctor was currently using as his stage.

He grinned down at her in response.

They ended up having to make a trip back to camp to grab the light kits and force-weights from the TARDIS, and so night had already fallen by the time the devices were being placed on the trap door.

With their faces illuminated ominously by the ring of fluorescents placed around the perimeter, they stood over the stone as it slid slowly out of place to reveal the carved stairs leading down into the unlit tomb-like structure.

“The Underhenge.” The Doctor whispered, stepping over to the steep edge, before pulling out his screwdriver and leading them all below the earth.

At the bottom of the stairs a narrow slanting of rocks opened up to a small stone room- two large dungeon doors blocking them from the rest of the underground chamber. The Doctor lit a nearby wall-torch with the sonic and pulled it out of its holster, Rose following suit on the other side. When they came to either side of the doors he placed his lit torch to her empty one, smirking when it successfully caught fire as well. She nodded to him, so he placed his palm on the underside of the wooden plank holding the two doors together and forced the ancient thing away from the metal hooks it had rested in for millenia. It came out angrily with a loud crash to the ground- sending dust and cobwebs flying in its wake.

They both rested their shoulder against the doors, smirking to each other and grinning over to the young girls in their charge, before finally pushing the old hinges forward and leading them further into the Underhenge.

The Doctor let out a long breath as they took in the massive metal box sat in the center of the room. “It’s a Pandorica…” He breathed, eyes tracing the intricate geared lock inlaid into four sides of the six sided prison.

“More than just a fairytale…” River let out behind them, eyes wide.

Rose took a few hesitant steps forward, but looked down as her foot ran into something metal. “Looks like we aren’t the first ones here.” She said nervously, sending her husband an anxious look as before her sat the severed arm of a Cyberman.

He furrowed his brow at the discovery, but was kept from debating the implications when Amy spoke up. “So what is it then? The Pandorica?” She asked them. “What’s the story?”
At that, The Doctor took the few remaining steps toward the box slowly, and reverently placed his hand against the cool metal. “There was a goblin, or a trickster, or a warrior.” He started. “A nameless, terrible thing, soaked in the blood of a billion galaxies... The most feared being in all the cosmos. And nothing could stop it, or hold it, or reason with it. One day it would just drop out of the sky and tear down your world.” He retold the story quietly as he took in the box disbelievingly, running his fingers delicately along the lock.

“How did it end up in there?” Amy asked, her voice a mixture of awe and fright.

“Oh, you know fairytales…” The Doctor smirked. “A good wizard tricked it.”

River rolled her eyes and huffed. “I hate good wizards in fairytales,” she said, looking over to Amy. “They always turn out to be him.” She shook her head and stepped forwards to start running tests on the box with her communicator.

Amy’s eyes brightened at the story though. “So, it's kind of like Pandora's Box, then?” She said. “Almost the same name.”

The Doctor was placing the torch in the nearby holder. “Sorry, what?” He asked, not particularly familiar with human children’s stories.

“The story. Pandora’s Box,” Amy clarified, walking backwards, “with all the worst things in the world in it. That was my favourite book when I was a kid.” She smiled over to them, but her face fell when she saw the way the alien couple was looking at her.

He walked over to her, studying her. “Your favourite school topic, your favourite story…” He rocked onto the balls of his feet. “Never ignore a coincidence…” He said, but then immediately spun back to the box in contradiction to the statement. “Unless you’re busy- in which case, always ignore a coincidence.”

Rose huffed and patted Amy on the arm consolingly, trying to mask the worry she was sure was in her eyes. Things weren’t making sense here. The longer they were here the more her head ached with the slow ominous build of time’s song.

Meanwhile, the two geniuses in the room entered a familiar back-and-forth of information. “So can you open it?” River asked.

“Easily.” The Doctor answered, pressing his ear against metal. “Anyone can break in to a prison... But I’d rather know what I’m going to find first.” He said, glancing over to her.

River tilted her head in agreement and her eyes scanned her communicator. “You don’t have to wait long.” She informed him. “It's already opening. There are layers and layers of security protocols in there, and they're being disabled one by one. --Like it's being unlocked from the inside.”

“How long do we have?”

“Hours at the most.”

“What kind of security?” He went on, and Rose realised he was quizzing her.

“Everything.” River said, shaking her head, but missing the irony. “Deadlocks, time stops, matter lines.”

The Doctor looked up at the prison as she said it all, letting out a low whistle. “What could need all
River raised her light-colored brows. “What could get past all that?” She offered back.

“Think of the fear that went into making this box.” He whispered reverently, pointing at the young girl and running the sonic down the prison’s edge. “What could inspire that level of fear?” He pondered quietly, pressing himself against its walls again. “Hello, you… have we met?”

“So why would it start to open now?” River asked, poking her head around so that she could see him again.

“No idea.” He answered honestly.

Amy cleared her throat, getting both of them to look over to her and Rose who’d been standing there watching them with amused smirks. “And how could Vincent have known about it?” She added. “He won't even be born for centuries.”

The Doctor started sonicing the large beams of stone around them at that. “The stones. These stones are great big transmitters, broadcasting a warning to everyone, everywhere, to every time zone. The Pandorica is opening.” He explained quickly as he waltzed around the chamber scanning and reading.

“Everyone? Everywhere?” Rose asked, but was ignored save for a small worried glance from River.

“Even poor Vincent heard it, in his dreams.” He went on. “But what's in there? What could justify all this?”

Rose could feel the timelines buzzing around her and projected the feeling onto her husband. “Doctor, everyone?” She repeated.

He turned to her, scanning her eyes frantically as he spoke. “Anything that powerful, I'd know about it. Why don't I know?”

Their eyes searched each others for a beat. “Who else is coming?” She whispered.

The Doctor stumbled back a step as it hit him. “Oh,” he let out.

Amy shook her head, watching him look around. “Oh? Oh, what?”

“Oh…” River whispered. “If it is basically a transmitter, we should be able to fold back the signal.” She offered, going over to the large stone beam to place her communicator against it. The Doctor immediately started scanning all the transmitters to send over to her advice.

“Stonehenge is transmitting. It's been transmitting for a while.” River mumbled, partly to herself, partly for Amy’s benefit. “So who heard?”

“Okay,” The Doctor said, clicking the screwdriver shut. “Should be feeding back to you now. River, what's out there?

“Give me a moment…” She said, sotto voce, as he eyes flitted over the results, she sucked in a sharp breath as she realised- “There are at least 10,000 starships out there Gramps.” She said, shaking her head and looking up to him and Rose.

“At least?” Amy asked incredulously.
River huffed and pushed her bangs out of her eyes. “Ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million—” She ranted, fear increasing with each figure uttered. “I don't know. There's too many readings.

“What kind of starships?” The Doctor asked, but his question was answered immediately by the alien voices coming through the now-live transmissions.

“Maintaining Orbit.” The grating metallic sound of a Dalek reverberated.

The Doctor froze, wide-eyed and breathing stilted as the Daleks continued giving and following orders. The processed, horrific voices circling him as they circled the Earth.

“Doctor, those are Daleks.” Amy whispered, as if it needed to be said. Alarm laced every word and her eyes betrayed her every fear.

Distantly, he felt Rose’s hand come to rest on his arm—grounding him. “Yes.” He breathed eventually. “Okay, okay, okay. Dalek fleet, minimum twelve thousand battleships, armed to the teeth.” He repeated, tossing his screwdriver from one hand to the other anxiously. “Ah!” He spun around, “but we've got surprise on our side. They'll never expect four people to attack twelve thousand Dalek battleships—” He caught himself “—because we'd be killed instantly… So it would be a fairly short surprise.” He flipped the sonic and hit his head with it in frustration. “Forget surprise.” He rambled off to no avail and turned to Rose miserably.

Rose opened her mouth to reply, not really sure what she was going to say, when another synthetic voice added itself to the Daleks.

“Cyberships…” River breathed, putting Rose’s thoughts to voice.

“No, Dalek ships. Listen to them. Those are Dalek ships.” He argued, too distracted by the sounds of his greatest enemy to have heard anything else.

“Yes- Dalek ships and Cyberships.” She answered, eyes flying over the reading as she pressed herself against the transmit stone.

“Well, we need to start a fight, turn them on each other. I mean, that's easy. We've done it before.” He ranted quickly, turning to look to Rose as he remembered that dark day. “It's the Daleks. They're so cross.” He said, trying to sound hopeful but it came out as frantic.

“Sontauran. Four battleships.” River added.

“Sontaurans!” The Doctor yelled, sounding mad. “Talk about cross! --Who stole their handbags?”

“Terileptil. Slitheen, Chelonian, Nestene, Drahvin. Sycorax, Haemogoth, Zygon, Atraxi, Draconian…” River listed them off quickly as the reading came in.

The Doctor took a step back with the call of every enemy race that ever hated him- the loud Dalek voices suffocating him as he looked wide-eyed and desperate to the stairs.

“They’re all here for the Pandorica…” Rose muttered, and he spun around to look at the box in question.

“What are you?” He whispered. “What could you possibly be?”

They wasted two more second staring at the prison in horrified wonder before they all took off towards the stairs leading to the surface. The looked up to the sky that should have been full of stars- but instead found the thousands of battleships lights whizzing and buzzing around over their
“What do we do now?” Amy asked miserably as her eyes followed the ships.

“Doctor, Rose, listen to me.” River started frantically, turning to them. “Everything that ever hated you is coming here tonight. You can't win this. You can't even fight it. Please, this once, just this one time, please, you have to run.” She begged them, with that familiar tone- like she was protecting more than just their lives. She was protecting their futures- her past.

The Doctor didn’t take his eyes off the sky. “Run where?” He asked incredulously.

“Fight how?” She shot back.

At that, an idea struck. Both of them thinking so quickly they couldn’t be sure whose it was. “The greatest military machine in the history of the universe…” Rose breathed, as her eyes met her husbands.

“What is? The Daleks?” Amy asked, looking between them.

“No. No, no, no, no, no…” The Doctor replied, already pacing as the gears began to turn. He grinned over to the two young girls behind them. “The Romans!”

Rose ran over to River and took her hand. “Alright, you’re with me.” She told her.

“But where are we going? I don’t understand.” She said, shaking her head confusedly as Rose pulled her to their horses, The Doctor and Amy hot on their heels.

“A goddess and an empress?” Rose smirked over her shoulder. “I think we could manage to build up an army of our own- what do you think?” She said cheekily, winking as she mounted the horse.

The Doctor placed a hand to her knee before she could pivot the horse around. “Please, be careful.” He implored her, biting back the impulse to beg her to stay. Time energy was pulsing around her now- the tipping point drawing nearer. In a few minutes the humans would even be able to see her glow.

Rose took his hand and held it firmly. “You too.” She said, and then looked over to River. She nodded, and without another word they both took off towards the legion.

The Commander’s men pulled them into his tent as soon as their feet hit camp.

“I return home to find out we’ve been playing host to Minerva- ” He sneered the goddess’s name, clearly an atheist, “-and the Empress Pompeia- who is in Rome. ” He glared daggers down at the girls.

“Yes…” River started awkwardly. “Funny how things work out.”

Overhead a starship flew close to the tent, blowing the tapestries as a mechanical whirr filled their ears. The Commander’s eyes pierced the young girl’s. “The sky is falling, and you make jokes!”

He yelled angrily, and River pulled her chin back.

Rose tilted her head at the man. “When you fight Barbarians, what must they think of you?” She asked.

“Oh, riddles now.” He said indignantly.
“Where do they think you come from?” She pressed.

He rolled his eyes and stepped closer to the shorter woman, looking down on her. “A place more deadly and more powerful and more impatient than their tiny minds can imagine.” He growled as he puffed his chest out importantly.

Rose smirked as she felt her vision turn gold, making the Commander stutter and fall back a few steps in fear—effectively giving Rose the chance to tower over him despite her stature. “You've been a soldier too long to believe there are gods watching over us.” She said wisely, eyes glowing with the light of time. He swallowed—convinced she was a goddess come to smite him for his disbelief. “There is, however, me.” She went on, allowing the voice of time to penetrate her words. “And right now, I need your help.”

The Commander opened and closed his mouth a few times in an effort to find a reply—a voice. At the tent’s entrance a centurion cleared his throat. Rose blinked away the timelines as the commander turned to have a hushed conversation, but she could still feel the faint golden glow coming through her skin now.

Back in the Pandorica Chamber Amy went about the room lighting all the torches. “So…” She said as she slid the last one back into its holder. “What’s all this got to do with the TARDIS?”

The Doctor glanced over to her from where he was using a small device to analyse the box. “Nothing, as far as I know.” He evaded.

“But Vincent’s painting.” Amy pressed. “The TARDIS was exploding. Is that going to happen?”

“One problem at a time, Pond.” He said, not looking up this time. “There's forcefield technology inside this box. If I can enhance the signal, I could extend it all over Stonehenge. Could buy us half an hour.” He rambled off.

Amy squinted at that. “What good is half an hour?”

“There are fruit flies that live on Hoppledom Six that live for twenty minutes, and they don't even mate for life.” He told her, and Amy raised her eyebrows, waiting for the conclusion. He squinted at the box as his own words caught up with him. “There was going to be a point to that.” He mumbled. “I’ll get back to you.”

Amy sighed and walked over to him, leaning heavily against the Pandorica until finally he looked up her. “All of time and space, everything that ever was, or ever will be…” She started, quoting the first words he ever said to her on the TARDIS. “Why me?” She asked.

His brow furrowed as he processed that, taking her in. “Amelia Pond…” He breathed. “The girl who waited. The girl with the fairytale name in the the too-big house with too-many empty rooms.” He said, almost like he was writing the blurb to a children’s book. He tilted his head and looked at her deeply. “Does it ever bother you, Amy, that your life doesn’t make any sense?”

Amy’s breath caught in her throat.

And then the laser shot past her ear.

She let out a terrified scream as the energy blasts continued shooting haphazardly about the chamber, her and The Doctor running around to the other side of the Pandorica—breathing heavily as they hid from whatever it was firing at them so poorly but heavily.
“What was that?” Amy demanded.

“Okay, I need a proper look.” He half-answered. “Got to draw its fire. Give it a target.”

“How?”

He looked over to her. “You know how sometimes I have really brilliant ideas?”

“Yeah?”

He winced. “Sorry.” And sent the word to his wife as well before jumping out from around the Pandorica. “Look at me I’m a target!” He yelled, hands in the air, and the laser started firing again—just narrowly missing him as he dove back behind a sarsen.

Amy squealed from her place at the Pandorica. “What was that?” She demanded again, half for her original question, half in incredulous indignation for his actions. Little unbeknownst to her Rose was yelling the same thing in his head.

‘Sorry, love. All good though. Just getting attacked. Fill you in in a mo’ He looked over to Amy and then up in order to recall what he’d seen. “Cyberarm. Arm of a Cyberman.” He told her.

“And what's a Cyberman?”

“Oh, sort of part man, part robot.” He explained vaguely. “The organic part must have died out years ago. Now the robot part is looking for, well…” He tilted his head “fresh meat.”

“What, us?”

“Yeah, it's just like being an organ donor- except you're alive and sort of… screaming.” He huffed and peeked around the corner of the sarsen before looking back up to her. “I need to get round behind it. Could you draw its fire?”

“What, like you did?” She asked incredulously.

“You'll be fine if you're quick. It's only got one arm—literally.” He assured her quickly, grinning and throwing her a double thumbs up.

Amy huffed and repeated the motion—though with an exceptionally more terrified expression, yelling as she ran around the other side of the Pandorica and to the next sarsen over. The Doctor pouncing on the arm just as she ducked around the corner—a beam just nearly missing her leg.

On the floor he ran the sonic over the arm quickly. Amy took a hesitant step forward. “Doctor?”

“Scrambling its circuits.” He explained and then looked up to see she’d come forward. “But stay where you are! It could be bluffing!” He ordered, still using the sonic.

“Bluffing?” She argued, taking another step forward. “It’s an arm.”

“I said stay where you are!” He yelled, reprimanding, and Amy huffed, backing up behind the stone and crossing her arms in front of her.

Moments later she felt something crawling up her leg. She looked down, prepared to shoo away a spider, but instead was met with wires winding their way around her booted ankle. “Doctor—” she started, but was cut off by her own scream as the wires pulled her to the floor.

“Amy!” He yelled, standing up and moving to help her, but then the arm in his hand delivered a
powerful electric shock—stopping his hearts and sending him crashing back to the dirt unconscious.

The robot—Cyberman—head the wires are attached to crawled its way towards Amy. She yelled and grabbed at its ear-bar-things to hold it back—it’s wires winding up her arms and snapping sparks at her as she struggled to stand back up.

Then the head stopped suddenly, and started making a sort of fizzing noise—a bright red line coming down the center of the helmet, cutting it in two.

The two panels popped open to reveal a decaying human skull—a dried layer of skin and chunks of rotting flesh still clinging to the bone.

Amy screamed and the skull tumbled out. The helmet now snapping open and closed as it moved closer to her face.

She managed to turn and start slamming the Cyberhead in the stone—throwing it to the ground as soon as the grips it has on her arms loosened. It started scurrying creepily along the cavern floor again. “Doctor?” She called, but he was still indisposed. The head shoots something at her, and she feels a sharp pain in her neck. She reached up to pull out the projectile, and finds a small dart between her fingers.

The edges of her vision begin to blur.

“You Will Be Assimilated.” The robotic voice threatened emotionlessly.

Amy blinked around the spinning. “Yeah? You and whose body?” She shot back.

Wrong question to ask though, apparently, because as soon as she did loud metal footsteps started ringing through the chamber. She looked up to see a headless, single-armed robot body coming towards her. It stopped and picked up the head—reattaching it. “You Will Be Assimilated.” It repeated, walking towards her—single arm outstretched.

Amy backed up, looking around wildly for a weapon as the room tilted. She grabbed the torch and started waving it in front of her—the Cyberman going in and out of focus as her head swam. Before she knew what was happening she slammed into some decidedly not-solid wall, and tumbled through the doors into a small dungeon, the doors slammed shut behind her in the face of the Cyberman.

“Doctor!” Amy yelled, pressing herself up against the far wall as the door rattled.

And then it stopped.

She squinted and took a few hesitant, wobbly steps forward to lean against the door. “Doctor?”

And then a Roman short sword pierced the wood— inches from her face. Amy screamed as the door swung back open to reveal the Cyberman hung lifelessly on the door—and the centurion who’d put it there.

The Roman’s face went in and out of focus and Amy squinted through the haze, blinking slowly. “Who… who are you?” She breathed, trying to place the blurry but familiar features.

The centurion took his helmet off. “Hello, Amy.” He said and that voice… that voice…

Amy’s eyes rolled to the back of her head and her legs gave out from under her.
Rose stopped dead in her tracks as she stepped out of the Commander’s tent to find a familiar face staring back at her.

Rory Williams.

How had she forgotten him?

He was dressed as a centurion.

Next to her, River’s hand fell to her heart. “Oh thank the gods, you aren’t dead. The Doctor had managed to convince me I was living on borrowed time in a temporal bubble.” She muttered, forgetting to worry about who could hear her. She flung her arms around the centurion. “What the hell are you doing in 102 AD?” She asked, pulling back, seemingly unaffected by the unreturned hug. “And why the hell are you wearing that?”

Rory squinted at the strange young girl he’d only met once before, and looked back up to the more appropriately gobsmacked expression on Rose. “How… how…” She stuttered, unable to pick just one of the hundreds of questions.

“You’re glowing.” He said, instead of trying to offer explanations he had hoped she’d have.

“I do that.” She answered back quickly, still not blinking as she stared at him- all the memories she’d locked away flooding back… right up until the end. What had happened?

“I’d managed to convince myself you were a dream.” He told her.

Rose shook her head, the unexplainable weight that had been on her chest finally releasing its hold on her.

River rolled her eyes as she looked in between them. “Um… guys? I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but we sort of have an army to build here.”

Rose blinked, and finally managed to unstick her feet- stumbling forward to wrap her arms around Rory. “I’m so sorry.” She whispered, tightening her embrace.

Rory nodded and hugged her back, then finally they turned back to River. “Alright… let’s do this.” He said determinedly, and overhead another starship rushed past.

They spent the next half hour recruiting soldiers to guard the Pandorica. Well, Rose did anyway. Rory and River sort of just hung back and watched as her golden complexion and goddess-like features had the men following her without question. But in the end only having enough time to gather around a hundred and fifty men.

They were making their way back towards Stonehenge when she heard it. That single dreaded word.

‘Sorry.’

She stopped dead in tracks, pulling on her horse’s reins and dropping her heels, allowing the Romans to go on around her. She focused fully on the bond and watched as her husband jumped in front of firing energy weapon- proclaiming himself to be a target. Her heart stopped.

‘What was that?’ She bit out, once he was back to safety, heart rate picking up again.
‘Sorry, love. All good though. Just getting attacked. Fill you in in a mo’ He answered and Rose huffed, keeping her eyes closed as she watched the incredibly dangerous and annoying proceedings- aware of Rory’s and River’s eyes on her as she did.

She screamed and grabbed at her temples as The Doctor was knocked unconscious.

“Rose!” Rory and River both called out.

She turned to Rory frantically, eyes glowing brighter than ever. “Go!” She yelled. “Help them!”

Rory nodded frantically, and without further question clicked his tongue and snapped his heels into the horse’s sides- sending him into a dead-run down the hill towards Stonehenge. The Doctor was in trouble. And that meant so was Amy.

Rose and River stayed at the top of the hill- watching as the monument was surrounded by Romans on foot and aliens by air.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa.” Rory let out, running forward to catch Amy as she fell, ending in carrying her bridal style over to the nearby table.

“Sir, the man’s coming round.” One of his men said behind him, just as he laid her down.

“Amy!” The Doctor yelled, right on cue. “Amy? Where’s Amy?” He came bursting into the small room.

“She’s fine, Doctor.” Rory answered. “Just unconscious.”

The Doctor pushed Rory aside without looking at him, pulling out his sonic to scan Amy quickly. “Okay. Yes, she’s sedated, that’s all. Half an hour, she’ll be fine.” He breathed, and then paused long enough for Rory to gather he was probably talking to Rose. He turned on his heel suddenly though, clapping his hands together. “Okay, Romans. Good. I was just wishing for Romans!” He exclaimed. “How many?”

The Doctor had looked at him now, but apparently his mind was too scattered to notice. Rory huffed. “About a hundred men up top- volunteers.” He answered, and then pointed to the out-of-commission Cyberman still pinned to the door. “What about that thing?”

“A hundred?” He repeated. “Not exactly a legion.”

The soldier looked to Rory for permission to exit and he nodded. “Your wife probably could have managed to get the whole camp… but we were sort of on a clock.” He answered.

“Yes, I know that, Rory!” He shot back sarcastically. “I’m not exactly one to miss the obvious.”

Rory squinted at the use of his name and the irony, but still The Doctor hadn’t processed it.

“Ohkay,” he went on, stepping back to pull the massive guns collecting dust in the rock and hold them up. “Cyberweapons. This is basically a sentry box, so headless wonder here was a sentry. Probably got himself duffed up by the locals. Never underestimate a Celt.” He spoke quickly, still toting the guns and gesturing casually with them.

“Doctor-” Rory started.

“Hush, Rory, thinking.” He interrupted him. Still not getting it. “Why leave a Cyberman on guard,
unless it's a Cyberthing in the box. But why would they lock up one of their own? Okay, no, not a Cyberthing, but what?” He rambled and spun around until he was up in Rory’s face. “What? No, I'm missing something obvious, Rory. Something big. Something right slap in front of me. I can feel it.”

“Yeah, I think you probably are.” Rory answered dryly.

“I’ll get it in a minute.” He huffed, and pivoted back around, tossing the Cyberweapons onto his shoulder as he walked off.

A beat.

The weapons crash to the floor. Rory nods.

Another beat.

The Doctor poked his head back around the door, stepping slowly towards him. Finally the expression Rose had graces his features. He walked back up until they were face to face. He pokes him.

Rory rocks back onto his heels and forward again.

“Hello again.” The Doctor said quietly.

“Hello.”

The Doctor shoved his hands in his pockets and looked away. “How’ve you been?” He asked awkwardly.

“Good. Yeah. Good.” Rory answered haltingly, and then tilted his head. “I mean… Roman.”

“Rory,” The Doctor let out, turning towards him again and rocking a bit. “I’m not trying to be rude,” he starts, and Rory imagines the line is more for Rose’s benefit than his own, “-but you died.”

Rory nodded. “Yeah… I know… I was there.”

“You died and then you were erased from time. You didn't just die, you were never born at all. You never existed.” The Doctor went on, shaking his figure at him. “How can you be here?” He asked incredulously.

Rory opened and closed his mouth a few times. That’s the question he’d been asking himself for weeks and the whole time he’d though The Doctor and Rose would know- but apparently not. “I don't know. It’s kind of fuzzy.” He answered eventually.

“Fuzzy?” The Doctor repeated, squinting at him.

“Well, I died and turned into a Roman. It's very distracting.” He said dryly, and then stepped back up to Amy, running his finger through her hair. “Did she miss me?” He asked quietly.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels, but was saved from having to answer as the ground started shaking. They ran back into the Pandorica Chamber.

The gears on the outside of the prison were glowing now- an eerie green light illuminating the circular cogs as they moved about and clicked together like puzzle pieces.
“What is it? What’s happening?” Rory asked.

“The final phase.” The Doctor breathed, pressing himself against the box and running his fingers along the lock. “It’s opening.”

The ships were descending now. Whirring closer and closer towards the Pandorica. ‘You’re surrounded.’ Rose informed her husband from where she and River sat upon their horses on the hill that overlooked Salisbury Plain. Timelines were swirling around her in a passion now, but still she had her own head.

Next to her River spoke up finally. “We should probably get back to the TARDIS. They’ll need equipment.”

Rose let out a long breath. That didn’t feel right. She needed to go back to the TARDIS, but not with River. Somehow, the girl would be safer at Stonehenge surrounded by Daleks than with her in the TARDIS. Nothing about the thought sounded right, but deep down she knew it was true. “I’ll go.” She finally said. “You go help The Doctor. He needs all the help that he can get right now.”

River squinted at her. “What about you?”

Rose smirked, but didn’t answer, instead turning her horse 180 degrees and cantering off before the young girl could have the chance to even consider following.

River huffed and took off towards Stonehenge.

She reached the monument just as Rory was rushing up the stairs. The battleships were rushing around above them, bleeping and dinging, flashing lights and being altogether threatening and rather annoying. Eyes wide, she dismounted and a static hum went up followed by a screech of feedback.

“Sorry, sorry, dropped it.” The Doctor’s voice rung out. River watched him emerge from the Underhenge, her communicator in hand, now apparently being used a microphone through the Stonehenge transmissions.

“Hello, Stonehenge!” He yelled out- like at a rock concert, his head still just one of many in a sea of soldiers.” Who takes the Pandorica, takes the universe…” He went on, “But bad news, everyone…” Suddenly, he jumped up on the center stone, grinning madly. “Because guess who! Ha!”

All the human heads turned towards him, but the aliens continued in their loud circling, making The Doctor spin around annoyed.

“Listen, you lot, you're all whizzing about. It's really very distracting. Could you all just stay still a minute because- I AM TALKING!” He yelled the last bit angrily, ringing out over the field, and immediately all the ships came to a halt- their lights shining down on him and only him.

He grinned madly. “Right, the question of the hour is, who's got the Pandorica? Answer, I do. Next question… Who's coming to take it from me?” He raised his eyebrows and paused, holding his arms out wide and turning in a small circle to give the ships a significant look. “Come on! Look at me! No plan, no backup, no weapons worth a damn…” He told them, then let out a long breath. “Oh, and something else. I don't have anything to lose! ” He yelled wildly.
River sucked in a breath and looked behind her at that. *What happened to Rose?*

“So,” The Doctor went on. “If you're sitting up there in your silly little spaceship, with all your silly little guns, and you've got any plans on taking the Pandorica tonight, just remember who's standing in your way.” He glared up at the battleships and The Oncoming Storm brewed just behind his eyes. “Remember every black day I ever stopped you- and then, *and then*…” He paused, challenging them. “Do the smart thing. *Let somebody else try first.*”

River and the Romans watched with bated breath as at that line every single starship in the sky turned out its lights and flew further up into the atmosphere.

Rory blew out a loud, impressed, breath and next to him River nodded- her chest tight. The Doctor looked down to them significantly and tossed the communicator back to River. “That'll keep them squabbling for half an hour.” He said casually, and then disappeared back to the Underhenge.

“The Gods have come to use our world as their battlegrounds.” A Roman soldier muttered next to River.

She could understand the confusion.

The timelines swirled around Rose now like a tornado; sparking and twisting, forming and fading. Everything was tunnel vision now- Bad Wolf directing her thoughts and actions. She attempted to talk to The Doctor but she could only communicate emotions now- not words.

Rose sighed and closed her eyes, focusing inwards; seconds later the TARDIS dematerialised.

“Is Rose okay?” River asked The Doctor as she ran down the stairs, Rory hot on her heels.

He turned around at. “Yes, just… busy.” He answered vaguely, and she could see the worry in his eyes but it wasn’t outright mad fear yet- so she counted that as a plus.

Behind her, Rory took a step forward. “They’re still out there.” He told The Doctor. “What do we do now?”

The Doctor jabbed his thumb over his shoulder to the Pandorica. “If I can stop whatever’s in this box getting out then they’ll go home.” He said, and secretly River thought that sounded a bit hopeful. The Doctor looked up as Amy stumbled into the chamber, holding her head. “Rory, I’m sorry. But you’re going to have to be very brave now.” He muttered.

Amy walked right past Rory. “Ow, my head.” She pouted, going over to The Doctor.

The Doctor held her face and said “ah” getting her to roll her eyes and do the same so that he could look in her mouth. He chuckled and patted her cheek. “Just your basic knockout drops. Get some fresh air and you’ll be fine.” He told her on a laugh, squeezing her shoulder and turning back around to the box.

Rory looked over to River incredulously. She grimaced and tried her best to look supportive.

“Is it safe out there?” Amy asked to The Doctor’s back.

“Not remotely, but it’s fresh.”
“Fine.” Amy huffed, and turned around- running directly into Rory. She took a step back, surprised, but still no recognition graced her features. “Oh, you're the guy, yeah? The one who did the swordy thing.” She said, with a vague jabbing gesture.

Rory blinked. “Yeah.”

“Well thanks for the swording. Nice swording.” She mimed some more ‘swording’ moves and then patted Rory on the shoulder before walking past him to the stairs.

Rory stood there, shell-shocked and staring straight ahead of him. “No problem.” He muttered, and then spun around to call to her as she began heading up. “My men are up there! They’ll take care of you!” He added.

Amy waved behind her in understanding. “Good. Love a Roman.” She said, and ran up the remaining steps.

Rory turned on The Doctor. “She doesn’t remember me. How can she not remember me?” He demanded.

The Doctor sighed heavily. “I don’t know.” He answered honestly.

Rory shook his head. “What do you mean you don’t know?”

“I thought you were erased. You were supposed to be erased. You fell through the crack like the clerics. I watched all of Amy’s memories of you fade away. But then River remembered you-”

“-and Rose.” Rory interrupted him. “Rose remembered me.”

The Doctor squinted at him at that and looked over to River. “She- she didn’t.” River answered Rory, and then turned to The Doctor. “Her memories unlocked once she saw him back at the camp.”

All The Doctor wanted to do was talk to Rose now. If not only for answers but for just some semblance of okay-ness in this mess. But she was in the TARDIS, nearly completely Bad Wolf now. All she was is a warm but silent presence in his mind now. It was driving him mad. He shook his head and started thinking out loud. “There's going to be a huge explosion in the future, on one particular day. And every other moment in history is cracking around it.”


The Doctor huffed, mind landing on the painting from Vincent. “I don’t know, but-” He cut himself off. He didn't want to say it outloud. Saying it would make it real. “The cracks are everywhere now. Get too close and you’ll fall right out the universe.”

Rory squinted at him. “But I did. I fell through that crack in the cave, but then… I woke up here. A Roman soldier all the sudden, my head full of Roman… stuff.” He huffed. “A whole other life, just here like I'd woken up from a dream. I started to think it was a dream. You and Rose and Amy and Leadworth… And then today, in the camp, the men were talking about the visitors. The girl with the red hair. I thought you'd come back for me. But she can't even remember me!”

The Doctor stepped up to him at that. “If something can be remembered- it can come back.” He told him.

“But I don’t understand.” Rory pressed. “Why am I here?”
The Doctor shrugged. “Because you are.” He answered. “The universe is big. It’s vast and complicated and ridiculous, and sometimes, very rarely, impossible things just happen and we call them miracles... I’ve only seen a few in my nine hundred years, and all of them were Rose.” He shook his head, wondering at the enigma that was his wife. “Now get upstairs.” He ordered. “She’s Amy, and she's surrounded by Romans. –I’m not sure history can take it.”

He patted Rory on the shoulder, and he nodded determinedly. Turning on his heel to go chase after Amy.

“You think Rose did it?” River asked him as he turned back to the Pandorica.

“I think Rose had something to do with most of the wonderful things in this universe.” He answered vaguely, and began sonicing the prison.

The TARDIS landed in Amy’s back garden.

Rose walked out the doors, leaving little golden footprints of dust in her wake now, and checked on her time senses. The twenty-sixth of June, 2010. There were scorch marks on the ground. The front door was off its hinges.

She wandered through the too-big house with it’s too-many rooms, running her fingers along the wall and leaving a trail of time dust behind. She stepped into Amy’s room.

On the dresser little paper puppet versions of herself (covered in gold glitter) and The Doctor sat next to a paper craft of the TARDIS and a number of illustrated adventures Amy had thought up for them. Rose ran her fingers over the worn, curled paper sadly and felt her breath stutter in her chest as it tightened. “Oh, Amelia…” She whispered. “I’m so sorry.” And the words had the timelines spinning madly around her again.

Bad Wolf directed her vision to the the books. On top of the small stack two books were open. The Story of Roman Britain and The Legend of Pandora’s Box.

She gasped as the pieces fell together, and ran for the TARDIS.

Rose fell to her knees as soon as the TARDIS doors slammed shut behind her, sending them into the time vortex without thinking about it. She still couldn’t speak to The Doctor, but if she concentrated-

The Doctor yelled and grabbed at his head as he was suddenly flooded with an onslaught of images from the timelines currently circling Rose. He wasn’t meant to be able to see these. But she needed him to know-

In the cave as The Doctor struggled to pull Rose and Amy into the TARDIS. Just as the light from the explosion had nearly surrounded Rory, and was about to strangple him from existence, Rose’s eyes brightened and she took him back- sending him where he needed to go. Where The Doctor and Amy would need him to be.

Scorch marks -landing patterns- outside Amy’s house. The books in her room. The illustrations of the exact Romans standing a few feet away from The Doctor in the present. The cover depicting the Pandorica as Pandora’s box.
The Doctor gasped and forced his eyes back open.

Rory stepped up to Amy hesitantly. “You okay?” He asked.

Amy looked over to him and rolled her eyes. “Did the Doctor send you?” She asked exasperatedly. “I’m fine. He just fusses.”

Rory nodded and noticed she was now wrapped up against the cold. “You’ve got a blanket.” He mused out loud. “Good- that’s good. Who gave that to you?” He squinted.

“One of the fellas.” Amy answered boredly.

He looked out to the men, feeling jealous and protective. “Which one?”

Amy looked up him and shrugged. “Just one of them- does it matter?”

Rory shook his head and sat down next to her. “No- no. Forget him- it. Forget it.” He sputtered out awkwardly.

Amy smirked, feeling like she got it now. “What’s your name?” She asked.

The question made his chest hurt but he managed to answer anyway. “I’m Rory,” he told her.

And Amy sucked in a surprised breath as the memories came flooding back.

The Doctor was muttering madly to himself on the floor. “Rose- Rose. You have to get out of there. Please please get out. You have to run, Rose, run!” He yelled the last word but he knew even if Rose could hear him she wasn’t listening. She was Bad Wolf now.

“Doctor,” River begged from where she was crouched down next to him. “What is it? What’s happened?”

Amy ran in then, looking simultaneously angry and beyond happy as she dragged Rory along beside her. “Doctor! Why did I forget Rory? What happened?” She demanded, but stopped dead in her tracks when she saw him on his knees- pulling at his hair. “Doctor?” She asked more quietly.

The Doctor stood up shakily at her voice. “The Romans. They’re plastic.”

Rory looked down at his hands at that. “What? No I’m not.” He argued.

The Doctor’s hands were still shaking as he laid them against the Pandorica. “No. You aren’t. Rose saved you before you could be erased. Dropped you here because she knew we’d need you.” He said quietly.

River shivered as she watched him. That quiet madness. The storm raging behind his eyes. Her heart pounded in her chest as she worried what his demeanor meant about Rose. “Where is she?” She asked, voice small.

“Oh the TARDIS. It’s about to explode with her inside.” His voice shook.

Amy took a step forward, ready to console him, but before she could get a word out the chamber started shaking violently, making all of them buckle their knees as the stone quaked under their
feet, and behind them the plastic Romans entered robotically.

The Pandorica was opening.

“Run! Hide!” The Doctor ordered quickly, pushing River, Amy, and Rory toward the stairs. They were too confused and frightened to argue.

The Romans didn’t seem to care about the others. As the bright white light of the Pandorica filled the chamber, two of them grabbed The Doctor by the arms, hauling him backwards back to the prison.

“Plastic Romans.” He bit out, struggling against their hold with every step. “Duplicates, driven by the Nestene Consciousness, eh? Deep cover, but what for? What are you doing? What’s in there, eh? What’s coming out?” He asked every question but his captors just kept their heads forward-staring unseeingly towards the box.

They kept him around so that his back was to it. “The Pandorica is ready.” One of them announced emotionlessly.

He tried to look over his shoulder. “What, you mean it’s open?”


The Romans turned him so that he was facing his greatest enemy. “Scanned?” He huffed. “Scanned by what? A box?” He glanced over to the Pandorica but it was still just cracked, nothing visible through the bright light.

“Your Limits And Capabilities Have Been Extrapolated.” The Dalek Prime informed him.

More teleport beams fill the room. Cybermen, Jadoon, Sontarans…

“Ready for what?” He asked, looking around wildly as more and more of his enemies filled the room.

The Dalek Prime rolled forward menacingly. “Ready For You.” He said, and the light of the Pandorica cleared to reveal an empty chair.

As Amy, Rory, and River ran for the nearest stone to duck behind, another Roman came out of nowhere and grabbed Amy around the waist.

“No!” Rory yelled, spinning around and drawing his sword, River stopping dead behind him.

The Roman’s hand split in two to reveal an energy gun embedded in the plastic. Without ceremony, he buried it in her back and fired.

River and Rory stepped forward, “No!” they both screamed, but it was too late. Amy tumbled forward to the ground, and as River fell to her knees in front of her, Rory angrily sliced off the plastic head of the decoy Roman.

The Doctor struggled desperately against the Romans as they dragged him towards the prison.
They shoved him into the seat; the metal bars clamping down around his shoulders, legs, and wrists.

Breathing heavily, he could feel his wife burning inside his head. He looked around madly to the aliens surrounding him. Daleks, Cybermen, Jadoon, Sontaran, Terileptil, Slitheen, Chelonian, Nestene, Drahvin, Sycorax, Haemogorth, Zygon, Atraxi, Draconian… “You lot…” He breathed, “working together… an alliance– How is that possible?” He asked, not believing his own eyes.

“The Cracks In The Skin Of The Universe.” The Dalek Prime said.

“All reality is threatened.” The Sontaran captain finished.

“All universes will be deleted.” The Cyberleader clarified in its own species vocabulary.

The Doctor pulled his chin back at that. “What? And you've come to me for help?” He asked, hopeful despite being locked into the greatest prison in history.

“No.” The Sontaran yelled, like a battlecry. “We will save the universe from you!”

“From me?” He asked incredulously.

The Cyberleader stepped forward again. “All projections correlate. All evidence concurs. The Doctor will destroy the universe.”

The Doctor shook his head vehemently. “No, no, no! You've got it wrong!”

The Cyberleader ignored his protests “The Pandorica was constructed to ensure the safety of the Alliance.” He informed him.


The Doctor struggled against the restraints at that “No. no, no, not me! The TARDIS!” He yelled, and in his mind’s eye he could see the light of the timelines swirling around Rose as their ship hurtled through the vortex- burning a path of destruction through time as it went. “And I’m not in the TARDIS!” He argued, no matter how much he wished he was.

“Only The Doctor Can Pilot The TARDIS.” The Dalek said. And the statement was so wrong The Doctor couldn’t even begin to argue it. *Rose was already being erased.*

“Please, listen to me!” He begged desperately, attempting to sit forward. He just wanted to save his wife. The universe be damned.

The Dalek was, of course, unaffected by his pleading. “You Will Be Prevented.”

“Total event collapse! Every sun will supernova at every moment in history! The whole universe will never have existed!” He yelled frantically, trying to move his hands and legs but failing. He fell back against the seat and tried to keep from crying. “Please, listen to me!”

The Cyberleader took another step forward. “Seal the Pandorica.” He ordered, clenching his fist.

The Doctor continued begging and pleading more desperately as the walls began closing him into his eternal prison. Rose and the the TARDIS burned behind his eyes- *everything* he ever cared about, *everything* that ever mattered- burning. “No! Please, listen to me! The TARDIS is exploding...
right now and I'm the only one who can stop it! Please listen to me!” He screamed, but the walls sealed shut.

Rose stood, back turned from the console, time and space twisting around her and all through the TARDIS. She watched as Rory and River held Amy’s lifeless body while The Doctor was sealed inside the Pandorica.

She closed her eyes against the images, and the music crescendoed. “Run, my love.” She whispered, and behind her the heart of the TARDIS burst into flames.

Chapter End Notes

One more episode left in this season! MAJOR changes in store and some will be hinted at next chapter ;)

-- comments keep writers writing 💖
Amelia Pond knelt at the edge of the bed and clasped her hands together. “Dear Santa,” she began, “thank you for the dolls and the pencils and the fish. It's Easter now, so I hope I don't wake you, but, honest, it is an emergency.” She paused to glance over to the scary thing. “There's a crack in my wall. Aunt Sharon says it's just an ordinary crack, but I know it's not, because at night there's voices. So, please, please, could you send someone to fix it, or a policeman, or…”

The wind rattled the big old house that surrounding her. Squinting, Amelia stood up, running to the window to see if something had happened—she was sure something must have happened.

But when she pulled back the curtains there was nothing there.

Dr. Christine, Amelia’s third psychiatrist, smiled down at her painting. “It’s lovely Amelia,” she said, but then squinted and pointed to the yellow shapes surrounding the moon in the painted sky. “But what are all these?”

Amelia furrowed her brow. “Stars,” she answered simply, and jumped when her aunt let out an annoyed noise.

“Amelia!” She huffed, giving her an angry look.

Dr. Christine continued on smiling though. “Tell you what,” she started, “let’s go and have a look outside, shall we?”

Amelia nods, and so they all walk out to the back garden and look up at the night sky. “What do you see, Amelia?” Dr. Christine asked, as she held the girl’s shoulders.

Amelia shrugged. “Just the moon.”

“And what else?” The psychiatrist prompted.

She shook her head. “Nothing. Just… the darkness.”

“But no stars. If there were stars up there we’d be able to see them.” Dr. Christine concluded wisely, and then pulled Amelia around so she was facing her. “Amelia, look at me. You know this is all just a story, don’t you? You know there’s no such thing as stars?”

Amelia nodded, but still her gaze went back to the starless sky. Where had they gone? She was sure
she’d seen them before… in a dream or…

She tried to fall asleep later that night, but the crack in her wall was whispering to her again- telling her about the stars, and she could hear the sounds of the adults hushed conversation from downstairs. Sighing, Amelia stood up to creep along the stair rail, kneeling down just as Aunt Sharon and Dr. Christine were walking past.

“It's quite common, actually.” The psychiatrist was saying. “Throughout history, people have talked about seeing stars in the sky. God knows where it comes from.”

Aunt Sharon sighed. “I just don't want her growing up and joining one of those Star Cults. I don't trust that Richard Dawkins.”

Amelia rolled her eyes as the adults turned the corner without seeing her. It was hardly the first time Aunt Sharon had expressed her concern over Amelia joining a cult- star based or otherwise.

Just as they disappeared into the sitting room, the mail slot flapped open, and a small slip of paper landed on the doormat. Amelia saw a flash of a red hat run past, and she checked to make sure the adults were distracted before she ran down the remaining stairs to grab the mysterious piece of mail.

It was a brochure for the National Museum. Inside, the picture of the Pandorica was circled a number of times in red ink. Amelia furrowed her brow and flipped it over. On the back a arrow was pointing to the picture of the museum. “Come Along, Pond” It read, in swooping handwriting.

As couple of days later Amelia was finally able to convince her aunt to drive her to London.

“Come on, Aunt Sharon!” She huffed exasperatedly as, in her red wellies and toggle coat, she dragged her aunt through the museum- the older woman going much too slow.

“Oh, look at that!” Aunt Sharon said, attempting to pull them to a stop again to look at some fossils. “That's good isn't it?”

Amelia rolled her eyes and tugged her along. “Not that! This way!” She moaned.

“But we aren’t looking at anything!” Her aunt protested, trying to slow them down again. Amelia sighed and let go of her hand- taking off through the galleries towards the Pandorica.

She ignored the frantic calls of her name as she ran- pausing only briefly to stare at the stone impression of a sort of… massive pepperpot that looked familiar somehow. She looked over her shoulder as Aunt Sharon's calls came closer, and ran into the room housing the Pandorica.

She pushed through the crowd of people surrounding the box and stared at it- waiting for something to happen. She began to bring her drink up to her lips, but then it was snatched from her hand. Amelia turned around to angrily yell at whatever kid had decided to take her cup- but there's no one there. She turned back around slowly, and startled slightly when suddenly there’s a sticky note on the box. “Stick around, Pond” it said, in that same swooping writing in red.

Amelia reached up to grab the note, but then turned when she heard her name “Amelia!” He aunt was calling angrily. She winced and hurried out of the crowd, disappearing behind a mummy’s sarcophagus just as her aunt came in.
She spent the rest of the evening hopping from one exhibit to the next surrounding the Pandorica, keeping out of sight from her aunt and the one security guard that was helping look for her.

When finally night fell and the museum closed, she stumbled out of the tall grass surrounding the plastic penguins- knocking them over in the process. “Sorry.” She mumbled, and then looked up to the Pandorica, taking slow, hesitant steps towards the odd box she’d been summoned to.

She ducked under the rope and pulled the sticky note off, squinting from it to the box, before finally laying her hand against its side.

Loud metal clanking ensued and the box started slowing green, Amelia hopped back to the other side of the rope. Holding her breath as the box started opening.

A bright white light filled the room, shrinking her pupils as her eyes widened. When finally the light cleared, a young woman sat in front of her, red hair just like hers falling down around the locks keeping her tapped inside the box. “Okay kid,” the woman said, “this is where it gets complicated.”

[1,894 Years Previously… Salisbury Plain, 102 AD]

Rory was leant miserably against the stone, dried tears on his cheeks as Amy laid lifeless across his lap. Next to him, River sat silently staring up towards the starless sky. They’d watched it burn. For a second the sky was filled with fire, and then just as quickly- nothing. She had dirt in her hair and her knees were scraped- the epitome of a child in the middle of a war. Once they had both stopped crying, neither one of them spoke.

Finally though, Rory let out a long breath and pulled Amy’s hair back. “So the universe ended…” He started, getting River to look up as he spoke to the dead woman in his arms. “You missed that… in 102 AD. I suppose this means you and I never get born at all.”

River blew out a long breath. It meant a lot of things. Already she could feel her past fading. Her birthday, her best friend’s name, the street she grew up, her first pet… all security questions she should have known the answer to, but now only drawing a blank.

Rory huffed. “The Doctor said the universe was huge and ridiculous, and sometimes there were miracles… I could do with a ridiculous miracle about now.”

Right on cue The Doctor zapped into existence in front of them. He was wearing a fez and carrying a mop. “Rory! River! Listen, she's not dead. Well, she is dead, but it's not the end of the world. Well, it is the end of the world. Actually, it's the end of the universe.” He rambled and then caught sight of the mop he’d been flailing around. “Oh, no. Hang on.” He let out, and then hit some buttons on River’s vortex manipulator (how had he gotten that?) and disappeared again.

“Doctor? Doctor!” Rory yelled in the impending silence.

He popped up again though- sufficiently mopless. “You need to get me out of the Pandorica.” He said, pointing between the two of them with his screwdriver.

Rory shook his head. “But you aren’t in the Pandorica.”

“Yes, I am. Well, I'm not now, but I was back then. Well, back now from your point of view-
which is back then from my point of view. Time travel, you can't keep it straight in your head.” He
rambled some more at his grief stricken friends and then sighed. “It's easy to open from the
outside. Just point and press.” He tossed River the sonic. “Now go.” He ordered, and then zapped
away again.

A beat.

He came back. “Oh, and when you’re done, leave my screwdriver in her top pocket. Good luck!”
He added, and then disappeared again.

“What do you mean? Done what?” Rory yelled at the space where The Doctor had been, but he
didn’t come back this time.

River sighed and stood up. “Come on. You heard him. We need to get him out of the Pandorica.”
She dusted the dirt off her pants and started towards the entrance to the Underhenge. “Bring Amy,”
she added quietly over her shoulder.

In the Pandorica Chamber, the Romans and aliens had all either turned to stone or dust. Rory set
Amy down in the dirt in front of the Pandorica. “What are these?” He asked River, studying the
statue-like figures around them.

“Echos.” River answered, voice small. “After images of a collapsed history. Footprints of the
never-were.”

Rory stared at her back. “What does that mean?” He asked.

River blinked the tears from her eyes. “Total event collapse.” She whispered. “The universe
literally never happened.”

Rory shook his head. “So how can we be here, then? What’s keeping us safe?”

River let out a long breath, steeling herself before she turned back around to face him. “Nothing.
We’re just at the eye of the storm. We’re just the last to go.”

Rory swallowed at that, unable to find a response appropriate enough. River gave small nod and
turned towards the Pandorica, lifting the sonic up. “Just point and press, yeah?” She mumbled, and
then did just that, taking a step back as the box began to open, flooding the chamber with its light
once more.

The Doctor looked up to them, squinting, as the restraints unlocked from around him. “How did
you do that?” He asked incredulously, and if River saw his cheeks were tear-stained, she decided
not the mention it.

She held up the screwdriver. “You gave us this.”

He pulled the sonic from his pocket at that. “No, I didn’t.”

River smirked. “You did. Look at it.”

He finally sat up that, walking towards her. He held his own screwdriver out to the one she was
holding and electricity zapped between them- making them both jump back. “Temporal energy.
Same screwdriver at different points in its own time stream. Which means it was me who gave it to
you. Me from the future.” He explained quickly and then pulled his chin back at the last sentence.
“I’ve got a future! That’s nice!” His eyes landed on Amy then though. “That’s not.”
“She was shot.” Rory let out miserably. “I tried to stop him, but I wasn’t quick enough.”

The Doctor knelt down to Amy, and breathed a sigh of relief when he heard her heart beating. It was slow, maybe a single beat a minute, but it was there. Without a word he lifted her up and carried her towards the Pandorica, setting her up in the chair, River followed suit, putting the future sonic in her pocket.

“What are you doing?” Rory asked incredulously. “What’s happening? Have you got a plan?”

“Bit of a plan, yeah.” He mumbled, and held Amy’s head up. “Memories are more powerful than you think, and Amy Pond is not an ordinary girl…” He studied her face. “She grew up with a time crack in her wall. The universe pouring through her dreams every night…” He drifted off as he placed his finger at her temples, resting his thumbs against her cheekbones. “I’m leaving her a message for when she wakes up,” he whispered, “so she knows what’s happening.”

He took a step back and pulled his sonic out, sealing the prison around her. “Whoa, whoa, whoa!” Rory protested. “What are you doing?”

“I’m saving her.” The Doctor answered, not missing a beat. “This box is the ultimate prison. You can’t even escape by dying. It forces you to stay alive.”

Rory shook his head. “But she’s already dead.”

“No, she’s mostly dead.” He explained. “When you opened the Pandorica again the restoration field hit her- started her heart back up, just barely, but enough. The Pandorica can stasis-lock her that way. Like a ventilator for coma patients. Now, all it needs is a scan of her living DNA and it can restore her completely.”

“Where is gonna get that?” Rory asked, while behind him River crossed her arms protectively in front of her as she began to put his plan together, random bits of overheard conversation from her past coming back to her.

The Doctor looked at his watch and did the math quickly. “In about two thousand years.” He looked up to River. “I’m going to need your vortex manipulator.”

“I want that written on my gravestone.” River deadpanned as she began unbuckling the wrist strap, earning an eye roll from the Time Lord.

Rory looked between them and the Pandorica. “She’s going to be in that box for two thousand years?” He asked incredulously.

“Yeah, but we're taking a shortcut.” He answered holding up his hand as he shoved the device on it. “Rubbish way to time travel, but the universe is tiny now. We'll be fine.”

“So our future is still there then? Our world?” River asked hopefully.

The Doctor shrugged noncommittally. “A version of it, not the one we know- for at least another 1894 years, just about. I can’t speak for your future. You refuse to tell me anything of it.” He held his arm out for the two of them. “Just put your hand here. Don’t worry. Should be safe.”

Rory shook his head. “That’s not what I’m worried about.” He said, looking up to the Pandorica as an idea began to form in his head.

A vague notion of a memory lingered on the edges of River’s mind as she followed Rory’s thought process. “Doctor, you said Rose brought Rory back…” She drifted off as she watched the Time
Lord’s features flicker to the inner turmoil he was trying so hard to conceal, but she persisted. “The last time she did that- with Jack. Is that what happened to Rory?”

Rory looked between the two of them. He knew about Jack. He’d met him. Rose had accidentally made him immortal when she brought him back to life. The Doctor’s jaw tightened and he took out his screwdriver again to scan Rory quickly. “She slowed down his body clock.” He answered eventually, going over the readings quickly and clicking the sonic shut before looking up to him. “To a millionth of its normal speed.”

“Why’s she done that?” Rory asked, squinting at him. The Doctor remained silent, though. He didn’t want to say it out loud. Still hoping maybe Rory wouldn’t- “This box needs a guard.” Rory went on determinedly, looking up towards the prison again. “I killed the last one.”

“Rory, she’ll be fine. Nothing can get into the box.” The Doctor said shortly.

“You did.” Rory shot back.

“Yeah, well. There’s only one of me. I’ve counted.” He said flippantly, but Rory only set his shoulders, not dignifying that with a response. The Doctor took a step forward. “No, Rory, no.” He implored him. “Don’t even think about it.”

“She’ll be all alone.” Rory continued though.

“She won’t feel it.” The Doctor protested

Rory scoffed. “You bet she won’t”

The Doctor closed his eyes against the impending headache. “Two thousand years, Rory. Alone the entire time stood outside a metal box. It would drive you mad.” He warned him, still trying to convince him not to do it.

“Will she be safer if I stayed?” Rory asked, and then looked over to him when he paused. “Look me in the eyes and tell me she wouldn’t be safer.” He demanded.

River held her breath as she watched his eyes shift back and forth. “Rory you-” He started.

“Answer me!” Rory interrupted him angrily.

The Doctor let out a long breath. “Yes. Obviously.” He admitted.

Rory took a step back. “Then how could I leave her?”

The Doctor sighed and looked over to River, who only shrugged in response. He breathed heavily through his nose and closed his eyes… humans. “Listen to me,” he started, once he opened them again. “This is the last bit of advice you’re going to get in a very long time. Rose extended your timeline- that’s all. You’re not Jack. You’re not immortal. You can still die. So for God’s sake,” River put her hand on the vortex manipulator just as he finished putting in the coordinates. “Stay out of-”

What exactly though The Doctor wanted Rory to stay out of, he wouldn’t find out for another 1,894 years. He sighed, staring at the space where The Doctor and River had been, and settled in for the longest stint of guard duty in history.
Amy gasped as she the restraints released and she fell out of the Pandorica.

“Are you alright?” Her younger self asked, watching her curiously as Amy huffed and fell back on her bum. “Who are you?”

“I’m-” Amy started, but then looked up into the little girl’s eyes- her own eyes, “-fine.” She finished awkwardly, and then sighed. “I’m supposed to rest. Got to rest, The Doctor says.”

Amelia squinted down at her. “What doctor?”

“He’s in here.” Amy tapped her temple. “Left a message in my head like I’m an answerphone.” She grumbled, and then stood up, finally catching the breath she’d been chasing for the last two thousand years. “Where am I? Hang on. National Museum, right? I was here once when I was a little…” She drifted off as she looked over and swallowed. “Yeah, complicated.” She said, and then measured herself up against herself. “Let’s see, it’s what, 1996?” She gambled holding the hand that measured Amelia’s height up to her chest and fluffing the girl’s hair.

“Who are you?” Amelia asked again as Amy walked around her.

“It’s a long story.” Amy answered distractedly, walking around the exhibit, and then stopping dead when the timeline of the Pandorica through history caught her gaze. 118 AD taken back to Rome under armed guard. 420 AD Raided by the Franks. 1120 Prized possession of the Knights Templar. 1231 Donated to the Vatican… “Oh…” she breathed, “a very long story.”

She hit play on the video next to the graph. The voice of a historian paid to tell the story- her story-their story fills the room. “The Last Centurion. –He appears as an iconic image in the artwork of many cultures, and there are several documented accounts of his appearances, and his warnings to the many who attempted to open the box before its time. His last recorded appearance was during the London blitz in 1941. The warehouse where the Pandorica was stored was destroyed by incendiary bombs, but the box itself was found the next morning, a safe distance from the blaze. There are eyewitness accounts from the night of the fire of a figure in Roman dress, carrying the box from the flames. Since then, there have been no sightings of the Lone Centurion, and many have speculated that if he ever existed, he perished in the fires of that night, performing one last act of devotion to the box he had pledged to protect for nearly two thousand years.”

Tears were falling by the time the recording ended. “Rory… oh, Rory…” Amy let out, shaking her head.

The sudden call of “EXTERMINATE!” from behind her interrupted her grief and she ran forward to shove her younger self behind her as a fossilised Dalek rolled towards them. “Ex-ter-min-ate!”

The air fizzled in front of them and The Doctor appeared between them and then Dalek, “-trouble.” He said, finishing the sentence he’d started two thousand years ago. His eyes widened as he took in the alien coming for them though, “oh.” He spun around to see Amy and Amelia. “Ah, two of you. Complicated.” He observed, earning a head tilt from Amy.

“Exterminate!” The Dalek yelled again, getting his attention back. “Weapons Systems Restoring.”

The Doctor jumped into action finally at that, pulling River, Amy, and Amelia with him to the other side of the Pandorica. “Come along, Ponds!”

They ran into the middle-eastern montage and The Doctor crashed into a dummy- making its fez come off. “What are we doing?” Amy demanded.
He caught the fez deftly and spun it around in his hands anxiously. “Well, we are running into a dead end, where I'll have a brilliant plan, that basically involves not being in one.” He answered flippantly.

A security guard called from behind the Dalek, shining his torch light into the exhibit. “What’s going on?”

“Get out of here!” The Doctor yelled back to the seemingly unwitting human. “Just go! Run!”

The Dalek spun around to face the guard though. “Drop The Device.”

“It’s not a weapon!” The Doctor interrupted frantically. “Scan it. It’s not a weapon. And you don’t have the power to waste.” He attempted reason with the genocidal alien.

“Scans Indicate Intruder Unarmed.” The Dalek confirmed.

The guard tilted his head and took a step forward. “Do you think?” He said, and out of nowhere pulled a bloody Roman short sword from his belt, launching it at the Dalek and piercing him right in the eyestalk.

“Vision Impaired!” The Dalek screeched as it rolled back from the force.

“Rory!” Amy yelled, coming out from behind the Pandorica to confirm it was her fiance standing on the other side dressed in the National Museum security uniform. She went to him in a dead run, flinging her arms around him.

The Doctor scanned the now-dormant Dalek quickly as the two humans started snogging. He looked up to them incredulously when they still didn’t break after a few moments. “We’ve gotta go!” He yelled. “Come on!” They still didn’t come apart though so he walked over to them. “And break.” He tried, no avail. “And breathe!” He scoffed, but still nothing. He turned on his heel and huffed. “Well, someone didn’t get out much for two thousand years.”

Amelia tugged on his sleeve. “I’m thirsty can I get a drink?” She deadpanned.

He squinted down at her. “Oh, it’s all mouths today, isn’t it?” He said dryly, shoving the fez over her head so that it covered her eyes. She huffed and shoved it into his side, grinning playfully.

River interrupted whatever his reply was going to be though. “Doctor, the light from the Pandorica.” She said, taking a step towards the Dalek. “It must have hit him.”

Right on cue the Dalek’s weapon system began moving again as its shattered eyestalk swiveled upwards towards them. “Out! Out! Out!” The Doctor yelled, shoving Amy, Rory, and River in front of him and grabbing Amelia’s hand as they ran until they found a set of doors. The Doctor slammed them shut as the rest of the group fell into the Museum’s reception.

“So,” The Doctor started, sonicing the lock as Rory held the doors next to him. “Two thousands years, how’d you do?”

“Kept out of trouble.” Rory answered dryly.

“Oh.” The Doctor raised his eyebrows and went over to the nearby broom cupboard. He noticed he was till hold the fez, however, and flipped it around confusedly for a few second before finally shrugging and just placing it on his head. “How?”

“Unsuccessfully.” He deadpanned, and The Doctor smirked, spinning around with a mop in hand.
“The mop!” Rory yelled suddenly, pulling The Doctor to a halt. “That’s how you looked all those years ago when you gave River the sonic.” He told him, and next to him River nodded in confirmation.

“Well, no time to lose then.” He said easily, typing in the coordinates and zapping away.

He reappeared again seconds later. “Oops, sorry.” He let out, shoving the mop into the door handles and disappearing again.

Amelia tugged on Amy’s arm. “How can he do that? Is he magic?” She asked innocently.

“Right.” The Doctor came back. “Let’s go then.” And they started running up the nearby stairs.

“Wait!” He spun back around. “Now I don’t have the sonic. I just gave it River two thousand years ago.” He zapped away, and then came back before they could blink twice, walking up to Amy and pulling the screwdriver from her top pocket. “Off we go!” He proclaimed again, only to stop again a second later. He couldn’t keep things straight anymore. Not without Rose there. Everything was getting all muddled together as every atom in his body was screaming for him to find and save his wife. “No! Hang on,” he turned to walk up to Amelia. “How did you know to come here?” He asked her.

Amelia took the museum leaflet and post-it from her coat pocket and handed it to the magic man wordlessly.

He straightened up. “Ah, my handwriting…” He observed, crinkling up the notes and running over to the reception desks to find their previous (future?) selves and a red pen. He disappears again, and returns with the drink he’d stolen from Amelia earlier and hands it back to her.

Amy groaned. “Okay, how are you doing that?” She demanded. “And where’s Rose?”

He looked down to his wrist and held it up to show her. “Vortex manipulator. Cheap and nasty time travel. Very bad for you. I’m trying to give it up.” He explained quickly, and then started back up the stairs. “Rose is where we’re going- to the roof!” He yelled, anxious already to find the TARDIS and his wife.

Yet again though, the vortex manipulator interrupted their ascent as at the top of the stairs a future version of himself, ash-covered, and smoking slightly, appeared and tumbled down the steps and to their feet.

“Doctor, it’s you.” Rory said incredulously. “How can it be you?”

“Doctor, is that you?” Amy asked quietly as he knelt over his dying future self.

“Yeah, it’s me.” He whispered. “Me from the future.”

Suddenly future-him’s eyes snapped open, sitting forward to whisper in his ear. “We find Rose. I’m not dead. Just nearly. Going to save her. Don’t let on.” He said, quiet enough so that the surrounding humans couldn’t hear, and then fell limply back to the marble floor.

“Are you… I mean is he- is he dead?” Amy asked quietly from behind him.

“What?” He said distractedly, eyes flitting back and forth as he tried to put the pieces together. He stood up to face her. “Dead? Yes, yes. Of course he’s dead.” He sucked in a breath and scanned his time senses before he started running up the stairs again. “Right! I’ve got twelve minutes! That’s good.”
Amy looked up from his dead body to him at that. “Twelve minutes to live?” She repeated. “How is that good?” She yelled.

“Oh, you can loads in twelve minutes” He answered flippantly. “Suck a mint, buy a sledge, have a fast bath. Come on, the roof.” He tried to go again.

“We can’t leave you here dead!” Rory argued.

The Doctor rolled his eyes, thoroughly annoyed now at all of the things keeping him from finding Rose. “Oh, good.” He said sarcastically, stepping back down to Rory. “Are you in charge now? So tell me, where’s Amelia?”

The humans all turned to where Amelia had been standing only moments before- now nothing but a discarded drink cup remained. “Where did she go?” Amy asked, and her and Rory ran down the stairs while River ran up towards The Doctor.

“There is no Amelia.” The Doctor said. “From now on, there never was. History is still collapsing.”

“But how can I still be here if she’s not?” Amy protested, and River closed her eyes as a similar thought ran through her own head.

“You’re an anomaly.” The Doctor answered. “We all are. We’re all just hanging on at the eye of the storm. But the eye is closing, and if we don’t do something fast, reality will never have happened. Today, just dying is a result. Now, come on!” He growled out finally, turning and running before they could stop him again.

River turned back to them before following. Amy was shaking her head vehemently. “He won’t die.” She said. “Time can be rewritten. He’ll find a way. I know he will.” Rory shrugged off his jacket and laid it over the dead Doctor.

“Move it! Come on!” The Doctor yelled angrily, and they all ran to follow him.

They pulled themselves through the roof hatch and squinted at the resulting brightness.

“What, it’s morning already? How did that happen?” Amy asked, coming out after The Doctor and River.

“History is shrinking. Is anybody listening to me?” The Doctor answered as he strode purposely out onto the roof. “The universe is collapsing. We don’t have much time left.” He went over to the nearby satellite dish and sonics it.

“What are you doing?” Rory asked.

“Looking for the TARDIS.” He answered as the dish sparked.

“But the TARDIS exploded.” Rory argued.

“Okay, then I’m looking for an exploding TARDIS.” He threw back, yanking the satellite from its pole and ignoring the resulting sparks as he jumped back down and ran to the edge of the roof.

“But I don’t understand!” Amy protested. “So, the TARDIS blew up and took the universe with it. But why would it do that? How?”
“Good question for another day.” He said, and then turned back around. “The question for now is, total event collapse means that every star in the universe never happened- not one single one of them ever shone. So, if all the stars that ever were are gone, then what?” he spun around to jab his sonic at the great big fireball in the sky, “is that?” He breathed deeply as he took it in. He could feel it now. The time energy radiating off of that thing. “Like I said, I’m look for an exploding TARDIS.”

Rory held his palms out incredulously. “But that’s the sun.”

“Is it?” The Doctor threw over his shoulder, and then held the satellite dish up towards it. “Well here’s the sound that ‘sun’ is making right now.” He said, sonicng the dish and allowing the familiar whooshing and whirring sounds of the TARDIS to surround them. They all sucked in a breath at that. “That’s my TARDIS burning up. That’s what’s been keeping the Earth warm.” He finished.

River’s hand flung to her mouth as another sound met her ears and the pieces fell together. “Oh my God… Rose…” She whispered. “I can hear her.”

“What?” Amy shook her head, furrowing her brow. “I can’t hear anything.”

The Doctor flicked the sonic at that and adjusted the frequency so that Rose’s quiet voice rose above the noise of the TARDIS. “Run, my love.” She choked out, and he could practically see the golden tears running down her face as she stood in the console room. Her words repeated themselves over and over again.

“How… how can she be up there?” Amy asked, staring at the massive explosion in front of her. The golden energy whipped around the sphere, reaching out and sparking, lapping at the rest of the universe with its fiery tendrils of time. How could anyone be up there?

“The emergency protocols. The TARDIS has sealed off the control room and put her into a time loop to save her. She is right at the heart of the explosion.” His ears rung as that didn’t sound exactly right though. “She is the explosion.”

“Can’t you get her?” Amy asked.

He closed his eyes against the headache the question caused. “No, I can’t. She is the heart of the TARDIS. She’s what’s been keeping the universe going for the last two thousand years. I pull her out and the Earth dies instantly along with the TARDIS.” He sounded miserable.

Before he could half-consider risking the whole of reality to save his wife though, the Dalek rose up from the ground down below, firing its weapon. “EXTERMINATE!”

“Run, run!” The Doctor ordered, spinning around and pushing them all towards the roof hatch, shielding them with his body and the satellite dish. He threw the burning thing to the ground and hopped down the ladder after the humans, pausing to seal it.

“Gramps, come on.” River said anxiously, rocking back on her heels from below him.

“Shush. It's moving away, finding another way in. It needs to restore its power before it can attack again.” he said, and then jumped down from the ladder. “Now, that means we've got exactly four and a half minutes before it's at lethal capacity.”

“Until it’s due to kill you, you mean.” Amy bit out angrily.

He ignored her tone, walking past her and leading them back through the upper corridor of the
museum. “Shut up. Never mind that. How can that Dalek even exist? It was erased from time and then it came back. How?”

“You said the light from the Pandorica-” Rory started.

“It’s not a light, it’s a restoration field.” The Doctor interrupted as they turned a corner into the (now empty) prehistoric exhibit. “But never mind- call it a light. That light brought Amy back, restored her, but how could it bring back a Dalek when the Daleks have never existed?” He came to a stop.

“Okay.” Amy said easily, recognising the familiar pattern. “Tell us.”

He smirked and started walking again. “When the TARDIS blew up, it caused a total event collapse. A time explosion. And that explosion blasted every atom in every moment of the universe. Except…” He drifted off, stopping to turn to them again.

“Except for inside the Pandorica.” Amy finished.

He nodded. “The perfect prison. And inside it, perfectly preserved, a few billion atoms of the universe as it was. In theory, you could extrapolate the whole universe from a single one of them, right? Like cloning a body from a single cell… And we've got the bumper family pack.”

Rory looked up and interrupted as The Doctor finally took a breath. “No, no. Too fast. I’m not getting it.”

“The box contains a memory of the universe, and the light transmits the memory.” He put simply, “and that's how we're going to do it.”

“Do what?” Amy asked.

“Relight the fire.” He breathed. “Reboot the universe.” He set his jaw and grinned. “Come on!” He growled madly, leading them back towards the stairs.

River argued with him as they ran down the corridor though. “Gramps, you're being completely ridiculous! The Pandorica partially restored one Dalek. If it can't even reboot a single life form properly, how’s it going reboot the whole of reality?”

He spun around at that- it was a valid question. “What if we give it a moment of infinite power?” He offered. “What if we can transmit the light from the Pandorica to every particle of space and time simultaneously?”

River tilted her head. “Well, that would be lovely, Gramps. But we can’t.” She threw back. “On account if it being completely impossible!”

“Ah, no, you see, it’s not.” He said, poking the nose of the smaller, younger girl in front of him. She was Rose’s height- he’s just noticed. “It’s almost completely impossible. All we need is one spark.”

“For what?” She asked incredulously, shaking her head.

His eyes glowed madly. “Big Bang Two! Now listen…” He turned back around to start down the corridor again- only to get immediately get shot in the left heart by the Dalek.

“Exterminate! Exterminate!” He screeched as it rolled towards them while The Doctor fell to the floor and Amy and Rory ducked behind the corner.
Without thinking River pulled the blaster out from her belt and shot the Dalek- bringing it to a stop. She always knew defying the ‘no weapons’ rule would come in handy someday. She looked down to check on The Doctor but he was already typing coordinates into her vortex manipulator- disappearing before she could stop him. “Damnit.” She whispered, and her head snapped back up to Amy and Rory. “We need to get back downstairs.”

“River, he died.” Amy argued miserably.

The teenager shook her head vehemently, fighting and failing to hold back the tears. She held up her blaster again and flipped a switch to the Alpha Mezon setting. She yelled angrily and aimed it at the Dalek’s eyestalk- killing it stone dead. “He’d be alive right now if I wasn’t so afraid of using this in front of him.” She said miserably.

Amy stepped forward and grabbed her hand. “Don’t blame yourself. Come on.” She said quietly, and they ran the rest of the way towards the stairs.

When they got there, The Doctor was missing. “How could he have moved?” Rory asked incredulously, looking around wildly.

“That bloody…” River breathed, and took off running towards the Pandorica, Amy and Rory close behind her.

“Doctor!” Amy screamed as they rounded the corner and saw The Doctor slouched over in the seat of the Pandorica. They screeched to a halt in front of him.

“Why did he tell us he was dead?” Rory asked as River went up to him, picking his head up.

“We were a diversion.” Amy answered quietly, masking her emotions. “As long as the Dalek was chasing us, he could work down here.”

“Gramps, can you hear me?” River pleaded miserably. “What were you doing?”

All around them the room brightened as outside the TARDIS burned brighter. The Doctor sucked in a faltering breath. Rory looked up towards the window where they could see the explosion. “What is it? What’s happening?”

“Reality’s collapsing. And now it’s speeding up. Look at this room.” River answered, and at that Amy and Rory turned to see the new empty stands. Where sarcophagi and polar bears and penguins once sat was now just empty space. “History’s being erased.” River explained. “Time’s running out. Gramps, what were you doing? Tell us! Doctor!”

His head finally lolled forward, his eyes opening slightly. “Big… Bang… Two…” He muttered.

“The Big Bang. That's the beginning of the universe, right?” Rory said.

“What, and Big Bang Two is the bang that brings us back? Is that what you mean?” Amy stepped forward.

“Oh…” River breathed, stepping back from The Doctor as it clicked. She turned back around to face them. “The TARDIS is still burning. It's exploding at every point in history. If you threw the Pandorica into the explosion, right into the heart of the fire…” She drifted off and sucked in a reverent breath at the image. “Then let there be light. The light from the Pandorica would explode everywhere at once, just like he said.”

“That would work? That would bring everything back?” Amy asked.
“A restoration field powered by an exploding TARDIS, happening at every moment in history. Oh, that’s brilliant- it might even work.” She turned to The Doctor and saw what he’d been working on. “He’s wired the vortex manipulator to the rest of the box.” She winced as she realised what that meant. “He’s going to fly the Pandorica into the heart of the explosion.” She told them quietly.

Soon, the TARDIS was burning red and angry in the sky.

“River…” The Doctor muttered, and she looked up from where she was just finishing his work. “A few more minutes left in this universe. Are you going to tell me who are you now?”

She let out a surprised breath and a broken laugh. “Doesn’t matter now, does it?”

He gave her a significant look. “Melody…” He started.

She sniffed and wiped a tear away. “You said it right that time.” She mumbled miserably, and then turned on her heel before he could say anything more, walking up to where Amy and Rory stood solemnly watching the proceedings.

“He’ll want to talk to you.” She told Amy.

Amy shook her head. “So what happens here, River? Big Bang Two? What happens to us?”

River bit out a lie. “We all wake up where we ought to be. None of this ever happens and we don’t remember it.”

“What about them?” She went on frantically. “River, tell me The Doctor and Rose come back too.”

She closed her eyes and couldn’t find it in herself to lie again- not when it came to this. They deserved better. “They’ll be at the heart of the explosion.” She whispered. “All the cracks in time will close. But they’ll be on the wrong side, trapped in the never-space, the void between worlds. All memory of them will be purged from the universe. They’ll have never have been born.”

Amy let out a shuttering breath, tears streaming down her face. After a moment she steeled herself, and walked around River, taking slow steps towards The Doctor. “Hi,” she breathed out eventually.

He opened his eyes at her voice. “Amy Pond…” He breathed. “The girl who waited all night in your back garden… Was it worth it?”

“Shut up. Of course it was.”

“Yes, you asked me why we took you with us-” He started.

Amy shook her head. “It’s not important.” She interrupted.

“And Aunt Sharon.” Amy protested.

“Yeah, it’s the most important thing left in the universe.” He argued. “It’s why I’m doing this. Amy, your house was too big. That big, empty house, and just you.” His breathing was labored as he was slouched over in the chair, looking up to her meaningfully.

“And Aunt Sharon.” Amy protested.

“Where were your mum and dad?” He pressed. “Where was everybody who lived in that big house.”
Amy stared at him. “I lost my mum and dad.” She said, and she knew it was true. She’d been saying it as long as she could remember… that’s all she could remember.

“How? What happened to them? Where did they go?” He questioned her, putting voice to the thoughts running through her head.

Amy blinked down at him incredulously. “I- I don’t-”

“There was a crack in time in the wall of your bedroom, and it's been eating away at your life for a long time now.” He told her. “Amy Pond, all alone. The girl who didn't make sense…”

“How could I just forget?” She asked quietly.

“Nothing is ever forgotten.” He breathed, an idea occurring to him. The hints that have been at the edges of his awareness since they met her coming into focus. “Not really. But you have to try-”

“Doctor! It’s speeding up!” River called, cutting him off.

“There's going to be a very big bang. Big Bang Two. Try and remember your family and they'll be there.” He spoke quickly now as the world started shaking with time running out.

“How can I remember them if they never existed?” She argued miserably.

“Because you're special.” He answered easily. “That crack in your wall, all that time, the universe pouring into your head… You can bring them back. You just remember and they'll be there.”

Amy shook her head though. “But you and Rose-”

“You'll have your family back. You won't need your imaginary friends any more.” He smiled, and the walls of the Pandorica began closing. Tears were running down her cheeks again. “Ah, Amy Pond… Crying over me, eh?” He teased, and the restraints settled over his shoulders. “Guess what?” He smirked.

“What?”

He raised his eyebrows and grinned. “Gotcha.” He let out, and then the walls sealed.

“Get back!” River screamed, tackling Amy to the ground as the box started shaking violently.

They watched from the floor as lightning cracked around it with loud bursts of energy- sending it up through the roof and towards the TARDIS. The Doctor flying, running, always and forever towards Rose.

Then the world ended.

And then it didn’t.

---

Amelia Pond.
The girl with the fairytale name and fairytale dreams.

She lived in a big house. A too-big house with too many rooms and not enough people to fill them. Just her and her cross Aunt Sharon who was gone so often Amelia was able to convince herself she was just a ghost.

And when she was, Amelia would sit at her window while all alone in the too-big house and look up at the stars. She’d inexplicably find herself thinking *that’s where I belong.*

And then she’d walk along the creaking floorboards and peak into the vacant rooms and glance at the empty chairs.

And she’d dream.

She’d dream up the perfect parents. The mum- she glowed with all the love Amelia’s too-big home was lacking. And when she smiled it was like when the stars twinkled and streaked across the sky. The dad- he held all the happiness Amelia didn’t think really existed outside of books. When he laughed it was like how the moon shines brightest on the darkest nights.

They’d take her hands and whisper “run” and she’d fly away with them to see the stars.

In that magic blue box.

The box that was bigger-on-the-inside but not too-big –never too-big. The box that filled its every room with light and wonder. The little-big magic blue box that felt like home.

Amelia would close her eyes tight as she could and wish with everything she had that they were real. That they were more than just the dream the psychiatrists told her they were. That they were there. Until eventually she fell asleep to dreams of adventure with The Raggedy Doctor and The Golden Rose.

So it was really no wonder, that when The Doctor told her to remember her parents, to bring back her family, that the only thing she could think of, even as the world was ending, was them.

---

The Doctor landed on his feet inside the TARDIS, and instantly fell back when Rose crashed into his chest- sending them sprawling to the ground as he let out a surprised noise and grabbed her waist.

She pushed herself up and hovered over him, looking at him incredulously. “Are we alive?” She asked, furrowing her brow and holding her hand up to her face for closer inspection. “Brilliant. I love it when we do that.” She teased, rolling off him and standing up.

The Doctor followed suit, straightening his bowtie as he looked around their perfectly-fine TARDIS curiously. “How did we do that?”

Rose was squinting up at him though. “What in the name of sanity have you got on your head?” She asked, touching her tongue to her teeth as she held back a laugh.
He reached up to adjust the fez. “It’s a fez. I wear a fez now. Fezzes are cool.”

Rose did laugh then, rolling her eyes at her absolutely ridiculous husband, and going up on her toes to place a kiss to his lips.

And she’d meant for it to be innocent, she really had, but The Doctor growled and grabbed at her waist, pulling her closer towards him as he deepened the kiss- Rose obliging as she reached up to knock the fez off and run her fingers through his hair.

Her back pocket started vibrating though. She furrowed her brow and pulled away, ignoring the noise of protest The Doctor made as she brought her phone out.

Amy was calling.

Amy gasped as she sat up straight in bed, and then sat there- looking around wildly as she tried to remember what was a dream and what was reality- what was no longer reality.

One thing was for sure though. She remembered them.

Her mobile was ringing. It was Rory. She flipped it open quickly, glancing up to the wedding dress hanging on her closet door as she answered- the dress she’d gotten from the TARDIS.

“Tell me I’m not mad.” She said by way of greeting.

“You remember them, right?” Rory answered, making her breathe a sigh of relief. “River was wrong. We didn’t forget them. They weren’t erased. Rose must’ve-”

Amy cut him off with another gasp, her hand flying to her lips as she remembered. “Oh my god. I did it.” She let out, and then giggled madly as those words set in. “Rory, oh my God, I did it.”

“Did what?” He asked slowly, thinking maybe she was mad.

“The Doctor, he told me to remember my parents. And I told him, I told him that was ridiculous. I’ve never had parents, right?” She started.

“Yeah, you moved here without-” He began.

She cut him off though. “Right. But he was convinced because my house is too big that they were eaten by the crack in my wall or something. Told me if I remembered them while the universe was resetting then they could come back-”

“And when he told you to remember your parents, you thought of them.” He finished, with dawning realisation as he recalled all the games they used to play as children.

Amy shrugged and fell back onto her bed. “Do you think I messed up?” She asked him quietly.

Rory shook his head before he remembered she couldn’t see him. “Nah. Sharon lived in that house way before you showed up. Her late husband before that. The house isn’t too-big because anybody got sucked into a crack. It’s too-big because it didn’t used to be. It just happened to fall into the hands of a single person and her niece.”

Amy let out a breath as Rory helpfully filled in those gaps. “Yeah, he was just jumping to conclusions.” She agreed. “Besides, if now the cracks never happened, that means no one ever fell into them. They’d have come back either way if they were ever here.” She reasoned, glancing over
to her crack-less wall for confirmation. She caught site of the wedding dress again. “Oh my god, Rory!” She yelled, sitting up straight again.

“What?” He asked frantically.

“We’re getting married today.” She answered, eyes glowing wide, and grinning when she heard something crash to the floor on his end of the line.

“That explains why I have seven missed calls from Dad. I should probably call him back. Alright, see you in a bit- I guess. Love you.” He let out quickly.

Amy smirked. “Love you too.” She said, and hit the end call button, letting out a small girly squeal and collapsing back into her pillows. She sighed and picked up her phone again, dialing Rose.

“Okay, did I surprise you this time?” Amy asked as soon as the call picked up.

Rose let out an incredulous laugh. “Yeah, absolutely astonished, dear.” She breathed, and then put the phone on speaker, setting it on the console as they began taking the TARDIS out of the time vortex.

“How?” The Doctor asked. “How did you do it?”

Amy giggled, loving the familiar question as it came from him- directed at her no less. “You told me to remember my parents.” She told him. “I never had parents, Doctor. But I did have you two.”

Rose and The Doctor’s eyes met over the console as Amy took their breath away.

“Speaking of which…” Amy went on cheekily. “It’s my wedding day, and I expect to be walked down the aisle.” Rose and The Doctor’s eyes widened at that, but Amy continued before they could protest. “And I believe it is customary for the father of the bride to give a speech?” She added, willing to milk this turn of events as much as possible- determined now to get all the things she never thought she could.

The Doctor blanched and began stuttering uselessly. Rose laughed. “We’ll be there in a mo.” She told Amy cheekily, and the bride-to-be grinned as the the wonderful sounds of the TARDIS met her ears.

Amy insisted that they landed the TARDIS right at the end of the aisle and walk her out of it. Loved an entrance, that one.

And later, in the reception hall, after the master of ceremonies called for a speech, The Doctor stood, clearing his throat and adjusting the white bowtie of his fancy tux, as Amy cheered with the rest of her friends and clinked her champagne glass with her knife. He smiled down at her, and then looked over to Rose who squeezed his hand encouragingly.

“Hello everyone,” He started. “I’m Amy’s imaginary friend, but well- as you can see, I came anyway!” He shrugged. “I do that,” he smirked, eyes glowing. “It’s funny though- I don’t normally do speeches. Well, not happy ones anyway- typically just the sort that scare off aliens or otherwise keep them distracted long enough for my wife to think of something clever.” He joked, earning laughs as Rose blushed and Amy rolled her eyes. “I wandered around a lot before I met Rose,” he
went on, looking down to her. “I was just this daft old man who stole a magic box and ran away—well, I borrowed it. Always said I would give it back.” He looked out at the crowd knowingly and they all laughed. “Was going to see the stars, I said. And I did, for a long time. I saw whole worlds created and watched them fall in the same day. I saw stars supernova and entire galaxies devoured… I saw war, and the end of all things.” He took a deep breath as the room stilled, hanging onto his every word. “And then I met Rose, and she was so brilliant and more fantastic than all of those things combined. And I realised that this whole time— I’d been running to her. She shined so bright she just took all of that darkness and turned it to dust…” He drifted off and sighed heavily. “And I thought, this is it. Nothing could ever beat this. There’s not a story in this whole great big universe that could top this one.”

The Doctor paused, and looked over to Amy and Rory. “But then these two showed up.” He smirked down at them, and Amy let out a breathless laugh before he went on. “Amelia Pond, the girl who waited. The girl who had the universe pouring into her head every night as she dreamed of stars and adventure.” He shook his head reverently and moved his gaze to Rory. “And Rory Williams, the boy who loved the girl with stars in her eyes so much that he stood outside a box for two thousand years just to keep her safe… –Rory Williams, the boy who waited- good on you mate.” He nodded, pointing to him, and the room let out little breathless chuckles at that. He took a deep breath and looked out to the crowd again.

“Nine hundred years in time and space, and I’ve never met anyone who wasn’t important.” He told them. “We’re all just stories in the end,” he looked back down to Rose and over Amy and Rory, and he held his glass up to their little makeshift family. “Let’s just make it a good one, eh?”

Chapter End Notes

AND we’ve reached the end of the first season!

I'll be going on a small-break-but-not-really. One more short chapter will be released here Thursday to serve as a transition piece into the next season's rewrites. And two more stories are going to be added to this universe:

"Before The Madness" - prequel Ten/Rose stories that will better explain their journey to this point and include the series-official rewrites of both Doomsday and Journey's End, how they came to the regeneration from Chapter 1, some tales from The Year That Never Was, as well as the full Alina story.

"Between The Madness" - Outtakes from Mad, Beautiful, Fantastic. One-shots and random scenes/conversations that had to be cut from the main story for one reason or another. (Lots of fluff.)

SO be sure to not only subscribe to MBF but also to me to make sure you're notified when this story officially becomes a series!

Mad, Beautiful, Fantastic will return with The Impossible Astronaut on Wednesday February 28th
If you ever tried to tell Amy Pond that there was a time before The Doctor and Rose danced, she’d call you a liar.

Every morning she’d see them dance around each other as they made tea and breakfast. He’d take her hand and spin her towards the kettle, she’d hold his shoulders and turn him towards the toaster.

Every afternoon she’d watch them twirl around the console as they flew. They’d circle each other as they spun dials. He’d grab her waist and dance them towards the dematerialisation lever. She’d laugh as he dipped her back when he pulled it.

And at night, when they thought she was asleep, she’d occasionally spot them on her way to the kitchen, holding each other in their arms as they swayed silently to the sounds of the time vortex.

The Doctor and Rose just danced. It’s what they did. They made their way through their mad, beautiful, fantastic life spinning each other around and waltzing to a tango.

And at her wedding, as she watched The Doctor dance like a complete idiot- flailing his arms above his head energetically, attracting a crowd of children drawn to this strange ridiculous man, and Rose stood next him grinning brilliantly as she laughed and encouraged the kids to join in on their antics…

Amy’s heart hurt.

...They would have made such great parents.
Running

Chapter Notes

Originally posted in Between the Madness. Realised upon reread that I wanted it in the main story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Melody leaned against the entryway to the reception hall, quietly watching Amy and Rory sway back in forth in each other’s arms, the music drifting around them as slowly their wedding guests began filing out. She smirked and looked down to her feet, subconsciously messing with the vortex manipulator on her wrist. She’d been surprised when she woke up at all- much less in Leadworth, but really it made sense. Not many people got to see this, but she supposes it was pretty par for the course in her life that she’d end up standing here eventually.

She looked up to see Rose had spotted her from across the room. The Doctor was still distracted by the remaining children, but she tilted her head and began making her way towards the young girl. Melody smirked and turned on her heel to walk out the doors, knowing Rose would follow.

She joined her a second later, and leaned against the brick and ivy laced building next to her. For a long while they didn’t say anything- just stared up at the stars. “Who are you?” Rose eventually whispered.

Melody smiled sadly and shook her head- not looking over to the blonde. “It’s not important.” She told her as she found the moon in the night sky and remembered she still had essays due in a millenia.

Rose studied the girl’s profile. “Everyone is important.” She said firmly, making Melody let out a tinkling laugh at a joke Rose didn’t understand yet.

She gave a long sigh. “No, yeah I know. I just mean…” She finally looked over to Rose. “I think I’ve accidentally made a mystery out of myself for you two… and it’s not one you should be running to solve.”

It was Rose’s turn to laugh now. “Well, we can hardly stop now.” She teased.

Melody looked down sadly at that though. “You’re on a collision course.” She informed her, and Rose’s breath caught in her throat as she watched Melody carefully. Melody could feel her eyes on her, but it took her awhile to look up again. “You’ll find out soon enough.” She said, and then smirked and tilted her head towards the reception hall. “Well, in their timeline anyway. I have no idea how long you two will run from it.”

“Run from what?” Rose asked quietly, studying Melody like maybe the eighteen year old could be dangerous. Melody smiled sadly at that. Sometimes seeing them before they knew her was fun… but other times it just hurt.

Melody grabbed her hands and Rose was surprised to see tears in the young girl’s eyes. “It’s coming soon now.” She whispered. “And it’s going to be hard, but… I promise you it will all be okay in the end.”
Rose shook her head though. “What’s coming?” She asked her, and it was quiet, but there was a plea behind the words.

Melody gave her a watery smile at that. “My story.” She answered, and choked on a little breathless laugh. She squeezed Rose’s hands tightly, and took a step back, ignoring the confused look from the woman. She typed in the coordinates from home, and disappeared before Rose could ask her any more.

Chapter End Notes

Season 06 Coming Soon
Rory huffed as he stacked the last box in the kitchen of their tiny Leadworth flat, and leaned heavily against the wooden counter. “One year married and how do we celebrate it? By packing. Manual labor. How romantic.” He said dryly, looking over to Amy as she came to stand next to him.

“They said they’d be here.” She told him, not for the first time that day, and rolled her eyes.

“This century?” He asked her, half-seriously.

Amy scoffed and then tilted her head, half-considering. “Probably,” she eventually smirked, patting him on the shoulder before retreating back into the sitting-room-without-anywhere-to-sit. They’d been sort-of-living in the small flat for a while now in between travelling. It was more of a place to stay than it was a home. It’d only been a year for them since the Pandorica, but she knew it’s been a few more for The Doctor and Rose. It didn’t really bother her though. She could try to understand the hardships of near-immortality with human friends. She did wish they would try to be a bit more punctual though-

Right on cue though the whooshing sounds the TARDIS filled the flat as the blue box materialised in the center of the sitting room.

Rose poked her head out, grinning cheekily. “Are we late?” She asked, reading the room quickly. “Sorry, there was a war in the Gamma Forests… needed sorting- quite a lot of running.” She stepped out of the ship, breathing a bit heavily and piling her hair on top of her head in a messy bun. “Only just got back.”

“You have literal time machine, yet you are always somehow late.” Rory said, shaking his head as The Doctor joined them as well.

“Oi! It’s not her fault!” The Doctor protested, patting the TARDIS consolingly.

“Yeah, we’re not blaming the TARDIS,” Amy teased, hugging them both in turn despite their offended scoffs.
The mail slot flapped open before anyone could say anything more, making them all turn towards the door with curious glances. Rory was the one to walk over to the TARDIS blue envelope on the floor, addressed to ‘The Ponds’ in looping golden writing that looked vaguely familiar. There wasn’t a return address though, nor any stamps.

Rory huffed. “You two do know I’m not a Pond, right? That’s not how it works.” He complained, holding up the envelope he assumed was from them- Amy immediately plucking it from his hand.

“Yeah it is.” The Doctor said easily clapping Rory on the back even as he watched Amy over her shoulder.

Rory sighed, “yeah, it is.” He relented, and also shifted his attention to his wife as she tore open the mail.

“We didn’t send that though…” Rose said, going up on her toes to try and see the letter.

Amy furrowed her brow at that and flipped it around for her to see. A complicated series of time-space coordinates followed by a short sentence in Linear Gallifreyan started back up at them. “I beg to differ.” She said amusedly.

The Doctor squinted and took the letter and envelope from her, flipping it over in his hands to see Rose’s handwriting on the front. “Well we haven’t sent it yet…” He muttered, handing it over to Rose for her to see.

Rose scanned the coordinates first. “What is this? America? 1969?” She mumbled confusedly before translating the Gallifreyan beneath it. “‘Use the cloaking functions’?” She asked incredulously. “What the hell do I mean by that?”

“And why’d you write it in Gallifreyan?” Amy added.

Rose only shrugged at that though. “So we’d trust it, I suppose. Know it was from ourselves and not some rando.” She explained easily and then stepped into the TARDIS, her husband and humans right behind her.

Rory snorted at that. “Are you really under the impression that you wouldn’t immediately go to any mysterious coordinates sent to you through the post?”

The Doctor glared over to him but Rose laughed good-naturedly. “Touché” she gave him, chuckling as she typed in the coordinates. She looked up to The Doctor. “You’re gonna have to tell me what I meant by ‘cloaking,’ dear.” She reminded him as she sent them into the time vortex with a slight lurch.

“Oh! Right!” He exclaimed, flying around the console at her words. “We can put the engines on silent-” he cut himself off though for as soon as he said that he hit a switch that made the ship emit a loud screeching noise. “No, no not that one!” He yelled over the sounds as they all held their ears. He ran to the other side of the console, spinning a dial quickly and hitting a button, and the noise stopped- altogether this time. “There we go!”

Rose wrinkled her nose in disgust though, looking around their now-silent ship. “Oh no, no I don’t like that. It needs the noise.” She complained, stroking the TARDIS lightly.

“Oh, that lovely noise…” The Doctor nodded in agreement, earning eyerolls from Amy and Rory that he didn’t see. “No matter, I do as I’m told by my wife- even future versions of her.” He winked over to Rose at that and he grabbed her by the waist to spin her around until he was on the other side of her. “And I assume you also meant to put the outer shield on invisible- don’t normally do
that,” he added, with a tilt of his head, “huge drain on the power. Plus, last time I did I lost her for nearly a week in 17th century France.”

Rose giggled and Amy and Rory balked at the information as he spun a few more dials and flipped a few more switches. This time executing the command without error. “Alright then! 1969! That’s an easy one!” He exclaimed, kicking both himself and Rose into the process of landing. “Funny how some years are hard and others are easy,” he rambled as they danced around the console. “Now, 1482, full of glitches!” He yelled, making eye contact with Amy who startled and nodded vaguely.

Rose typed quickly into the keyboard while he ran over to wind up a crank on the other side. “Time isn't a straight line. It's all bumpy wumpy. There's loads of boring stuff like Sundays and Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons.” He rhapsodised as they worked on landing her at such precise coordinates as the ones they provided themselves. “But now and then there are Saturdays. Big temporal tipping points when anything's possible. The TARDIS can't resist them- like a moth to a flame. She loves a party, so we give her 1969 and NASA, because that's space in the sixties, and this is where she’s pointing to!”

Amy peeked over Rose’s shoulder to the monitor. “Washington D.C., April the eighth, 1969…” She read off, the TARDIS helpfully providing her with the English when she looked over.

“D.C.?” The Doctor repeated, looking up to the redhead as they landed silently. “1969? Who's President?”

Rose brought up the location information quickly. “Richard Milhous Nixon– Vietnam, Watergate…” She drifted off as she read the less-than-stellar repertoire. “There's some good stuff, too…” She added, attempting to sound positive as she looked up to her husband who’d come to read off the monitor as well.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose though as he scanned it. “Not enough.” He grumbled.

Rose laughed, “hippie!”

He smirked over to her and gave a small shrug before reaching up to adjust the knob on the monitor. “Oh well now we can’t check the scanners- it doesn’t work when we’re cloaked.” He huffed and walked around the console and down the stairs. “Just a mo!” He called over his shoulder.

“Uh! Hold on!” Rose protested, chasing after him with Amy and Rory close behind her.

He turned around as his hand closed around the door handle. “Just… wait a moment. We're in the middle of the most powerful city in the most powerful country on Earth. Let's take it slow.” He implored her, waiting for her reluctant nod before giving her another smirk and a wink and slipping out the door.

He only made it half a step out of the TARDIS before stopping dead in his tracks. They’d landed the ship right in the middle of the bloody Oval Office. President Nixon was currently stood behind his desk, facing away from him while another man sat in the seat in front of the desk- also thankfully looking toward the window. The audio of what sounded like a phone call was playing over a tape-recorder.

"Hello? Who is this? This is President Nixon. Who's calling? Is this you again?" The voice of President Nixon played through the speakers.
A child, a little girl by the sound of it, answered him. “Mr. President?”

“A child…” The unnamed man with the President observed, surprised. Behind them The Doctor was creeping quietly closer.

President Nixon looked turned his head in acknowledgement as his voice answered over the tape. “This is the President, yes.”

“I'm scared, Mr. President. I'm scared of the spaceman.” The little girl told him, and The Doctor’s eyes widened. Every instinct in him telling him to run and help her.

The man, a detective by the looks of him, spoke again. “A little girl?” He asked incredulously.

“Boy.” Nixon corrected gruffly over his shoulder. The Doctor furrowed his brow.

“How can you be sure?” The detective challenged, and the President simply nodded towards the tape as it rolled on- answering the question for him.

“What spaceman? Where are you phoning from? Where are you right now? Who are you?” The recording-President asked the child a series of questions. Behind them The Doctor pulled out a notepad and a pen- wanting those answers as well.

“Jefferson Adams Hamilton.” The child answers. The Doctor wrote down the names quickly-immediately sure that that isn’t the child’s name- unless she has terrible parents.

“Jefferson, listen to me.” Nixon starts, but is cut off by the dial tone as the little girl rings off.

The detective took a deep breath. “Surely this is something the bureau can handle,” he started, and The Doctor jots down that this man is apparently not FBI.

“These calls happen wherever I am, Mr. Delaware.” President Nixon said, still facing the window. “How do I know the bureau isn’t involved?” The Doctor tilted his head- giving him that. Nixon went on, “I can’t trust anyone-”

He cut himself off as he turned around to find another man in the room. Mr. Delaware followed his line of sight and bolted up to standing when he spotted The Doctor.

It took The Doctor a second to realise anything had happened. He glanced up and did a sort of ‘go on’ gesture and continued writing before he caught on. Finally looking up awkwardly when he did. “Oh. Hello.” He started with a smile, but then backed up a scooch when they continued to stare at him. “Bad moment.” He looked around anxiously as he shuffled backwards. “Oh look, this is the Oval Office! I was looking for the er… oblong room…” He backed into a lamp and adjusted it quickly as the President buzzed for security. ‘I’ll- I’ll- I’ll just be off, then, shall I?” He stuttered, adjusted his jacket, and spun on his heel- only to immediately run smack into the invisible TARDIS, flinging him onto his bum.

Inside the TARDIS the three off them buckled their knees and grabbed onto the railing as the ship shook. Rose huffed, pushing her hair out of her face. “Yep, saw that one coming.” She commented dryly.

“Don’t worry!” The Doctor called to them from outside. “It always does that when it’s cloaked.” He fibbed, and Rose rolled her eyes, giving a significant look to Amy and Rory as she pulled the monitor towards her- counting on the ship giving her the scanner anyway.

The Doctor yelped as Ex-Detective Delaware knocked him to the ground, yanking his arm around
behind him as something like ten armed secret service agents came running into the room to pile on top of him as well. “Rose, have you got the scanner working yet?” He yelled, as his face was pressed into the carpet.

“Oh… I hate him.” She breathed.

“No, you don’t!” He called back, cheeky despite being shoved into the floorboards. Guns were pointed at him now as others pulled President Nixon by the arm. “Rose, make her blue again!” He yelled.

Rose shook her head, but quickly flipped the switch, letting the TARDIS become visible to all the men stood inside the Oval Office- effectively getting them to back off her husband as they gaped in astonishment.

“What the hell is that?” President Nixon breathed, eyes wide. The Doctor and Rose couldn’t help but smirk.

‘Just one second, love.’ He begged her quickly as he stood, brushing his jacket off. ‘They’re still armed and cross.’ He warned her, even as he used their momentary distraction to trot over to the President’s desk, sit down in his chair, fling his boots up onto the surface top, and casually pick up a discarded file.

When he looked up finally, tossing the file back on the desk, six guns were being cocked and aimed at his head. “Mr. President, that child just told you everything you need to know, but you weren’t listening.” He informed him quickly, seriously, as he ignored the weapons. “Nevermind though! Because the answer is yes! I’ll take the case!” He grinned, clapping his hands together.

Looking between the only two people not aiming a gun at him- the President and Mr. Delaware.

He finally acknowledged them though after there was a moment’s pause. “Fellas, the guns, really? I just walked into the highest security office in the United States and parked a big blue box on the rug. Do you think you can just shoot me?” He scoffed casually.

Rose burst out of the TARDIS at that. “They’re Americans!” She yelled at him- honestly making a pretty good point.

The Doctor stood up lightning-quick upon her entry, tone changing immediately as his hands flung to the air. Being blasé about his own life was one thing- but not Rose’s. “Don’t shoot! Definitely no shooting!” He let out frantically as the gunmen turned towards his wife.

Rose glared at him as her hands went to the air, and behind her Rory and Amy came out as well, heads down and hands up. “Don’t shoot us either!” Rory called. “Very much not in need of getting shot! Look, look- we’ve got our hands up!”

The six gunmen pointed their weapons wildly from one intruder to the next. “Who the hell are you people?” Nixon growled out.

“Sir, you need to step back.” Delaware warned him as the President attempted to take a step towards The Doctor.

Nixon protested though. “No, but who are they and what is that box?” He demanded angrily.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose at the President. “It’s a Police Box, can’t you read?” He snapped, ignoring the half-hearted ‘rude’ the comment got from Rose. He put his hands down. “I’m your new undercover agent on loan from Scotland Yard. Code name: The Doctor.” He improvised easily, and then gestured to the other three. “These are my top operatives- the Legs, the Nose,
and... Jailbait.”

“I hate you.” Rose huffed, shaking her head.

“No, you don’t.” He threw back easily, smirking.

“Who are you?” Nixon demanded again.

The Doctor smacked his lips together. “Nah, boring question. Who’s phoning you? -That’s interesting. Because Mr. Delaware-”

“-Canton.” The ex-detective corrected, earning incredulous glares from the SS agents that he ignored.

The Doctor smirked at that. “Canton,” he amended, gesturing to him. “Canton was right. That was definitely a girl's voice, which means there's only one place in America she can be phoning from.”

Canton raised his eyebrows, intrigued though still disbelieving. “Where?” He asked.

“Do not engage with the intruder, Mr. Delaware.” The head SS agent bit out.

The Doctor glanced over to the man still holding a gun at him, and looked between the President and Canton instead. “You heard everything I heard. It's simple enough. Give me five minutes, I'll explain.” He tilted his head down, taking a seat and propping his feet up again. “On the other hand, lay a finger on me or my family, and you'll never, ever know.” He added, presenting the ultimatum confidently as he folded his hands across his stomach.

Canton watched him carefully, then pointed over to the TARDIS. “How did you get it in here?” He asked. “I mean, you didn’t carry it in,” he raised his brow at The Doctor.

The Doctor smirked, loving the mystery. “Clever, eh?”

“Love it.” Canton agreed.

The angry agent let out an indignant noise. “Do not compliment the intruder, Mr. Delaware.”

The Doctor watched the armed and anxious man carefully, but Canton ignored him. “Five minutes?” He verified, holding his hand up.

“Five.” The Doctor confirmed, not looking away from the agent.

“Mr. President, that man is a clear and present danger to-” He started.

“Mr. President,” Canton interrupted him easily. “that man walked in here with a big blue box and three of his friends,” he said, pointing to The Doctor and then over to the SS agent, “-and that's the man he walked past.” The agent finally looked away from The Doctor at that to balk at Canton while the rest of the secret service men and the President glanced over to him. Canton went on, “one of them's worth listening to. -I say we give him five minutes. See if he delivers.”

“Thanks, Canton.” The Doctor smiled.

“If he doesn’t,” Canton continued, “I’ll shoot him myself.”

The Doctor swallowed. “Not so thanks.”

“Sir, I cannot recommend-”
“Shut up, Peterson!” The President barked, cutting off the warning. He looked to Canton “Alright.”

Canton smirked and turned back to The Doctor. “Five minutes.”

The Doctor put his feet down at that, rolling the desk chair forward as he sat up straight and looked around the President’s desk and office importantly. “I’m going to need a SWAT team, ready to mobilise. Street level maps covering all of Florida. A pot of coffee, twelve Jammie Dodgers, and a fez.” He grinned madly and drummed his fingers against the desk.

Canton could barely contain his laugh at that. “Get him his maps.” He ordered the agents curtly.

Later, at least fifty maps of various Floridian cities were laid out across the Oval Office—everywhere from Panama City, to Orlando, to Miami. Rose and The Doctor were the only ones looking at them though as they were the only ones who knew what they were looking for. She glanced up from her place on the floor as he walked past her, snatching a map from Amy as he went, and Canton spoke up from where he was watching them. “Why Florida?” He asked, following The Doctor over to the President’s desk.

“That’s where NASA is.” He answered quickly. “She mentioned a spaceman. NASA’s where the spacemen live.”

Rose huffed and stood up to join him, but paused as she saw a figure standing in the doorway. It was tall— at least seven foot—and wearing a tight, almost wet-leather looking black suit. It had unnaturally long arms with only three thick fingers. It’s pinkish-wrinkled skin was pulled tight over it’s distorted skull with sunken eyes, three holes for a nose, and no mouth the speak of. The room tilted, and Rose grabbed at her stomach feeling suddenly ill.

“Rose?” Rory called from the couch.

She looked over and instantly forgot the alien in the doorway. She looked back—not really sure why she was—and nothing was there. She shook her head, blinking away the odd feeling she couldn’t place. She felt like the was gonna vomit.

The Doctor took long strides over to her in an instant, feeling her discomfort. “What’s wrong?” He asked her quietly.

Rose placed her hand on his chest. “I’m alright. Just feeling a little sick.” She told him, clearing her throat, hand hovering over her stomach. She ignored the concern and worry radiating off her husband and pushed past him towards the angry agent from earlier and his colleague standing at the door. “Excuse me, is there a toilet?” She asked.

“Sorry, ma’am, while this procedure’s ongoing, you must remain within the Oval office.” Peterson answered, clearly just in an attempt to feel like he had some semblance of control over the situation by denying her. She waved her husband off distractedly as she felt his anger roll over him.

Canton looked over before she could argue however. “Shut up and take her to the restroom.” He ordered.

Peterson glared over to Canton, but eventually relented, nodding to his colleague who held his arm out past Rose. “This way ma’am.” He said.

“Thanks.” She muttered, walking past him quickly.
Canton caught The Doctor before he could attempt to follow Rose out. “Your five minutes are up.” He warned him.

“Yeah, and where’s my fez?” He threw back, picking up the map of Cape Canaveral.

Rose sighed as she entered the restroom. She was staring at her feet, attempting to quell her anxious thoughts before The Doctor could pick up on them.

When she looked up the alien from earlier was standing there.

Rose startled, taking a step back and bumping into the cabinet of soap and towels behind her. “I saw you… in the corridor earlier you were standing outside of Oval Office.” She said, chest heaving as she stared down the creature. “But then I forgot… How does that work then?” She tilted her head and took a hesitant step forward.

A woman came out of a stall then though, walking past the alien without notice towards the sink. Rose stared at her incredulously. Until finally she happened to spot it in the mirror. She jumped back with a shriek. “Oh, my God. What is that?” She asked, but the squinted with a slight smile as she quickly (humanly) convinced herself it was a joke. “Is that a mask? Is that a Star Trek thing? Ben, is that you?”

Rose’s eyes widened as the human started walking towards it. “No! Get back!” She yelled, and the American woman with the Yankee accent spun around.

She squinted at Rose confusedly. “Back from what, honey?”

Rose looked between the woman and the creature. “That.” She said, already sure of what was going to happen.

The woman turned back around and screamed again before laughing. “Oh, my God! Look at that. Is that a Star Trek mask? Ben, that’s got to be you…” She trailed off, tilting her head as the previous memory came back. “Hang on, did I just say all that?” She started walking towards the creature again curiously.

“No, please, you’ve gotta stay back!” Rose warned, reaching forward to grab her arm and attempt to shove her behind her.

“Back, honey? Back from what?” She repeated, and then the lights started flickering. She looked up. “Oh, those lights. They never fix them.” She laughed.

“Look behind you.” Rose said quietly as the lights continued to flicker. Electricity was moving around the room now.

“Honey, there is nothing.” The woman was cut off by her own scream when as soon as she turned around and remembered the thing behind her- and then it was electrocuting her with its alien hand. The blast so powerful that it turned her to dust.

Rose blinked back her tears as the lights came back on. “You didn’t have to kill her!” She yelled at the alien, cockney accent on full as her anger came to the forefront. “She didn’t even remember you!” She took a step back as she processed that. “What is that? Some sort of perception filter? We can only remember you when we’re looking?” She reached into her back pocket and pulled out her mobile, sliding the screen over to camera and taking a quick picture. “Why’d you have to kill her?” She demanded angrily again.
“Joy.” The thing rasped, it’s voice like smoke. Rose took a horrified step back at that, but then it went on. “Her name was Joy. Your name is Rose. The Bad Wolf. You will tell The Doctor.”

“Tell him what?”

It stepped closer to her. “Silence will fall.” It said, effectively running Rose’s blood cold. She clasped her phone tightly to her chest and spun on her heel, fleeing.

When Rose stepped back into the Oval Office the phone was ringing. “The kid?” Canton asked as the President stood up, both of them eyeing the phone warily.

“Should I answer it?” Nixon asked.

The Doctor jabbed his finger as the map though. “Here!” He exclaimed, and Rose ran over to him.

“You found it?” She asked.

“Found what?” Canton demanded, looking down to the place The Doctor’s finger rested.

“The only place in the United States that call could be coming from. See? Obvious, when you think about it.” He answered easily, adjusting his shirt tails better while the detective leaned over the map.

“You sir, are a genius.” He breathed.

“It’s a hobby.” The Doctor answered flippantly, winking over to Rose who rolled her eyes while Canton told the President to answer the phone- putting it on speaker for the rest of them as he hit record.

“Hello. This is President Nixon.”

“It’s here!” The girl’s scared and frantic voice answered, and Rose’s heart clenched at the sound. “The spaceman’s here! It’s going to get me! It’s going to eat me!”

The Time Lords were spinning towards the TARDIS before anyone had a chance to process it, pushing Amy and Rory ahead of them. “There’s no time for a SWAT team. Let's go. -Mr. President, tell her help’s on the way. Canton, on no account follow me into this box and close the door behind you.” He rambled off, shoving his arms back into his jacket sleeves and chasing Rose into their ship.

“What the hell are you doing?” Canton called after them increduously, following them without really thinking about it. Stopping dead in his tracks as soon as the door closed behind him.

The Doctor was ignoring him, flying around the console with Rose as he spoke. “Jefferson isn’t a girl’s name. It's not her name either. Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton- Rose!”

Rose rolled her eyes, but went along with his showmanship anyway. “Three of America’s founding fathers.” She supplied easily, typing in coordinates.

“Lovely fellows- two of them fancied me.” He said cheekily, winking at her.

Rory stood by the door next to Canton, having stopped before reaching the stairs when he heard The Doctor ‘invite’ him in. “You okay? Coping?” He asked the poor man, arms crossed in front of him as he watched Canton stare breathlessly around the ship.
The Doctor took no notice. “You see, the President asked the child two questions. Where are you and who are you? She was answering where.”

“It’s bigger on the inside.” Canton breathed.

Rory nodded. “Yeah, you get used to it.”

“Now! Where would you find three big historical names in a row like that?” The Doctor went on, walking around Amy.

She spun around, bouncing onto her toes excitedly. “Where?” She asked him, eyes glowing.

He grinned up to her. “Here!” He exclaimed, pulling the materialisation lever and catching himself deftly as they all fell back on landing. “Come on!” He took both girls by the hand and ran down the stairs- running directly into Canton.

He was opening and closing his mouth over and over in an attempt to find speech. “It’s… uh…”

The Doctor’s eyes flickered up to Rory. “Are you taking this?” He asked, but didn’t wait for a reply before stepping around Canton and towards the door.

“Why is is always my turn?” Rory complained as they filed past him, but was of course ignored, save for an apologetic smile from Rose and a kiss on the cheek from Amy.

As soon as Amy stepped out the door her head hurt- like déjà vu but worse, like there was a great big something sitting in her head but she couldn’t for the life of her access it. She rubbed at her temple as she looked around the dimly lit and dusty office room. “Where are we?” She asked as The Doctor took a nearby seat and started waving a little American flag around.

“About five miles from Cape Kennedy Space Centre.” He answered, watching Rose walk around the dingy room and small desk to pick up the phone- it was dead, line cut. “It's 1969, the year of the moon. Interesting, don't you think?” He went on, even as him and Rose had a silent conversation.

“But why would a little girl be here?” Amy asked, running her finger through some dust and ignoring the headache pulsing behind her eyes now.

“I don't know. Lost me a bit.” He told her honestly as he stood up. “The President asked the girl where she was, and she did what any lost little girl would do. She looked out of the window…” He drifted off as he pulled the blinds apart.

Right outside the street post signs indicated they were situated at the intersection for Hamilton Avenue, Jefferson Street, and Adams Street.

Amy sucked in a breath. “Streets!” She huffed. “Of course, street names!”

“The only place in Florida, probably all of America, with those three street names on the same junction.” He told her quickly before turning to his wife. “Rose Tyler, you've got that face on again.” He smirked, leaning against the wall.

“What face?” Rose asked, tilting her head.

He grinned. “The ‘he's hot when he’s clever face.’”

Rose raised her eyebrows at her ridiculous husband. “This is my normal face.” She said.
He smirked cheekily. “Yes, it is.”

Rose rolled her eyes. “You’re especially flirty today.” She observed, squinting at him.

The Doctor shrugged noncommittally at that. “Can’t help it. You’re especially beautiful today. Like you’re glowing.”

Rose furrowed her brow at that, ignoring the way her stomach flipped. She looked down, sure she wasn’t going all Bad Wolf, and only served to confuse herself more. Red chucks, three-day-old dark wash skinny jeans, and a loose-fitting olive top. Nothing about her looked especially anything. She looked back up to her husband quizzically, but he only winked and kissed her head quickly before moving on.

Rory managed to get Canton out of the TARDIS then. “We’ve moved. How- how could we have moved?” He asked, spinning around and laughing incredulously.

The Doctor spun around at that from his place halfway to the door. “You haven’t even got to space travel yet?” He looked to Rory disapprovingly.

Rory huffed and shut the TARDIS door behind him. “I was going to cover it with time travel.”

“Time travel…” Canton repeated breathlessly, looking around to all of them but Amy and Rose were already leaving the small office space.

The Doctor smirked and patted his arm. “Brave heart, Canton! Come on!” He clapped his hands together and followed the girls.

Canton turned back to Rory. “So it’s a box that's bigger on the inside, and it travels through time and space.” He verified.

Rory nodded, tilting his head a bit. “Yeah, basically.” He confirmed, walking them towards the door the rest of them had gone through,

“...How long have Scotland Yard had this?”

The Doctor pulled two torches from his pockets and handed them to Rose and Amy. They shone them around the dark, slightly damp, disused warehouse as they made their way through it. “This is definitely a trap.” Rose breathed. She looked over to Amy, aware that she wasn’t privy to the conversation in their heads. “The phone in the office was cut off.” She told her.

Amy found herself weirdly unsurprised by the information. “So how did the little girl phone from here?” She asked them anyway, but went on when she realised that was an unanswerable question. “Why would anyone want to trap us?” She questioned instead.

“Don’t know.” The Doctor answered, lifting up a nearby crate lid. “Let’s see if anyone tries to kill us and work backwards.” He offered flippantly- it was, of course, the usual plan.

They turned onto a path more littered than the one before it. Rose shone the torch light around all the broken computer parts and exposed wires. “Why would a little girl be here?” She breathed, not really a question so much as an observation.

“I don’t know.” The Doctor answered anyway. “Let’s find her and ask her.”
They came across the single light source in the whole warehouse. A sort of surgeon’s lamp set over an old slanted operation table surrounded by wires - the squishy type of wires covered in odd goo that you find in space. “Definitely alien.” Rose said, stepping slowly closer. “Not from this time zone either.”

Behind them, Amy was rooted to the spot as she took in the alien tech. Unsure as to why her stomach suddenly felt like it was in her feet, and her chest tightened.

“Which is odd, because look at this!” The Doctor exclaimed, not noticing Amy as his attention was caught by the nearby crate of spacesuits.

“That’s… Earth tech.” Rose said, brow furrowed as she ran her hand over the helmet The Doctor had picked up. “Contemporary…”

“Very contemporary!” He exclaimed “Cutting edge! It’s from the space program!”

“Stolen?” Rose asked.

Amy snapped her head up at that, shaking off the weird mood and finally wandering over to them. “What, by aliens?”

“Apparently.” The Doctor grinned and shoved the helmet over his head.

“But why?” Amy shook her head. “If you can make it all the way to Earth, why steal technology that can barely make it to the moon?”

The Doctor spoke from under the helmet. “Maybe because it’s cooler!” He exclaimed, voice muffled, and holding his arms out dorkishly. He pulled the visor up, smiling childishly. “Look how cool this stuff is!”

Amy raised her brow. “Cool aliens?”

The Doctor rocked a bit on his heels and held his hands out. “Well, what would you call me?” He grinned cheekily, looking up to the corner of his eye.

“An alien.” Amy deadpanned, even as she failed to hide her amused smirk.

“Oi!” The Doctor protested indignantly, and started pulling the helmet off awkwardly, but was kept from further reprimanding her as Rory and Canton joined them.

“I, uh, I think he’s okay now.” Rory told them, watching Canton warily.

“Ah! Back with us, Canton?” The Doctor called over to him.

Canton continued to stare up at the alien tech in front of him, one hand shoved in his pocket while the other held a torch. He nodded vaguely over towards the direction of the TARDIS. “I like your wheels.” He said casually.

“That’s my boy!” The Doctor grinned, patting him on the shoulder and walking over to where Rose had (of course) wandered off to. “So, come on! Little girl. Let’s find her.”

Rose was kneeling down at a storm drain the slimy alien wires were leading to. She huffed as she pushed over the heavy metal cover. “Looks like tunnels…” She mused as her husband came up behind her, she looked up to him. “I’m going down.” She told him, already lowering herself towards the ladder.
The Doctor wrinkled his nose. “I’m coming with you then.”

Rose shook her head. “No, you’re not.” She looked over his shoulder. “Rory is.”

Rory huffed. “Do I have to?” He asked exasperatedly.

“Yep!” Rose called, already making her descent again without waiting for him.

The Doctor watched her go with a put-out expression, and clapped Rory on the back appreciatively as he came up to him. Rory rolled his eyes and sent Amy a significant look before following Rose down the manhole.

Rose was leant against the wall, breathing heavily when he joined her. “You okay?” He asked.

Rose flashed the light around the damp room. “Yeah, just… felt a bit sick.” She answered vaguely, squinting into the darkness. She couldn’t have sworn she saw something before she’d looked up to see Rory… She started walking forward. “Come on,” she said over her shoulder.

Rory looked around anxiously as they went. “I keep thinking I hear things.”

Rose nodded and ran her hand along the grimey stone wall, calling on her time sense. “That’s odd…” She breathed. “These tunnels are old… Really old. How can they be really old and no one notice them?” They came across a maintenance hatch and Rose tried the handle. “It’s locked.” She huffed, getting down on her knees and pulling out her hair clip. “Why do people always lock things?”

“Something bad?” Rory asked, or more assumed.

“Almost definitely…” Rose mumbled, as she messed with the tumblers.

“And you’re going to open it. Of course you are.” Rory said dryly, looking around them and then over to her rigid posture. “Something’s wrong.” He observed, squinting at her.

Rose looked over her shoulder at their surroundings. “What? Something there?”

Rory shook his head. “No- no. With you. There’s something… bothering you.” He said, not happy with his own phrasing but at a loss for any other as he watched her turn back around- shoulders tight.

She let a few moments pass as she steeled herself and worked on the lock, aware of Rory’s eyes on her back. She spoke finally right when she heard the lock click. “I’m pregnant.” She mumbled, and it was the first time she’d said the words out loud since she read the results on the scanner more than a week ago.

Rory’s eyes widened. Off all the answers, he was least expecting that one. “Does The Doctor-”

Rose cut him off with a self-deprecating laugh as she sat back on her haunches, staring unseeingly at the unlocked door. “No, of course not.” She shook her head. “I’m too much of a coward to tell him.”

Everything about the woman’s posture said ‘stay back’ but Rory stepped forwards anyway. “Rose, why…” He drifted off, again unsure of how to ask such a complicated question.

It didn’t really need saying though, as she answered it anyway. “I keep thinking, maybe if I don’t say anything it won’t be real. That we won’t have to go through that pain again.” She looked up to
Rory finally, tears in her eyes, and he let out a stuttering breath at the sight.

“Rose, you can’t know that that will happen again.” He told her.

She clenched her eyes shut at the onslaught of emotions and threw up small barriers as quickly and as quietly as she could. “I hate keeping stuff from him.” She said miserably, instead of disputing his assurances. “I can’t even lie to him. Just have to lock it up in my head. Keep us busy enough that he won’t notice my emotions.” She let out another miserable chuckle as she shook her head vehemently. “I can’t do this to him again. I can’t hurt him like that again.”

Rory knelt down next to her at that. “Rose, it wasn’t your fault.” He told her, silently wondering how this powerhouse of a woman had been carrying around that much grief and self-loathing for so long.

She sniffed and looked up to him at that. “Isn’t it?” She bit out. “The stupid human girl who looked into the time vortex. That’s why she didn’t make it. I’m too broken, too-”

“No.” Rory cut her off before she could continue berating herself, putting his hands on her shoulders. “Stop. That isn’t fair, Rose. To either of you.”

Rose opened her mouth, not completely sure what she was going to say. But then the lights started flickering, and when she looked up they were surrounded by Silence.

Amy wandered over to Canton as he was studying the operating table that made her a little nauseous. “So you were kicked out of the FBI because you had attitude problems?” She asked him curiously.

“No.” He answered curtly, not looking up to her. “I just wanted to get married.”

Amy furrowed her brow at that. “Is that a crime?”

“Yes.” He said vaguely, but didn’t offer any more when Amy tilted her head at him, instead pointing over to The Doctor. “Doctor who, exactly?”

“Ah... That’s classified.” Amy smirked.

“Classified by whom?” Canton raised his eyebrows.

Amy looked down at that. “God knows...” She breathed, glancing over her shoulder to the alien in question- who was currently shoving his head in a crate that came up to his waist.

“Do you work for him?” Canton went on, walking around to her.

“He’s my friend,” she answered quickly, but then squinted. “If friend is the right word... He walked me down the aisle. Him and Rose...” Her headache was making itself known again and she rubbed at her brow. “Stuff is getting in the way.” She mumbled distractedly, somewhat offhandedly.

“Stuff does that.” Canton commented, but she barely heard him over the ringing in her ears.

Suddenly a voice was yelling frantically from somewhere in the warehouse. “Help me!” A little girl cried desperately. Making The Doctor stand up straight and spin around.

Canton dropped the bone saw he’d been examining to pull his gun and walk around Amy. “That’s
her.” He said gruffly, and ran off as the girl called for help again.

Amy suddenly doubled over, holding her head as the pain began making her vision blur. She heard The Doctor call her name distantly, and she reached out blindly for his arm.

“What’s wrong?” He asked her, looking between her and the direction of the little girl.

Amy shook her head, huffing. “I can’t- there’s something.” The ringing got worse and she cut herself off again, allowing him to pull her towards the child.

When they rounded the corner they found Canton laying on the ground, weapon discarded next to him unfired. “Is he alright?” Amy asked, blinking away the stars.

The Doctor scanned him quickly with the sonic. “Just unconscious.” He breathed. “Got a proper whack.”

Amy spun around and The Doctor stood up as loud slow footsteps echoed through the warehouse-getting closer to them. Her head was positively screaming at her. Trying to tell her something she couldn’t understand. Her eyes widened when an astronaut rounded the corner.

“Spaceman…” Amy breathed, heart pounding and eyes stinging with unshed tears even as she couldn’t understand why. The astronaut raised it’s arm- pointing at The Doctor, and Amy acted without her own permission. “GET DOWN!” She screamed at The Doctor.

The astronaut’s raised it’s visor- revealing the face of a scared little girl trapped inside. “Help me!” She begged desperately, and then the weapons system fired- just barely missing Amy as she tackled The Doctor to the ground.

Chapter End Notes

New chapter Thursday my dudes don’t worry.

I feel like now is a good time to remind everyone that this is a rewrite- and how the show not only would have gone if Rose was there, but also me just making changes that I think makes it a better story. In this universe "River" is just Melody Pond. She had a (semi) normal childhood. She goes by River when around previous versions of her parents and The Doctor and Rose to keep the timelines in tact (and also maybe because she thinks it’s quite clever). She’s a more-or-less regular teenager with access to time travel and a higher-than-average intellect due to growing up with Time Lords. She literally could not be the Astronaut.

What the heck is up with Amy though...

ANYWAY! I love you all and I can't thank you enough for all the support ❤️ ;)
The little girl trapped in the space suit apparently needed time for the weapon’s system to recharge. Canton woke up with the shot, and The Doctor was able to pull both him and Amy to standing and haul them away from the astronaut.

He ran to the storm drain and screeched to a halt as Rose and Rory hauled themselves up- both panting with their eyes wide with fear. “What is it? What’s down there?” The Doctor asked her frantically as she helped her up.

“Nothing.” Rose answered automatically, but then shook her head. “No- that’s not-” she looked up to him fearfully. “I don’t remember.”

“We were scared and running.” Rory said, still breathing heavily, hands on his knees. “But I don’t remember why.”

Before anyone could attempt to explain that, the little girl called out again. “Help me! Please!” She cried desperately.

The Doctor pulled Rose by the hand and ran their group through the warehouse further from the astronaut. “Doctor why are we running away from the little girl?” Rose yelled, looking over her shoulder.

Her blood ran cold and she pulled him to stop before he could answer. “Rose, we have to-” He cut himself as he saw it. Standing ten feet in front of them. He felt the memories come back to Rose- the memories she forgot.

“What the hell is that?” Canton asked- they were all staring at the alien now.

“Silence will fall.” It rasped, and slowly raised its three-fingered hand.

The Doctor knew what that gesture meant now- even if the familiar words evaded him. He took Rose’s hand again and called to the rest of the group. “When I say so- run.” He ordered. “Keep looking over your shoulder, and no matter what you do- do not stop running until you reach the TARDIS.” He paused, attempting to commit the alien to memory. “Now, RUN!” He yelled, turning on the spot and tugging Rose with him- thankful to see the humans following, but forgetting why until he looked over his shoulder.
Canton cooperated until they reached the bottom of the stairs and he came to a stop. “What the hell is going on?” He demanded angrily.

“Look behind you.” The Doctor said, they were all focused on the alien just over the man’s shoulder.

“There’s nothing behind me!” He yelled, refusing to look.

“Canton, just look.” Rose implored him, and it was only the genuine fear in her voice that finally made him turn. The alien creature he’d forgotten was mere inches from his face now. Rose grabbed his arm and hauled him towards the TARDIS.

Rose doubled over in pain as soon as they passed the threshold, yanking her hand from The Doctor to clutch at her stomach. “Rose!” He exclaimed, stopping to put a hand on the small of her back as she winced. “What is it, love? What’s happening?”

She looked up to him, tears in her eyes. “I’m pregnant.” She finally told him, voice small.

Behind him Amy’s hand flung to her mouth as she let out a small gasp, but The Doctor only stared down at his wife in shock. “What?”

Rory looked around the ship confusedly. “Weren’t we running from something?” He asked, not sarcastically.

Rose closed her eyes and straightened up, ignoring all the questions The Doctor was currently berraging her with. “There’s- there’s aliens out there- a lot of them.” She said, forcing the words out as they attempted to leave her.

Amy grabbed at her head that was still killing her. “I don’t- I can’t- remember.” She shook her head, looking to Rose desperately for the answers.

Canton spoke up then. “Will someone please just explain what the hell is going on?” He demanded again.

The TARDIS shook violently at that, and when they all blinked they found themselves in different places.

The Doctor screamed and pounded on the locked TARDIS doors in anguish as he was on suddenly back in the Oval Office. “NO! NO! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!” He spit angrily at the ship as he felt Rose now thousands of miles away from him. “YOU’VE LEFT HER ALL ALONE! THEM! BOTH OF THEM!” He accused the TARDIS, falling to his knees as he hit her-paying no mind to the Secret Service Agents and President behind him.

“My God, he’s insane.” President Nixon breathed, wide-eyed, and then looked to his men. “Arrest him. Bring him and the box to Area 51.” He ordered

He didn’t stop yelling hoarse insults to his home as Canton pinned his arms behind his back. Tears ran down his face as the only thing on his mind was Rose, their child, and one all-encompassing, terrifying thought: It's happening again.

Tears rolled when the thought hit Rose full-force as she ran down the streets of Boston. She
clutched at her stomach and turned down an alley- hitting the brick wall hard as she failed to hold back her sobs.

Neither one of them were able to offer comfort as they both suffered without the other.

Amy and Rory blinked up at the night sky as they landed in Kansas and Arkansas respectively. They pulled out their phones.

Two months later…

[Valley of the Gods, Utah]

Amy ran for her life from the black four wheel drive vehicle coming down the dirt roads of the desert plains. Another identical car came over the horizon ahead of her, and she took a sharp left turn- but screeched to a halt on a scream as she nearly flew over the cliff face. The jeeps pulled up behind her. She was cornered.

“Canton.” She growled out, panting, as the man exited one of the cars.

“Miss Pond.” He said easily, hands in his suit pockets as behind him four men aimed their guns at her. He motioned to one of them and he unfurled a polyester thing onto the red desert ground.

“Is that a body bag?” She asked, horrified.

Canton smirked. “Yes, it is.”

Her eyes flickered up to meet his. “It’s empty.” She said quietly.

“How ’bout that.” He answered- blasé as he took the gun from his holster and aimed it at her chest. The shot echoed against the cliffs, and Amy fell to the ground- motionless.

[Area 51, Nevada]

Canton sauntered into the prisoner holding room. The usual message of ‘All Visitors to Remain Behind The Yellow Line’ repeating itself over the PA system.

The Doctor sat in the middle of the room chained to a chair in a straight jacket- a yellow painted circle surrounding him on the raised platform. The large black bricks were just beginning to be placed height-wise. The Doctor switched between struggling against his restraints and slouched over pathetically.

Canton cleared his throat and the alien looked up- glaring at him. “We found Amy Pond.” He informed him. “She had strange markings on her arm.” He held up the picture of Amy’s lifeless arm against the dirt, tally marks covering it. He threw the whole file over the line for The Doctor to see. “Do you know what they are?”

The Doctor only continued to stare at him with hate-filled eyes. “Where is my wife?” He bit out-the same thing he always said. Has been saying.
Rose was wearing a tight, floor-length, low cut red dress as she made her way through the unfinished building. The wind was whipping the plastic sheets around erratically and she clutched the felt pen in her hand. She counted the tally marks on her forearms and up to her shoulders. At least fifty Silence were with her. She looked up and saw another but hardly startled as she added another mark to her skin.

“Rose! Rose Tyler!” A derisive voice rang through the metallic walls, and she spun around quickly. When she looked back over her shoulder there was nothing there.

She stood her ground. Not bothering to run when there was nowhere to go. Not anymore.

Canton and six more armed FBI agents came through the plastic barriers. “Don’t move. It’s over.” He said, steadying his gun at her chest.

“They’re here, Canton.” Rose whispered, eyes glinting. “They’re everywhere.”

He smirked. “I know. America is being invaded.” He mocked her.

Rose tilted her head. “You’ve already been invaded.” She informed him, voice low. “America is occupied.” She didn’t break eye contact, he swallowed.

The gun shot rang out against the metal structure.

Canton smirked at the familiar question yelled at him angrily upon his entrance.

“What? You can’t feel her in your head anymore, Doctor?” He taunted.

The Doctor growled and struggled against the chains. After a few moments of screaming insults at the man in Gallifreyan he slouched against the chair miserably and looked around as the black bricks were stacked higher- fusing together seamlessly as they were put in place.

“Zero balance dwarf star alloy. The densest material in the universe.” He observed emotionlessly, his voice devoid of anything. “Nothing gets through that.” He looked back up to Canton with nothing but loathing behind his eyes. “You’re building me the perfect prison… And it still won’t be enough.” Hit bit out the last words, lunging towards the man angrily, but getting held back by the restraints. He growled a bit like a caged animal.

Rory lasted the longest.

He threw his phone off the dam when Rose stopped answering, and turned around with his hands in the air when he heard the the warning shots.

He was covered in dirt and grime now from months of running through the desert. Every inch of his skin had tally marks from the pen he had wrapped around his neck with an old piece of rope and
a rubber band he’d found on the side of the road. “What are you waiting for?” He bit out, flinging his hands down when he realised the futility in the gesture.

“I’m waiting for you to run. It’d look better if I shot you while you’re running.” Canton answered, but shrugged when Rory stood his ground. “Then again– looks aren’t everything.”

Rory fell to the ground with the sound of gunfire.

[Area 51]

When Canton returned to the base he ordered the body bags be dragged into the newly completed prison.

“I want you to know where you stand, Doctor.” He said, as the bodies were dropped around him in the solid black cube of a prison cell.

“In a cell.” The Doctor answered, looking around at the body bags as the military men filed out.

“In the perfect cell.” Canton corrected, placing his fingers on the airlock after the last uniform filed out. The bricks moved around towards the entrance. “Nothing can penetrate these walls. Not a sound, not a radio wave, not the tiniest particle of anything.” He told him, and the alloy sealed itself completely just as he finished– locking them in. He smirked. “So I guess they can’t hear us, right?”

“Good work Canton.” The Doctor answered, still quiet to be sure. “Door sealed?”

“You bet.”

He stood up immediately at the words. Shoving off the loose chain and straight jacket easily. Around him all three body bags sat up straight- gasping for air. He ran over to Rose as soon as he was free and pulled the zipper the rest of the way down. “Are you okay?” He asked frantically.

Rose chuckled half-heartedly and let him help her to her bare feet. “Yeah, yeah. I’m alright. You?”

In lieu of answering her grabbed her by the waist and hauled her into the fiercest hug he’d given her a long while. Rose held back the tears that threatened to spill over at being with him again and tucked her face into his neck. “You smell awful.” She mumbled into his sweaty shoulder.

“Yeah, well I think you smell like sunshine and roses.” He teased (not missing the irony), and setting her back on her feet as she laughed.

She reached up to run a hand over his face. Taking in the scraggly beard and four-inch hair. “You look homeless.” She giggled, but went up on her toes to kiss him anyway.

Amy hugged and kissed Rory as well -though maybe not as desperately as The Doctor and Rose (which was understandable– circumstances of the last two months considered)- and looked over to Canton. “Won’t it look odd that you’re staying in here with us?” She questioned.

Canton shrugged. “Odd, but not alarming. They know there’s no way out of this place.”

The Doctor finally tore himself away from Rose at that to grin up at the rest of the group. “Exactly!” He exclaimed, pulling on his braces. “Whatever they think we’re doing in here– they know we’re not going anywhere.” He let the suspenders snap back against his chest and huffed
dramatically- falling to the side and landing against an invisible barrier that shimmered to reveal that wonderful blue box.

Amy laughed merrily at that and The Doctor smirked, snapping his fingers to allow the doors to fly open and reveal the sorely-missed interior of the ship. “Shall we?” He smirked, and the humans ran for the doors. Rose watched them go and took his hand before following them in.

“So!” The Doctor exclaimed, running up the stairs to the console with the rest of them and flipping a switch. “We know they’re everywhere. Not just a landing party, an occupying force, and they have been here a very, very long time. But nobody knows that, because no one can remember them.”

“So what are they up to?” Canton asked, watching the alien couple fly around their spaceship controls.

“No idea. But the good news is, we’ve got a secret weapon.” The Doctor grinned madly and pulled the dematerialisation lever, making them all lurch forward for a hand-hold.

“And what’s that?” Canton raised his eyebrows.

The Doctor opened his mouth to answer, but Rose spun a dial and hit a button quickly- stopping their flight towards wherever The Doctor was taking them and keeping them stable in the vortex. “First, washing up.” She said seriously, looking around to Amy, Rory, and The Doctor maternally.

Amy and Rory- still caked in dirt and covered in tally marks from months wandering through the desert- sent her grateful looks and flew up the stairs towards their room before The Doctor could protest and send them on another adventure.

The Doctor only pouted for a moment though before nodding- conceding her point. “Right, quite right.” He agreed, and looked over to Canton. “Galley’s round the corner there if you fancy a cuppa- or whatever it is Americans do.” He informed him pointing towards the corridor. “We’ll be right back.” He smirked and took Rose’s hand, leading them up opposite stairs towards the landing with their room.

When they were safely alone behind closed doors Rose finally allowed herself to collapse against the wall, dropping her fair-facade in an instant. The Doctor did the same. She shook her head and choked back a sob. “I’m so sorry.” She said miserably. “I shouldn’t have told you. I knew- I knew something like this was going to happen again.”

His arms were around her in an instant. “Don’t say that. Please don’t say that.” He begged as she pressed her face into his chest. “I would rather know. I would always rather know.” He tightened his grip and pressed his lips to her hair. “And I would never, ever, want you to go through something alone just to spare my feelings.” He blinked back his tears.

“I’m sorry.” She said again.

“It’s okay.” He assured her quietly.

She sniffed and shook her head. “No it isn’t.”

“Then it will be.” He told her, voice somehow both soft and fierce. He pulled back and wiped the tears from her cheeks. He studied her eyes and smiled bravely- managing one out of her as well. “Now, I think we could both do with a shower.” He teased, tucking a clumped strand of blond hair behind her ear.
“It was the hardest phone call of my life.” Rory told Amy as she towelled her hair, collapsing against the bed at the memory of Rose calling him in tears when she had realised she’d lost the baby.

Amy looked over to him sadly. “I’m sorry I was out of range for so long.”

He shook his head vaguely in answer- staring up at the ceiling. “She doesn’t deserve all this. They deserve so much better.” He said, suddenly angry at the universe.

Amy nodded in agreement and came to stand next him. She held her hand out. “Come on- they’ll be back down by now.” She said quietly, and smiled when he took her hand.

Rose and The (now clean shaven) Doctor were making their way back down to the console room when Amy and Rory arrived back. Canton was still standing around awkwardly. “So!” The Doctor started all false-cheer and frantic energy. He grabbed a small device from underneath the console. “Two months! What have we learned?” He asked them all, and then spun around to Canton- injecting his palm with something from the device and earning an angry ‘ow!’ from the detective that he promptly ignored.

“Well they’re everywhere.” Rory answered. “Every state in America- ahh!” He cut himself off with a shout as the Doctor also injected his hand.

“Not just America, the entire world.” The Doctor corrected and he moved on to Amy.

Rose pulled the monitor towards her. “There’s a greater concentration here though.” She told him, pulling up the map of America and zooming in on central Florida.

Amy tugged her hand away from him as he tried to inject her with whatever he had Canton and Rory. “Won’t hurt a bit.” He said, and took her hand back- pulling the trigger before she could protest again.

“Ow!” Amy growled, holding her hand.

“Yeah, there see- I lied.” He smirked and patted her on the head- ignoring her glare.

Canton looked between the four of them. “So you’ve seen these things, but you don’t remember them?” He asked incredulously.

“You’ve seen them too.” Rose answered distractedly, still typing into the console. “That night at the warehouse.” She huffed and looked up to him. “While you were pretending to hunt us down, we saw hundreds of those things- and we still have no idea what they look like.”

“It’s like they edit themselves out of your memory as soon as you look away. The exact second you're not looking at them, you can't remember anything.” Rory explained.

“So that’s why you marked your skin then.” Canton realised, nodding towards the felt pens still hanging from Amy’s and Rory’s necks.

“Rose’s idea.” Amy said, leaning back against the railing. “It was the only way we’d know if we’d had an encounter.”

“How long have they been here?” Canton asked.
“That's what we've spent the last two months trying to find out.” Amy huffed.

“Not easy, if you can't remember anything you discover.” Rory added.

“Well, how long do you think, then?” He pressed looking toward The Doctor and Rose. Rose shrugged noncommittally, but The Doctor walked up to him seriously.

“As long as there's been something in the corner of your eye, or creaking in your house, or breathing under your bed, or voices through a wall.” He said. “They've been running your lives for a very long time now, so keep this straight in your head—” at this he turned to the rest of his companions. “We are not fighting an alien invasion, we're leading a revolution. And today, the battle begins.”

“How?”

“Like this.” The Doctor smirked, and reached behind him in an attempt to inject Rose while she was distracted, but she grabbed the device from him before he could hit the trigger- not looking away from the monitor as she did.

He pouted while she grinned, turning the syringe gun towards her palm herself and barely wincing as she pulled the spring. She looked over his shoulder to Canton and held the device up as she loaded it with another microtube. “Nanorecorder.” She informed him, and injected The Doctor who pulled his hand back with an indignant ‘ow!’ She smirked as Amy and Rory laughed at him.

“It fuses with the cartilage in your hand.” She wriggled the fingers of her now slightly scarred hand for emphasis as she explained. “Then creates a telepathic connection with the speech centres of your brain- it'll pick up on your voice no matter what.”

Amy raised her eyebrows at that and looked down to the small bump in her palm, running a light finger over the device. “Telepathic? Like you and The Doctor?” She asked.

Rose chuckled at that. “Sort of,” she gave her, tilting her head, “but not as permanent.”

“So!” The Doctor said, spinning as he stepped up on the bottom stair. “The moment you see one of the creatures, you activate it—” He touched his ring finger to the center of his palm and beneath the skin the nanorecorder glowed, “—and describe aloud exactly what you’re seeing.”

He hit the device again and his last words repeated themselves from his hand. “Because the moment you break contact, you’re going to forget it happened. The light will flash if you've left yourself a message.” He looked around to them all seriously. “You keep checking your hand. If you've had an encounter, that's the first you'll know about it.”

“Why didn’t you tell me all this before we started?” Canton asked as The Doctor hopped down and began messing with the controls on the console.

“I did.” He said, not looking up. “But even information about these creatures erases itself over time. I couldn’t refresh it because I couldn’t talk to you.” The Doctor spun back around and was looking at a spot over Canton’s shoulder- he followed suit, and when he turned back he felt the immediate inclination to adjust the alien’s bowtie.

They were all staring just behind him, eyes occasionally flickering to look at him incredulously. “What?” He asked gruffly, looking between the four of them. “What are you staring at?”

“Look at your hand.” Rose encouraged him lightly, though she didn’t look away from whatever was behind him.
He did as she said and felt his breath stutter when he saw the flashing light on his palm. “Why is it doing that?” He asked frantically.

“What does it mean if the light’s flashing?” The Doctor asked slowly. “What did I just tell you?”

“I haven’t-” Canton started.

“Play it.” The Doctor interrupted him, and after a moment’s pause he did.

“My God, how did it get in here?” The recording repeated Canton’s words from the seconds he could no longer remember

“Keep eye contact with the creature and, when I say, turn back, and when you do, straighten my bow tie.” The Doctor told him.

Canton sucked in a breath and turned around slowly. Standing just below them in front of the doors the alien creature from the warehouse was standing. How had he forgotten what it looked like? How had he forgotten it was standing right behind him?

“It’s a hologram, extrapolated from the photo on Amy's phone.” The Doctor explained as they continued to stare. “Take a good, long look.” He ordered, and then reached behind him to flip the image off. He snapped as they all turned to look at him. “You just saw an image of one of the creatures we’re fighting. Describe it to me.”

Canton opened his mouth, but paused, shaking his head. “I can’t.”

The Doctor looked down. “No, neither can I…” He agreed, but the looked up and pointed to Canton as a small memory resurfaced. “You straightened my bow tie because I planted the idea in your head while you were looking at the creature.” He pulled Rose around the console with the monitor, the humans following them.

Amy leaned around the screen to look at them. “So they could do that to people. You could be doing stuff and not really knowing why you’re doing it.”

“Like post-hypnotic suggestion.” Rory summed up, incredulously.

“Ruling the world with posthypnotic suggestion?” Amy repeated as a question to the Time Lords. They both nodded grimly.

The Doctor took a deep breath and clapped his hands together. “Now then! A little girl in a spacesuit- they got the suit from NASA, but where did they get the little girl?”

“It could be anywhere.” Canton said.

“Except they’d probably stay close to that warehouse, because why bother doing anything else?” The Doctor corrected him as he pulled up Rose’s search results for children’s homes around Cape Kennedy. “And they'd take her from somewhere that would cause the least amount of attention…” He added, and looked over to Rose in silent question of what she wanted to do.

“Alright then.” She said, already pulling her hair up in preparation. “You go to the space center- do whatever it is you’re planning with Apollo 11.” She paused, making split second decision- she couldn’t do orphanages. Not now. “Amy and Canton can check out those children’s homes- try and find the little girl.” She looked over to Amy who nodded in agreement, and she breathed a sigh of relief. “Me ’n Rory will stay with the President- he’s the most likely target for these things.” She bit her lip and reached up to straighten her husband’s bowtie. “And I have a feeling you’re gonna
need bailing out when you inevitably get caught messing about the Americans’ space rocket.”

He let out an indignant scoff at that, wrinkling his nose at her. “I can be stealthy!” He protested.

Rose grinned and that and went up on her toes to quickly kiss the pout off his lips. “No you can’t” she teased him easily, and then twirled away from him to pull the materialisation lever and steer them out of the vortex.

The sun had already begun to set when the typical daily Floridian thunderstorm set it, making the normal grey moss that hung from the oak trees appear to be even more like old dirty laundry than normal. It was pouring as Canton and Amy ran up the dreary stone stairs of Graystark Hall Orphanage.

A small, seemingly perpetually-frightened, balding, mid-40s aged man opened the large chipping wood door so that only his face was visible. “Hello?” He had a strong southern accent.

Canton held up his old bureau credentials. “FBI. You must be Doctor Renfrew. Can we come in?”

“Well- the children are asleep.” Renfrew exasperated, somewhat squirrlishly, holding a handkerchief in between fidgeting fingers.

Amy, dressed in a black pantsuit now, leaned forward and smiled genially. “We’ll be very quiet,” she assured him.

“Is there… a problem?” He asked, looking between them.

“It’s about a missing child.” Canton answered, truthful yet vague.

“Well what are you-” Renfrew started, but cut himself off, eyes widening a bit before finally nodding. “Yes, yes, come in.” He mumbled, turning away from the door and leaving it adjacent for them to follow through.

Inside some creaking old wooden stairs led up torn paper-lined hallways. “This way,” Renfrew lead them. “Please excuse the writing.” He added with a motion towards the graffiti. “It keeps happening. I try to clean it up…” He picked up a bucket for emphasis and began absentmindedly scrubbing at the ‘GET OUT LEAVE NOW’ painted in daunting red paint across the third staircase wall.

“It’s the kids, yeah?” Amy asked, eyeing the writing warrily. “They did that?” She felt like she had that day at the warehouse. Her pulse was pounding behind her eyes and there was a ringing in her ears.

“Yes, yes… the children… it must be… yes…” Renfrew answered weirdly, reaching up, his sleeve coming back as he did to reveal ‘GET OUT’ scribbled aggressively on his wrist. Amy and Canton shared a look. “Anyway…” He went on, looking towards the landing. “My office is… this way…” He didn’t sound at all sure about the fact though as he began walking down the flickering corridor.

“We nearly didn’t come to this place.” Canton told him as the followed. “I understood Graystark Hall was closed in ‘67.”

“That's the plan, yes.” He answered distractedly.”

“The plan?” Amy questioned, looking around the dilapidated building and staving off the nausea.
“Not long now…” Renfrew nodded.

Canton eyed the man’s back as he followed him up the stairs, a sneaking suspicion slowly confirming itself the more this man said. “It's 1969.” He told him.

Renfrew turned around to look at him, holding his hands up. “No, no. We close in ’67. That’s the plan, yes.”

“You misunderstood me, sir. It's 1969 now.” Canton tried being more specific.

“Why are you saying that?” Renfrew argued, seeming upset. “Of course it isn't.”


Renfrew opened his mouth to protest again, but his eyes met something over Amy’s shoulder, and after a moment his mouth slowly closed as he nodded. “…My office is this way…” He mumbled again, turning about to take a left from the main staircase they had been making their way up.

Amy stopped as she reached the landing. “I’ll check upstairs.” She told Canton glancing around the corner towards more peeling walls and dusty surfaces, her headache getting stronger with every step she took.

“Be careful.” Canton warned her, mistaking her pained features for general uneasiness, before turning to follow Renfrew up to his office.

She pushed open a door lined with old metal cots and abandoned children’s toys. More messages of ‘GET OUT NOW’ and ‘LEAVE ME ALONE’ were painted on the walls. She pulled out her mobile and called The Doctor.

“Amy.” He answered on the first ring.

“I think we found the place she was taken from.” She told him, shining her torch around the room.

“How do you know?”

Amy shook her head. “Those things have been here.” She said, looking over to even more graffiti as she said it. “But this whole place is abandoned. There’s only one guy here- and I think he’s lost it.”

“Repeated memory wipes fry your head eventually.” The Doctor explained quickly, his voice slightly muttered. “Find out what you can, but don’t hang around.” There was odd clanking sounds surrounding him.

Amy squinted. “Where are you?” She asked.

“Gotta go. Got company.” He answered vaguely before ringing off.

She only had half a second to be exasperated before terror set in when the door behind her slammed closed.

She ran to it quickly, pulling at the knob to no avail, and finally noticing the blinking light beneath the skin of her palm. Slowly, Amy raised her hand, and with shaking fingers played the message.

“ I can see them, but I think they're asleep. Get out. Just get out!”
Heartbeat racing frantically now she ran to the window - but they'd been painted shut. Her knuckles turn white in effort and finally she notices the tally marks now maring her skin. Chest heaving, she slowly raised her shaking hands in silent horror. Her ears started ringing again and her vision blurred as, if almost by impulse- or perhaps distant memory, she looked up to the ceiling.

Above her, an entire… cluster… of aliens hung from the ceiling, like slimy uncanny valley bats. In their sleep they make that horrible low rasping clicking sound.

Keeping her head up, Amy slowly started to make her way back to the door. She only made it a few paces though before her shin is colliding with a bucket and an alien’s eyes are snapping open to meet hers. She stifled a scream, and in front of her the door slowly creaked open.

She looked down, and the aliens are forgotten.

The Doctor snapped closed the maintenance panel above his head as he sat up to see the two scientists now stood in front of him at the top of Apollo 11. “Don't worry, I've put everything back the way I found it.” He assured them casually, but then caught sight of the bit of wire he still held in his hand. “Except this…” He added awkwardly. “There's always a bit left over, isn't there?”

Despite his good-natured tone and mostly-confident reassurances though, they called for security, and soon a (because apparently nevermind the fact that he broke into Apollo 11, he was just one man in a bowtie and didn’t warrant the use of any more staff) military police officer came to haul him down to a lecture haul (again, serious lack of respect for his impressiveness here), to sit in a plastic chair with his hands cuffed in front of him (sigh), in front of heads of security Mr. Grant and Mr. Gardner.

‘Trouble’ He told Rose, and his wife didn’t even bother asking what for, before shoving both Rory and the President of the United States into the TARDIS.

“Now, one more time, sir. How the hell did you get into the command module?” Gardner repeated.

The Doctor huffed, failing to stop his eyes from rolling as he sat forward. “I told you. I’m on a top secret mission for the President.” He said, and then proceeded to completely undermine the impressive statement, by shoving the chain of the handcuffs into his mouth, and attempting to bite through them- not unlike a child.

“Well, maybe if you just get President Nixon to assure us of that, sir, that would be swell.” Gardner replied sarcastically, with a indulgent smirk to Grant and the MP standing behind each of them.

The Doctor put his hands down, and distractedly attempted to blow the floppy hair out of his eyes. “I sent him a message.” He answered, looking at Mr. Gardner seriously.

Mr. Gardner gave him that ‘oh did you now’ look that The Doctor was, unfortunately, very familiar with. But the head of security did not have time to properly respond to the claim before the doors behind him opened- admitting President Nixon. Rory and Rose following behind him dressed in their secretary best- Rose in a TARDIS blue dress and pearls, Rory in a suit and specs.

Rory immediately wandered over to the model of Eagle sitting on the desk while Rose looked at The Doctor. ‘I called it.’ She sung, smirking. He wrinkled his nose sarcastically in turn while the security officers immediately jumped to their feet.

“Hello. I believe it's Mister Gardner. Is that correct? Head of Security?” Nixon greeted, stepping forward to shake the man’s hand.
Gardner was, understandably, at a loss for words. “Er, yes sir. Yes, Mr. President.”

Nixon turned to the other man. “Mr. Grant, is it?” He asked.

Grant smiled broadly at being called by name by the POTUS. “Yes, Mr. President.”

The President then, almost immediately, dropped into speech-mode, looking at the men seriously as he boosted their egos. “The hopes and dreams of millions of Americans stand here today at Cape Kennedy, and you’re the men who guard those dreams. On behalf of the American people, I thank you.”

Gardner bumbled over his reply, pausing for a few seconds in awe before finally stuttering out a response. “You- you’re welcome, Mr. President.”

Nixon turned to the assistant head. “I understand you have a baby on the way, Mr. Grant.” He said casually (though not really) making conversation, and effectively stopping the collective hearts of Rose and The Doctor as they broke all over again.

“What are you hoping for, a boy or a girl?” The President went on, and Rose looked down to her feet, making desperate attempts to swallow her emotions before they could swallow her, feeling The Doctor attempt to comfort her even as he did the same.

“Just a healthy American, sir.” Grant answered easily, in possibly the most American response one could possibly give to the question- earning a laugh, a hearty repeated-agreement, and another handshake from the President.

Unaware of the silent emotional turmoil going on either side of him, the President went on. “Now, fellas, listen.” He said seriously. “This man, here- code name the Doctor, is doing some work for me, personally. Could you cut him a little slack?”

At that, The Doctor stuffed all those feelings down for later, and grinned at the two men as they turned to look at him incredulously- giving them a little handcuffed wave for good measure. He winked at Rose when he saw her hold back giggles.

Gardner looked back to Nixon warily though. “Uh, Mister President, he did break in to Apollo 11…”

Nixon’s eyes flickered over to The Doctor and the Time Lord mouthed ‘sorry,’ awkwardly looking away from the President, even has he tried and failed to conceal his amusement.

“Well- well I’m sure he had good reason for that.” Nixon said, mostly as a way to brush it off, but a little bit of a pointed threat towards the alien. He chuckled casually to give the illusion of indifference and reassure the security guards. “I need you to release him now so he can get on with some very important work for the American people. Could you do that for me?” He asked them again.

“Well…” Grant started hesitantly, no idea what the protocol here was- if there even was a protocol.

“Son, I am your Commander in Chief.” Nixon reminded him sternly.

Gardner jumped in at that. “Then I guess that would be fine, Mister President.” He said.

Nixon smirked, “glad to hear it.” He crossed his arms and waited for the MP to uncuff The Doctor.

The Doctor grinned madly. “Thank you!” He said, standing up and shaking Grant’s and Gardner’s
hands, he snapped and pointed finger guns at The President before walking past him to take Rose by the hand and lead them all back to the TARDIS.

Rory stayed behind for half a second to continue messing with the scale model of the Eagle. He grabbed at the little satellite, and it broke off in his head. Eyes widening, and clearing his throat, he set the piece on the desk and turned to the guards now looking at him sternly. “America salutes you.” He let out awkwardly- in his very much British accent, before accidentally giving a British salute, and turning on his heel to chase the others into the time ship.

The rain was beating loudly against Doctor Renfrew’s small office window as Canton sifted through the filing cabinet. “This place,” he started, looking over to the man. “It’s been closed for years. What have you been doing?” He asked him.

Renfrew was staring at a piece of notebook paper where the words ‘GET OUT NOW’ were scribbled. “Oh… the child…” He answered distractedly. “She must be cared for. It's important.” He looked up to Canton and nodded matter of factly. “That's what they said.”

Canton squinted at him. “That’s what who said?”

Outside, thunder and lightning crashed.

Amy walked slowly through the creaking corridor, shining her torch along the darkened hallways. In front of her, one door stood out- it was metal, unlike the rotting wooden ones that surrounded it. The ringing in her eyes got louder as she approached it- like her brain was screaming at her to remember something she couldn’t. Blinking away the nausea, Amy took a deep breath and turned the door knob.

Inside was a little girl’s bedroom. A small cot with a pink patchwork quilt and an assortment of stuffed animals sat in one corner, some toys in another. Hanging from the ceiling, a delicate metal mobile hung, and Amy held her breath as she ran a reverent hand over the tiny stars.

Vision blurring, she turned to the night stand where an assortment of photographs rested. They were of the little girl, all in black in white, she couldn’t have been more than four years old, but it was hard to tell as Amy’s head was spinning. But then… a familiar piece of fabric caught her eye.

Amy let out a small gasp when she saw it- resting against the lace doily, that red piece of fabric- a bowtie. His bowtie. It had to be. Hands shaking, she picked it up, and nearly blacked out from the headache it caused.

She spun around as loud, halting footsteps, and labored breathing filled the room. The Astronaut was coming into the room. Amy braced the night stand behind her to keep herself from passing out as the ringing got louder. “Who are you?” She demanded. “I don’t understand. So just tell me who you are!”

The Astronaut raised the visor, revealing the little girl trapped inside. She blinked at Amy, her breath stuttering. Tears formed in Amy’s eyes and she couldn’t be sure why as the room tilted. “Please just tell me.” She tried again, slouching against the night stand now.

“Please , help me.” The little girl begged her desperately.

But it was too late, Amy passed out while on either side of her the aliens entered the room.
There was a slow knock on the door. Both men looked up to it, but it was Renfrew who answered it, opening it just a crack so that he could peek his head through like he had earlier with the front door. “It’s- it’s just some questions… Yes, I see.” He mumbled to whoever was there, and then shut the door back with a click and shuffled back to his desk chair.

“Who was that?” Canton asked, and squinted when he didn’t answer. “Doctor Renfrew. Who was that?”

Renfrew looked up to him slowly. “Who was who?” He asked.

Canton took a few steps towards the door, but it opened before he could reach it. The horrible humanoid alien stepped over the threshold, letting out rattling breaths as it stared Canton down menacingly.

“What are you?” Canton asked, keeping his voice level as he closed his fist and clicked the nanorecorder on. “You can tell me, because I won't remember. You invaded us. You're everywhere.”

Amy screamed came from down the hall and it took everything in Canton not to make a mad dash out as she begged for his help. “Help me! Canton! Please! I can't see! Somebody, help me!”

He kept his eyes on the alien. “Are you armed?” He asked it.

The alien hissed. “We are the Silence.” It told him. “This world is ours. We have ruled it since the wheel, and the fire. We have no need of weapons.”

“Yeah?” Canton asked, reaching for his gun. In less than a second he’d pulled his weapon and fired three shots into the Silence’s chest- bringing it to his knees with a loud rasping cry. “Welcome to America.” He muttered, and stepped over the alien. He ran out of the office and down the corridor. “Amy!”

Back in the Oval Office The Doctor was repeating everything Rose had said before they’d gone to save him at the space center. “You have to tape everything that happens in this office. Every word, or you won't know if you're under the influence.”

Nixon stood up, placing his hands firmly on his desk. “Doctor, you have to give me more than this.” He demanded gruffly. “What were you doing to Apollo 11?”

“Thing. A clever thing.” He answered flippantly. “Now, no more questions. You have to trust me, and nobody else.” The Time Lord levelled the President with a serious look, and behind him the TARDIS door flung open.

“Doctor, it’s Canton. Amy’s in trouble.” She told him, holding her mobile to her chest, her eyes wide with fear.

The Doctor nodded towards the President before spinning on his heel to follow Rose into their ship.

Canton follows Amy’s pleas for help to the out-of-place metal bedroom door on the top floor.
“Amy!” He yelled, twisting the handle, but it’s locked. “Amy, can you hear me? Amy, I’m going to try to blow the lock. I need you to stand back.” He warned her, he took a step back, holding his gun towards the door knob.

“Okay, gun down! I’ve got it!” The Doctor yelled, careening around the corner with Rose and Rory on his heels.

“Amy we’re here! Are you okay?” Rory called through the door as The Doctor sonicked the lock.

“I can’t see.” Amy sobbed, and finally the lock clicked and they all run into the room.

The spacesuit was lying motionless on the floor next to the bed, and Rose went to kneel down next to it She pulled up the visor of the helmet. “It’s empty.” She informed them quietly.

“Where is she?” Rory asked frantically, looking around the Amy-less room and to the Time Lords.

Their eyes met, and Amy’s voice filled the room again. “It’s dark. So dark. I don’t know where I am. Please, can anybody hear me?” She begged. Everyone looked to the floor where Amy’s nanorecorder was flashing against the stained rug.

Rory knelt down slowly, and picked up the small device carefully. He looked up to The Doctor. “They took this out of her. How did they do that?” He asked him frantically. “Why can I still hear her?”

Amy’s sobs filled the room as The Doctor ran a hand down his face before dropping both his arms limply to his sides, hands fidgeting and he rocked on his heels. He couldn’t stop failing. He

“Um,” he blinked rapidly. “It defaults to live.” He explained quietly. “This is current. Wherever she is right now, this is what she’s saying.”

Rory stared at The Doctor in horror before turning his back on him and holding the recorder to his lips. “Amy, can you hear me? We’re coming for you. Wherever you are, we’re coming, I swear.”

He said

Rose shook her head slowly and rose to her feet. “She can't hear you. I'm sorry, Rory. It's one way.”

Rory turned on the couple, eyes flaring in anger. “She can always hear me. Always. Wherever she is, and she always knows that I am coming for her.” He growled. “Do you understand me? Always.”

Their collective hearts clenched as Amy’s desperate sobs and pleas for help came again. It wasn’t something any of them were used to hearing- Amy defeated.

Rory set the couple with a hard look. “We’re coming. I swear.” He promised Amy, daring the aliens to try and argue with the sentiment. They didn’t.

Doctor Renfrew came down the hall then. “Hello? Is somebody there?” He asked, and then breathed a sigh when he saw all of them standing there. “I- I think someone has been shot. I think we should help. We-” He cut himself off, looking down as he lost his train of thought. “I can’t... I can’t remember.” He mumbled.

The Doctor paused only for a moment before pushing past Renfrew and running towards the office with Canton. Rose looked to Rory pleadingly for a beat, but he shoved past her to follow the others. She looked down to her feet and held back tears before following as well.
The Doctor took quick strides towards the injured alien in Renfrew’s office. He knelt down slowly as it backed up into a stack of books. “Okay. Who and what are you?” He demanded.

“Silence, Doctor, we are the Silence” The alien answered, its beady red eyes widening menancingly, and The Doctor and Rose stiffened at the word that had been following them for so long now. “And Silence will fall.”

Rose backed out of the room as her husband continued to ask questions the alien wouldn’t answer. She ran to the TARDIS and seconds later was landing it in Renfrew’s office with the shields on semi-permanence. As the ship materialised in the room, the Silence materialised in the control room. Rose breathed a sigh of relief and clicked her palm to stop the instructions from repeating again, and kept her eyes on the alien as the rest of them came through the doors.

“Rose,” The Doctor breathed as he took in the alien on their floor. “You’re brilliant.”

She gave him a half hearted smile and shifted over to the monitor to begin typing in coordinates.

When they landed back in the Area 51 containment facility and Canton opened the dwarf star prison wall to find ten armed militants surrounding him with their guns aimed. “Hello again.” He greeted them casually, shoving his hands in his pockets.

Ishem didn’t lower his weapon. “Sir, you've been in there for days. What the hell have you been doing?”

Canton raised his brows. After they’d lost Amy, they’d spent the last 24 hours attempting to find data on the Silence, examining the space suit, and nearly failing to keep the Silence hostage alive. He didn’t feel the need to tell Ishem that though. “It doesn't matter. I need Doctor Shepherd here right now.”

“Sir, I need to talk to Colonel Jefferson right now.” He protested incredulously, still holding his gun up.

Canton smirked. “No, you really don't.” He told him, and right on cue their Commander and Chief walked out of the prison- effectively getting the weapons lowered as all the soldiers came to attention.

“Er, hiya, fellows. I'm President Nixon.” He greeted them awkwardly, sending an exasperated look towards Canton. “I want to tell you, on behalf of the American people, how much we appreciate all of your hard work…”

Soon, President Nixon had disappeared with the TARDIS, leaving Canton alone with the Silence and Doctor Shepherd. “My God. What is it?” Shepherd breathed.

Canton sighed at the repeated question. “It’s just an alien, Doctor Shepherd.” He answered again.

Shepherd examined the bandages wrapped around the Silence’s torso. “Someone’s already been treating it.” He said, reaching out to the handiwork.

“Yeah, you’ve been treating it.” Canton told him, looking down to his watch- for the last hour.

Shepherd didn’t look away from the Silence this time- it had become somewhat of a 50/50 shot.
“Does Colonel Jefferson know this thing is here?” He demanded

“No.” Canton answered boredly.

“Then I’m going to tell him right now.” Shepherd said firmly, and looked down to collect his med kit.

“Again.” Canton mumbled.

Shepherd looked up to him as he stood, and blinked confusedly. “Sorry, what?”

Canton nodded. “Exactly.”

Doctor Shepherd shook his head and stepped out of the prison. “Sergeant, why was I called in here for no reason?” He demanded on Ishem angrily. Canton smirked and folded his hands in front of him as he looked down at the alien.

“You tend to my wounds.” It rasped. “You are foolish.”

Canton raised his eyebrows and pulled out Amy’s ‘mobile phone’ (or whatever) that Rose had handed him. “Why?” He asked, as he hit the button she’d told him to. “What would you do in my place?”

The alien made that horrible rasping clicking noise it was so fond of before it answered. “We have ruled your lives since your lives began. You should kill us all on sight - but you will never remember we were even here. Your will is ours.”

Canton tilted his head. “Yeah? Well, sorry to disappoint you, but thanks. That's exactly what I needed to hear.” He clicked the futuristic device closed and held it up for emphasis. “This is a videophone… Whatever a videophone is.” He informed the Silence with a smirk.

Rose crossed her arms as The Doctor ran the sonic over the spacesuit. They were back in the warehouse surrounded by alien and Earth tech. As soon as they’d put the suit on the lit operating table it was obvious that that’s where it was meant to be. The Doctor ran his fingers over all the wires taking up the majority of the room in the suit. “It's an exoskeleton. Basically, life support. There’s about twenty different kinds of alien tech in here.” He informed her. Behind them the television began the two minute countdown for the rocket launch.

Rose shook her head. “Who was she? Why put her in here?”

“You put this on, you don't even need to eat. The suit processes sunlight directly.” He explained quickly. “It's got built in weaponry, and a communications system that can hack into anything.”

Rose raised her brows at that. “Including the telephone network?”

He looked up to her. “Easily.”

Rose nodded as the pieces fell together. “And it defaults to the highest authority it can find. Little girl gets frightened, the most powerful man on Earth gets a phone call. The night terrors with a hotline to the White House.” She leaned over the suit with just enough room for the four year old girl to fit into. “Whatever they need her for, they need her alive.”

The Doctor shook his head incredulously. “What are the Silence doing? Raising a child?”
Rose huffed. ‘That’s the universe for you. We can’t have one. But an evil killer alien race? Sure, why not!’ She muttered bitterly in his head, he patted her arm in return and began pacing to keep himself (and her) from going down that line of thought.

He turned towards Rory who was bruting in the corner- still holding Amy’s nanorecorder. “The only way to save Amy is to work out what the Silence are doing.” The Doctor rambled. “And every single thing we learn about them brings us a step closer.” He wheeled around to point to Rose, as a thought struck him. “Of course, it’s possible she’s not just any little girl.”

Rose tilted her head towards the alien tech. “Well, I’d say she’s human, going by the life support software…” She started, but drifted off as she finally noticed the obvious.

“But?” Rory spoke up finally, recognising the look on her face.

“She climbed out of this suit.” Rose mumbled, picking up the frayed wires, bent metal reinforcements, and torn restraints. “Like, she forced her way out. Incredibly strong for a four year old…”

The Doctor smirked. “Incredibly strong and running away…” He mused. “I like her.”

Rose chuckled and shook her head at him. “We should be trying to find her.”

“Yes, I know. But how?” He implored her, and Rose bit her lip. “Besides, I have the strangest feeling she’s going to find us…” He drifted off and sent his wife a knowing look. “I know you do too.”

Rose nodded in agreement even as she hated it, but it was true. Something about this little girl’s timeline was knotting up in theirs. It was impossible to tell how, but it was obvious the universe was pulling them together somehow. Rose didn’t know if they should be running towards or away, but she didn’t feel like they’d have a choice in the end.

Rory pulled them out of their silent worries. “Why does it look like a NASA spacesuit?” He asked, nodding towards the telley where pictures of the NASA tech were rolling by.

The Doctor’s head snapped over to look at the television as well as more pieces fell into place. “Because that’s what the Silence do. Think about it. They don’t make anything themselves. They get other life forms to do it for them.”

“So they’re parasites?” Rose summarised.

The Doctor nodded. “Super-parasites, standing in the shadows of human history since the very beginning.” He spun on his heel as he worked through it- eyes shifting frantically back and forth. “We know they can influence human behaviour any way they want. If they’ve been doing that on a global scale for thousands of years…” He drifted off, eyes widening as the sounds of the space launch filled his ears more completely.

“Then what?” Rory asked, shaking his head.

“Then why did the human race suddenly decide to go to the moon?” Rose whispered ominously, getting Rory to turn towards the telley again as the ten-second countdown began. “Because the Silence needed a spacesuit.”

Two… One… Zero… Thirty-two minutes past the hour, Apollo 11 had liftoff.
Hours later Rory had gone back to sitting against the crates silently, nanorecorder in hand, and Rose’s phone vibrated with a message from Amy’s. She grinned when she opened the video from Canton- even as she did shudder at the hideous face she somehow kept forgetting.

“*You should kill us all on sight.*” The Silence said, and she passed the video to The Doctor who likewise grinned and blessed Canton’s existence in Gallifreyan. Rose squinted down to the spacesuit as the glove twitched.

“It’s repairing itself…” She realised suddenly, getting her husband’s attention back. She looked up to him. “If this thing could move on it’s own then-”

“Then when she’d said the spaceman was coming to eat her-” The Doctor interrupted, eyes widening as he followed the thought process.

“-that’s exactly what she meant.” Rose finished. They looked at each other seriously, but were brought out of their thoughts as Amy’s sobs grew louder. Rose leveled him with a look and he nodded, going over to sit next to Rory.

“She’ll be safe for now.” He told him. “No point in a dead hostage-” He cut himself off, realising too late how flippant that sounded.

Rory glared over to him. That was the thing about The Doctor- sometimes he was too good at putting all his emotions on the back burner. Rory knew, deep down, that both him and Rose were worried about Amy, but all he wanted to do was run for her- and they were insistent on keeping their heads on straight. The whole thing made him irrationally angry, and he failed at not having some part of him blaming them for Amy’s suffering. “Can’t you save her?” He asked, squinting at the alien he’d been led to believe could do anything- could save anyone.

“I can track that signal back. Take us right to her.” The Doctor told him honestly.

“Then why haven’t you?” He bit out crossly.

“Because then what?” The Doctor threw back seriously. “I find her and then what do I do? –This isn’t an alien invasion. They live here. This is their empire. This is kicking the Romans out of Rome.”

Rory stared at him incredulously. “Rome fell.”

The Doctor furrowed his brow. “I know. I was there.”

Rory huffed, again finding himself with that uncomfortable feeling of relating to The Doctor- of all people. “Yeah, so was I.” He clenched his jaw and looked off to point in the distance unseeingly.

The Doctor studied his profile. “Personal question-” He started.


The Doctor nodded, ignoring that as Rory shook his head in angry disbelief. “Do you ever remember it?” He asked him. “Two thousand years, waiting for Amy? The Last Centurion?”

“No.” Rory answered stubbornly.

“Are you lying?” The Doctor asked knowingly.

“Of course I’m lying.” Rory breathed after a moment.
“Of course you are.” The Doctor reaffirmed. “Not the sort of thing anyone forgets.”

“Every second of it.” Rory finally answered honestly. The Doctor raised his eyebrows at that, but Rory didn’t notice. “But it’s like it’s… tucked away in this one part of my mind. I can forget about it, most of the time.”

The Doctor’s breath caught at that. Suddenly remembering a very specific point in his life, a very specific face, that he kept locked away and shoved into the darkest corner of his mind- vehemently denying its existence at every turn.

Amy’s sobs pulled him out before he could drown. “Please, please, help me. Come get me, please.” She begged them.

When Amy woke up again she was strapped to a hand slanted metal table and a bright light was shining down in her eyes. “Where am I? Where is this?” She demanded frantically, tugging on her restraints.

Her vision readjusted in time to see a Silence turn towards her. “You are Amelia Pond.” He told her, like she wouldn’t know.

She squinted up to him incredulously. “Yeah, and you’re ugly.” She bit out, wrinkling her nose. “Has anyone mentioned that to you?” She snarked.

“We do you honour.” The alien said. “You will bring the Silence.”

Amy attempted to sit forward but was pulled back by the straps. “Whatever that means, you've made a big mistake, bringing me here, because wait until you see what's coming for you now.” She threatened through her teeth.

“You have been here many days.” The Silence informed her.

“No, I just got here. You just put me in here.” She protested.

“You have been here many days.”

“No, no. I can’t have been.” She argued angrily- frantically. It couldn’t be true. It couldn’t be-

“You will sleep now.” It rasped, leaning forwards, and Amy could feel her mind struggling not to obey.

“No- No Get off me. No!” She fought against the straps and tried to lean away from the Silence and escape at the same time. “No!”

But then that wonderful sound filled the room. Amy grinned, looking around the Silence towards the TARDIS. The Doctor stepped out, and paused as he took in his surroundings- he’s seen it before. “Oh.” He breathed. “Oh, interesting. Very Aickman Road. I’ve seen one of these before. Abandoned. I wonder how that happened? Oh, well I suppose I'm about to find out.” He shrugged it off and turned towards Rose and Rory… and then River, as she filed out as well. “River, keep one Silence in eyeshot at all times.” He told her sternly, and waiting until she nodded in understand before turning to the Silence- addressing them for the first time.

“Oh, hello. Sorry, were you in the middle of something?” He asked pleasantly as he walked around the center console and all seven Silence, casually carrying a television set. Rose stepped in front of
River to protect her, even as the young girl pulled a weapon. The Doctor, surprisingly, ignored this. 
“I just had to say, though, have you seen what’s on the telly?” He grinned, and put the set on the 
console and turned towards Amy. “Oh, hello, Amy. Are you all right? Want to watch some 
television?” He asked her. The Silence took a step towards him and he raised his eyebrows 
warningly. “Ah. Now, stay where you are. Because look at me, I’m confident. You want to watch 
that, me, when I’m confident.” He smirked and winked towards Rose who rolled her eyes. 

Rory, ignoring all of this, ran over to Amy and started working on getting her out of the restraints. 
“What’s he got?” Amy mumbled. 

Went to get River and you know… her gun.” He shook his head, eyes wide. “Rose isn’t even 
holding him back now.” He whispered, and Amy swallowed as she realised the implications of 
that. 

The Silence, were, again surprisingly, listening to The Doctor as he gave his spiel. It was obvious 
wherever they were from- they knew of the stories surrounding him. “Because all I really 
want to do is accept your total surrender and then I’ll let you go in peace.” He told them. “Yes, you've been 
interfering in human history for thousands of years. Yes, people have suffered and died, but what's 
the point in two hearts, if you can't be a bit forgiving, now and then, eh?” He stopped and looked 
up into the eyes of one of the Silence- who, fittingly, remained silent. “Ooo, the Silence. You guys 
take that seriously, don't you?” He said dryly, and started talking to the room at large again. 
“Okay, you got me. I'm lying. I'm not really going to let you go that easily. -Nice thought, but it's 
not Christmas.” He flicked on the telly, and got back into the Silence’s face. “First, you tell me 
about the girl. Who is she? Why is she important? What's she for?” 

The Silence only tilted his head and let out that rasping clicking growl. 

The Doctor rolled his eyes and turned to lean against the television set. “Guys, sorry, but you're 
way out of time. Now, come on. A bit of history for you.” He tapped on the TV’s glass. “Aren't 
you proud? Because you helped. Now, do you know how many people are watching this live on 
The telly? Half a billion. And that's nothing, because the human race will spread out among the 
stars. You just watch them fly. Billions and billions of them, for billions and billions of years, and 
every single one of them at some point in their lives, will look back at this man, taking that very 
first step, and they will never, ever forget it.” He told them, then smirked and looked over to Rose 
who pulled out her phone. 

“Ready?” She spoke into the receiver. 

Canton’s voice came over the speaker. “Ready.” He confirmed, and a series of beeps followed. 

Rory had stopped pulling at Amy’s restraints to watch this all unfold, all eyes were on the telly 
where Neil Armstrong was taking his first step onto the surface of the moon. “That’s one small 
step for man-” 

The screen rolled, and the injured Silence’s faced filled the screen. “You should kill us all on sight.” 

“One giant leap, for mankind.” Neil finished, as they all blinked, struggling to remember what 
had just happened. 

The Doctor, who’d been running through the plan in his head for days now, grinned. “And one 
whacking great kick up the backside for the Silence!” He yelled triumphantly at them. “You've 
given the order for your own execution, and the whole planet just heard you. You just raised an
army against yourself and now, for a thousand generations, you're going to be ordering them to destroy you every day.” He taunted them.

He stepped up to the Silence as it leered over him angrily, but he didn’t back down. Instead biting out his anger. “How fast can you run? Because today’s the day the human race throw you off their planet. They won’t even know they’re doing it. I think, quite possibly, the word you’re looking for right now is ‘oops.’”

The lights flickered as the Silence leant closer, and the electricity began zapping off of its body. Rose stepped forward then. “Run!” She ordered them all, and River immediately started firing her weapon, spinning in circles as she shot one Silence after another.

“I can’t get her out!” Rory yelled over the noise, pulling at Amy’s restraints. Rose tossed him the screwdriver, narrowly avoiding a laser beam in its path. He grabbed it deftly and got her out, dragging her towards the TARDIS as Rose stayed at their backs, covering them with her body and doing her best to slow down the time around the beams heading towards them. Rory shoved the sonic into The Doctor’s hands as they passed.

The Doctor backed up until he was at River’s back. Pointing the sonic out at the Silence as she fired her weapon. “Don't let them build to full power!” He ordered.

“I know, Gramps! There’s a reason I’m shooting!” She yelled back, somehow still managing to stay her sarcastic self in the middle of a war zone. She looked over her shoulder to him incredulously. “What are you doing?”

“Helping!” He answered- still aiming the sonic into the crowd.

“You've got a screwdriver!” She shouted. “Go build a cabinet!”

The Doctor scoffed at that. “That’s really rude!” He told her, rather paternally, but she ignored him-shoving him towards the TARDIS.

She spun around in a circle, shooting her weapon all the time. Finally, the noise died down, silence fell, and they all laid dead around her in the destroyed broken down makeshift time ship.

Chest heaving, she turned to see Rose leaning against the TARDIS, arms crossed.

River sighed and put the gun back in its holster. “Do I get a lecture now?” She asked her.

Rose shook her head. “Seeing you,” she whispered. “Knowing you’re from our future. Knowing we just asked you to do that…” She looked into the younger girl’s eyes imploringly. “What are we becoming? Where are we headed?”

River let out a long breath, running a hand through her hair. “This,” she started, waving a hand towards the gun on her thigh. “Isn’t because of you. I… I made some bad decisions when I was sixteen. Got caught up in a war that I shouldn’t have. You two are the ones who saved me from that.”

Rose nodded, accepting that even as it brought a million more questions. “You said we were heading towards something. That it was going to be hard… I think we’re there.” She informed her.

River nodded. “It’s not over yet.” She told her sadly.

“That little girl-” Rose started.
“She’ll find you.” River interrupted her, smirking a bit. “Sort of,” she added, tilting her head as she took in Rose’s sorrow. “You’ll be okay.” She promised the older woman- not for the first time, as she realised what point in her timeline it was.

Rose shook her head. “If you were anyone else I’d ask you how you knew that.” She laughed brokenly, still sounding miserable.

River smiled sadly at her, not really able to find the words to answer that. She pulled her wrist towards her and started typing in coordinates. “Well, I better get back to the future.” She smirked as she looked up, and was happy to see half-hearted smile from Rose at that. “If it makes you feel better I’m about to see you and hug the daylights out of you.”

Rose let out a little breathy laugh at that and nodded. “I look forward to it.” She told her honestly.

River gave a tongue-touched smile, and disappeared with a small zap from her vortex manipulator. Rose sighed and stepped back into the TARDIS.

After a short meeting with the President and Canton, they were back in the relative peace of the time vortex. Rose collapsed against the jump seat, and Amy came down next to her, laying her head in her lap. “I could sleep for a thousand years.” She informed them all as Rose ran comforting fingers through her hair.

The Doctor smirked and pulled the monitor towards him- away from the rest of them, quickly typing in a few commands. On the screen, the TARDIS was running a pregnancy test on Rose. The results flipped rapidly between Positive and Negative- refusing to land on one of them.

He looked up as he felt his wife’s mental prodding to see her furrowing her brow at him- picking up on his confusion and slight turmoil. He quickly locked up the the thoughts as surreptitiously as he could, and sent her a reassuring smile, breathing a sigh of relief when she accepted it and closed her eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies again for taking so long on this one, but then again, I did say Impossible Astronaut wouldn't be up until tomorrow- so technically I'm still ahead of schedule ;)

This incredibly long, confusing, and horribly explained episode was a piece of work. Moffatt's writing is sometimes near impossible to make coherent- much less actually entertaining. I did my best. A lot of the otherwise-unexplained actions of The Doctor from this episode can now be explained by emotional taxation.

This chapter yielded four outtakes (The Doctor/Rose, The Doctor, Canton, and Amy/Rory, respectively), and those scenes will be posted in Between The Madness in the next coming days. So be sure to subscribe there or to the entire MBF Universe

- comments keep writers writing ❤️
Amy was swinging her feet on the jump seat watching The Doctor do some general maintenance on the TARDIS. She looked around, vaguely wondering where their respective significant others went to, but not getting to hung up on it- it was a big ship afterall. She focused instead of the hard lines of The Doctor’s back and squinted suspiciously at them. “Something’s bothering you.” She said eventually, and it was less a question than it was an accusation.

The Doctor looked over his shoulder to her, and she raised her brows- daring him to deny it. He let out a long breath and walked over to sit down next to her. “Something’s always bothering me.” He said eventually, staring unseeingly towards the time rotor.

“Is that why we’ve been drifting in the time vortex for weeks- only stopping for lunch?” She asked him, bumping his shoulder a bit.

He smirked- couldn’t get anything past Amelia Pond. “There’s a question- there’s a lot of questions, but one big question. Needs answering. But I’ve been running from it for so long…” The Doctor looked over to her finally as he drifted of.

Amy nodded in understanding despite not understanding at all. It was something she found herself doing a lot around the Time Lord. She sighed, and leaned back against the seat. “You’re my best friend, you know.” She said eventually.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows at the non-sequitur, but followed her lead in leaning back. “Am I now?”

Amy nodded slowly. “When I was a little girl- and I was all alone in that too-big house, I used to pretend you and Rose were there. I could tell you anything. You weren’t going to call the therapist or tell me I was being silly…”

“I’m sorry.” The Doctor said as she paused. He knew where she was going with this.

Amy shook her head. “No, don’t apologise.” She looked over to him. “For any of it.” She added, and rested a hand on his shoulder until he met her eyes. “I know you’re not used to saying what’s on your mind, or voicing your fears out loud- at least not to anyone other than Rose, but…” She let out a long breath, studying him. “No one was ever happy they kept a secret.” She told him quietly.

The Doctor swallowed at that, and was halfway to opening his mouth, when suddenly the scanner started blaring madly at them, and both their heads snapped around to see the flashing red monitor. A message was written in Gallifreyan across the screen.

“What’s that say? What’s happening?” Amy asked as The Doctor stood back up.
Rose came around the corner then, running up the stairs to help her husband pilot the ship out of the time vortex. “Ship in distress,” she explained, hitting a button on the monitor for it to switch over to English. “Our scanners must have picked it up. Which I didn’t even think we had on anymore…” She shot a questioning look to The Doctor.

He shrugged and looked up to her through the cloister bell. “Must have bumped into accidentally.” He spun a dial and leaned over a number of panels to reach a lever. “Or she turned it back on herself looking for trouble.” He muttered.

Rose grinned at that and patted the console lovingly. “Quite right.” She said, sending The Doctor a teasing look that he couldn’t help but smile at.

Rory came down the stairs then, wrinkling his nose at the noise and plopping down next to Amy, sighing heavily. “Trouble again?” he asked her casually.

Amy smirked, watching the two Time Lords in their usual dance of landing the TARDIS. “Oh, definitely.” She breathed, shaking her head.

Rose had spent the better part of the last few weeks laying in bed miserable and useless, and was, at this point, getting fed up with herself. She was walking aimlessly through the TARDIS corridors looking for something to keep her mind occupied when she heard the distress signal. She grinned and silently thanked the ship before making her way to the console room.

And that’s why she barely even paused when on her way to open the doors her husband whispered ‘Are you sure?’ Rose simply grinned cheekily over her shoulder- she was more than sure.

She was surprised, however, when she was not met with the bright light that usually came with landing after being in space for so long, but rather dimly lit wooden panelling, and the distinct smell of salt mixed with the dusty surroundings and six inches of dirty water just below the crates the TARDIS had materialised on top of.

She stepped down with a splash and The Doctor, Amy, and Rory were coming down next to her as it finally clicked. “Oh…” she breathed. “We’re in the hull of a ship.”

“What, like a pirate ship?” Amy asked, eyes glowing.

The Doctor grinned in similar giddy excitement. He had missed this. He sloshed over to the the ladder leading up to a small hatch. They came up behind him as he shook the door- jarring loose the old rusting lock until finally it bust open.

A group of five, bearded, angry-looking pirates looked down on them- one of them pointing a gun directly at The Doctor’s forehead.

His smile had not faded though. “Yo ho ho!” He exclaimed merrily. The pirates furrowed their brows and stared down at him incredulously, however. “…Or does nobody actually say that?” He asked awkwardly, hands fidgeting a bit as behind him Rose bit back her snort.

The pirates all shared a look before hauling them all up by their arms and towards the Captain’s quarters.

“We really don’t mean any harm!” The Doctor protested, as Rory rolled his eyes at being manhandled (sort of expected at this point, travelling with these two), and Amy scoffed indignantly.
“Really, we saw you were in trouble—we’re here to help.” Rose told them as they pushed her into the small office. Three of the pirates stood between them and the door while the boatswain moved to stand just behind the Captain in front of them.

The surly captain studied them reproachfully. “We made no signal.” He said gruffly.

The Doctor went up on his toes—still full of giddy excitement. “Our sensors picked you up—ship in distress.” He said easily before Rose could stop him.

The Captain squinted. “Sensors?”

“Yes!” The Doctor answered quickly, until finally getting it. He rocked back on his heels and sucked his teeth. “Ohh… right. Problem word! Seventeenth century!” He looked between Amy and Rose who both nodded and raised their eyebrows (a little sarcastically). He motioned between him and Rose. “Our ship automatically, er, noticed...ish that your ship was having some bother.” He tried again.

“That big blue crate?” He demanded incredulously. The Doctor grinned and snap-pointed at him in confirmation. Rose sighed heavily.

The Boatswain spoke up then. “That is more magic, Captain Avery. They're spirits. How else would they have found their way below decks?”

“Well, er, I want to say multidimensional engineering…” he looked from Rose to Rory who both shook their heads, “but since you had a problem with sensors, I won't go there.” He finished, raising his hands a bit as he turned back to the captain. “Look, I'm the Doctor. This is Rose, Amy, Rory. We're sailors, same as you!” He exclaimed happily, punching the captain lightly in the chest and spinning on his heel to view the rest of the Pirates with a cheesy “Argh!” for emphasis. When he turned back around Captain Avery had a gun pointed at his head. “...Except for the gun thing…” The Doctor finished quietly. He squinted up at the captain. “And the beardiness.” He added with a distasteful squint for good measure.

“You're stowaways!” Captain Avery argued. “Only explanation. Eight days, we've been stranded here, becalmed. You must have stowed away before we sailed.”

The boatswain stepped forward. “Now what do we do with 'em?” He asked.

Captain Avery smirked menacingly. “Oh, I think they deserve our hospitality.” He said, a knowing glint behind his grey eyes.

Seconds later the crew was laughing as they pushed The Doctor out onto the plank, while three of them held back Rose, Amy, and Rory.

“I suppose that laughing like that is in the job description.” The Doctor said sarcastically as he wobbled a bit on the board. “Can you do the laugh? Check. Grab yourself a parrot. Welcome aboard.” He said dryly, checking his watch as he did.

“Stocks are low.” Avery told him gruffly. “Only one barrel of water remains. We don't need three more empty bellies to fill.” He spun towards the two men holding back Rose and Amy. “Take the doxies below- to the galley. They won’t need much feeding.” He ordered.

The Doctor practically growled at that, wheeling back around on the plank to stop them, but was held back by Captain Avery and the boatswain pointing their guns at his head and chest.
respectively. “Rose!” He called out worriedly while Rory angrily yelled “Hey!” and struggled against the hands holding his arms behind his back.

“Rory!” Amy called back. “A little help?”

Rory leant around the pirates. “Yeah. Hey, listen, right? She's not a doxy.”

Amy huffed and rolled her eyes. “I didn't mean just tell him off. Thanks anyway.” She sighed as both her’s and Rose’s heads were shoved below deck- Rose sending one last look to The Doctor as he watched her go with barely controlled anger.

‘Oh, they just dropped us down here.’ Rose informed him only a second later though. ‘Y’know how they underestimate women in past really gets under my skin sometimes… but I must say- comes in handy now and again too.’

He was too distracted by the gun at his back as he walked the plank to see what exactly she was doing down there that gave her such a cheeky edge to her voice, but he didn’t attempt to conceal his smirk at it either way. “If this is just because I’m a captain too, you know, you shouldn’t feel threatened.” He threw casually over his shoulder as he hopped up and down on the edge a bit. “Your ship is much bigger than mine. And I don't have the cool boots… Or a hat, even.”

He felt Rose’s amusement in the back of his mind, and if that wasn’t the most wonderful feeling…

“Time to go.” Avery bit out.

The Doctor looked over his shoulder to the crew. “A bit more laughter, guys!” He requested exasperatedly, making a ‘turn it up’ motion with his hands and grinning when they complied with more hearty pirate laughs from earlier. He bit the inside of his cheek, still needing to stall while Rose and Amy did whatever it was they were doing down there that was making Rose’s telepathic presence glow in the way it normally did when she was doing something clever. “Where are the rest of the crew?” He asked, finally voicing the question he’d been thinking on for a while. “This is a big ship. Big for five of you. I suppose the rest of them are hiding some place- and they're going to jump out and shout boo.”

“Boo!” Rose and Amy said together, smirking as the unwitting crew gasped at them behind, with stolen swords pointed outwards- now both dawned in long, oversized pirate coats and tricorn hats. Because of course that’s what had taken so long- a costume change.

“Throw the gun down.” Amy ordered, keeping her weapon level with the captain’s throat.

“Put the sword down. A sword could kill us all, girl.” Avery said slowly. All of the pirates now had the fear of God in their eyes at the ends of the two women’s swords.

“Yeah, thanks. That’s actually why I’m pointing it at you.” She said cockily, tilting the sharp metal edge closer to the captain for emphasis.

Barely a beat passed after that line before two of the crew came at Amy and Rose- wielding wooden staves as replacement for the traditional blade. The Doctor jumped down from the plank in desperate attempt to step between the women and the pirates, but Captain Avery pushed him forcefully back against the rigging, levelling his forearm against his chest as he struggled, fear marking his every feature now as the pirates came for his wife and best friend.

Amy and Rose were holding their own though. Fighting back the stave-wielding pirates easily as they avoided their cutlasses like the plague. Eventually finding themselves able to bring them to their knees and kick them to the ground.
Then Khalid, the dreadlocked pirate, backed them up against the stern as he swung a long piece of metal tied to a rope. Amy though, without a moment’s thought, she grabbed the hoist hanging next to her and jumped—flying across the four crew members and swinging her sword wildly as she did (The Doctor calling out and covering his eyes at the reckless act). Khalid called out in pain as she sliced through his palm, and she landed triumphantly atop a barrel.

Khalid looked up to her solemnly though, holding his injured hand close to him. “You have killed me.” He said gravely.

Amy squinted down at him. “No way! It’s just a cut!” She protested, and looked around to the grave faces of the crew around her. “What kind of rubbish pirates are yah?” She asked incredulously.

Captain Avery, who was still holding The Doctor back, spoke up to her at that. “One drop, that’s all it takes. One drop of blood and she’ll rise out of the ocean.” He informed her.

Amy didn’t bother trying to put that prophetic nonsense together though. “Come on, I barely even scratched him! What are you all in such a huff about?”

The boatswain growled at that and started marching purposely towards her, Amy swung towards him, wielding her sword again, but he grabbed her by the waist—sending her cutlass flying out of her hand. Rory escaped and made a grab for it, but just barely missed the handle—the blade slicing through the skin on his fingers. He called out as Khalid caught him round the shoulders.

Rory stared down at his hand as an odd black spot formed in the center of his palm like magic. Everyone grew silent, and Khalid’s eyes widened, taking a step back from him. Rory held his hand up and pointed to it. “Uh, Doctor, what’s—what’s happening to me?” He asked.

Captain Avery let go of The Doctor at the sight, and they both stepped forward. “She can smell the blood on your skin. She's marked you for death.” The Captain told him ominously.

“Uh, she?” Rory asked confusedly.

“A demon,” Avery answered, pointing to the water, “out there in the ocean.”

The Doctor grinned, now freely able to step over to Rory. “Okay. Groovy. So not just pirates today. We've managed to bagsy a ship where there's a demon popping in.” He took Rory’s hand to examine it closely. “Very efficient. I mean, if something's going to kill you, it's nice that it drops you a note to remind you.” He smiled up at Rory, clapping him on the cheek as he said it before making eye contact with Rose. She shook her head minutely. Her and Amy were still being held back by two of the crew.

He was about to request that he wife be let go of, but a wordless singing interrupted the thought, making him turn slowly towards the ocean where a pale green light had begun to break through the surface.

“Quickly, block out the sound.” The boatswain ordered over his shoulder to Khalid and Rory.

Khalid immediately complied, but Rory had further questions. “What?”

Avery answered him distractedly as he backed them all further towards the stern. “The creature. She charms all her victims with that song.”

“Oh, great.” Rory scoffed sarcastically. “So put my fingers in my ears, that's your plan?” He hit the Doctor’s arm with the back of his hand. “Doctor, come on. Let's go. Let's get back to the, uh…
back to the er-” He cut himself off as he started to rock aimlessly from one foot to the other, giggling with Khalid.


Rory fell forwards against the rope heavily, getting into Amy’s face. “You are so beautiful.” He told her.

Amy pulled her chin back. “What?” She asked incredulously.

“You are so beautiful.” He grinned, waving vaguely towards her coat and hat. “That’s great. You should dress as a pirate more often. Hey, hey-” He held his arms out to her. “Cuddle me shipmate.”

“Rory! Stop!” She protested as his hands fell to her shoulders.

“Everything is totally brilliant, isn’t it!” He exclaimed vehemently, shaking her shoulders. The Doctor and Rose shared a look. “Look at these brilliant pir"ates!” He went on, pointing. “Look at their brilliant beards!” He whispered it, and then looked off distractedly, hands falling from her shoulders. “I’d like a beard…” He said, and then turned to fall against Khalid- both of them with that same dazed look upon their faces. “I’m going to grow a beard!” He told him, and Khalid nodded in giddy agreement.

“You’re not!” Amy protested, looking to Rose and The Doctor helplessly.

“The music,” Avery explained. “It turns them to fools.”

Amy was the first to turn back to the water. “Oh, my god.” She whispered, as a figure burst from the depths- not disrupting the water’s surface even a bit as she rose into the air, and spirit-like drifted towards the ship’s deck. It was a woman, a beautiful woman. Glowing pale green, with dark, loose curls that fell against her white dress. They all stared in breathless wonder and silent horror as she held her hand out to them, her wordless song ringing melodiously through their ears.

Khalid, with no one holding him back, stumbled happily forwards, hand extended towards hers. Both the Captain and The Doctor made half-hearted attempts to grab at his arms, but seemed mostly rooted to the spot in her presence.

The second his fingers touched her he evaported into a cloud of smoke and a distant scream. The sight seemed to finally rock the rest of them, making them all jump backwards. Amy, who’d been holding onto Rory, grabbed onto him more forcefully this time as he attempted another step forward. “I have to touch her! Let me touch her!” He protested, pulling against his wife’s arms.

Amy huffed angrily, and pushed him towards Rose, who caught him deftly. She took long purposeful strides towards the spirit. “Sorry, but he is spoken for.” She bit out.

Suddenly, the mysterious woman turned a violent, angry red, her eyes turning the color of blood as she let out an ear-splitting hiss, sending forward a blast of air- knocking Amy off her feet and flying into the air.

“Amy!” The Doctor yelled, finally spurred into action as he ran to help her up. The woman started singing again, but he called over her. “Everybody into the hold!” He ordered, motioning them all towards the hatch as he lifted Amy up onto her feet.

Rose was struggling to pull Rory back from the spirit. Finally just grabbing him by the armpits and
hauling him to the hold. Ignoring his angry protests of “Hey! Hey! Wait!” as he went limp in her arms. She growled and looked up thankfully when The Doctor helped push him down the ladder.

The bilge water was a few inches deep down there, and Rose and The Doctor immediately started looking around for an escape plan after they flung the still half-giddy Rory towards Amy. “What is that thing?” She demanded of both them and the pirates angrily.

“The legend. The Siren.” Avery said, looking to The Doctor even as he answered Amy’s question. “Many a merchant ship laden with treasure has fallen prey to her. She’s been hunting us ever since we were becalmed, picking off the injured.”

The boatswain, Garrick one of them had called him, leaned around his captain. “Like a shark. A shark can smell blood.” He added.


“This ship is cursed!” Captain Avery yelled.

The Doctor turned on him, wrinkling his nose a bit. “Yeah, right. Cursed is big with humans. It means bad things are happening but you can't be bothered to find an explanation.” He bit out.

Rory interrupted whatever Avery’s reply was going to be. “She’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen!” He proclaimed loudly, still fighting languidly against Amy’s hold.

“Actually, I think you’ll find she isn’t.” Amy said through her teeth, batting his arms back down to his sides.

“She is.” Rory insisted.

Amy grumbled and looked over to Rose and The Doctor. “We need to leave right now.” She said firmly. Rose nodded and patted Amy’s arm consolingly.

“That thing of yours really is a ship?” Avery asked, again only addressing The Doctor.

“Well it’s not propelled by the wind.” The Doctor answered distractedly, looking above him towards the deck again as his mind was still racing with wild thoughts. He looked around at the sound of a gun being cocked and found Captain Avery pointing his weapon in his face again.

“Show me.” He demanded. “Weigh anchor. Make it sail.”

“And the gun’s back.” The Doctor observed exasperatedly. “You’re big on guns. –Freud would say you’re compensating. Ever met Freud? No. Comfy sofa.” He tilted his head as the invasion of thoughts spilled from his lips in the way they were wont to do when things weren’t making as much sense as they should be.

Fernandez, the larger of them, spoke up then, eyeing Rory warily. “Leave the cursed one, Captain. The creature can have him.” He said, earning glares from Rose, Amy, and The Doctor, while Rory nodded his agreement.

Captain Avery considered this. “We don’t want the siren coming after us-” He started, but was cut off by Fernandez’s startled cry as he fell against the crates, lifting his leg up.

“It’s a leech!” Amy screamed, and they all hauled ass at that- jumping up onto the various crates, barrels, and palettes as Rose ordered them all out of the water.
Fernandez pulled the leech off angrily. “It’s bitten me. I’m bleeding.” He growled, flinging the bug back into the water before looking down to his palm- a black spot had formed. He held it up for the rest of them to see his fate.

“What were you saying about leaving the cursed ones behind?” Rose asked, raising her eyebrows and finding little to no sympathy for the man in front of her. Fernandez glared back to her.

“It’s okay.” The Doctor said, getting back their attention. “We’re safe down here. No curse is getting through three solid inches of timber.”

Rose squinted at that, and right on cue the demon woman appeared from the water behind The Doctor.

“Oh! Ah! Hello again!” The Doctor let out awkwardly as Rose moved to help Amy hold Rory back, and the pirates failed to hold onto Fernandez. He easily yanked his arms free of the captain’s grasp and stumbled over to the spirit. “No! NO!” The all called after him, but it was too late- he exploded into a black cloud of dust.

They all ran through the the far door- Amy and Rose pushing Rory in front of them, and found themselves on the mess deck. “Safe?” Amy looked towards The Doctor.

“I have my good days and my bad days.” He huffed, pulling the hat off of her head, and flipping it around before setting it on his own.

“How did she get in?” Avery demanded.

The Doctor theorised on the fly. “Bilge water. She's using water like a portal, a door. She can materialise through a single drop.” He looked up to the captain. “We need to go somewhere with no water.”

“Well thank God we’re not in the middle of the ocean.” Amy bit out sarcastically.

Rory fell against her heavily again. “Did you see her eyes? Like crystal pools.”

Amy looked down at him. “You are in enough trouble.” She huffed.

“She means the armoury.” Avery said suddenly.

Amy squinted at him. “What?”

“He means the armoury.” Rose explained quickly. “Where’s the powder’s stored. It’ll be dry as bone down there.” She realised, looking to The Doctor and pointedly ignoring the offended looks of the crew and captain for her intellect.

The Doctor nodded. “Good. Let’s go there.” He said, taking a step forward.

Avery immediately pulled his gun again. “I give the orders.” He bit out, pulling back the safety.

“First America, now this.” Rose grumbled, and The Doctor smirked.

“Ahh. Worried because I'm wearing a hat now?” He said cheekily, raising his eyebrow before pushing past the weapon casually and leading them on. “Nobody touch anything sharp!” He ordered over his shoulder, mostly just to piss Avery off.

When they reached the door indicated, the boatswain shuffled through his keys. “They key… it’s gone Cap’n.” He said, eyes widening as he turned to him.
“How could it have gone?” Avery demanded.

The Doctor stepped past Garrick and pushed on the door. It creaked open. “Someone else had the same idea…” He said quietly, slowly stepping over the threshold.

“Barricade the door.” Avery ordered as they all shuffled in. He looked up as Garrick pulled down the lit lantern. “Be careful of that,” he warned. “Every barrel is full of powder.”

A muffled coughing is heard.

Avery squinted and made a beeline for one of the barrels at the noise, throwing off the lid, and making an angry noise as he hauled a small boy of only ten up by the collar. “You fool! You fool, boy. What are you doing here?” He demanded angrily as he shook the kid against the wall. Rose’s eyes widened and The Doctor reached out to grab her hand and pull her back before she could slap the sea captain.

“Who is he?” the boatswain asked the captain quietly.

The Doctor looked around to the pirates at that- both as confused as he was. “What, he’s not one of the crew?” He asked.

Captain Avery glanced over his shoulder. “No,” he answered gruffly. “He’s my son.”

At everyone’s stunned silence he set the boy back on his feet- pushing him towards the crates on the other side of the room. He sat down guiltily, hanging his head as his father came to sit beside him. Rose took a small step forward when neither father nor son spoke. “What’s your name?” She asked the child kindly.

He looked up to her- surprise written clearly upon his features. “Toby-” He started to answer her, but his voice seemed to finally push the pirate captain into speaking again.

“What in God’s name possessed you, boy?” He asked gruffly. “Your mother will be searching for you.”

Toby remained quiet at that however, and his chin fell back to his chest as he looked up to his father through his fringe. Avery sucked in a breath as he read between the lines. “How long?”

“Last Winter. Fever.” Toby answered quietly- effectively breaking everyone’s hearts. He finally looked up again. “She told me all about you. How you were a Captain in the Navy. An honourable man, she said. How I’d be proud to know you…” He picked his shoulders up- steeling himself even as more weak coughs shook him. “I’ve come to join your crew.” He told him.

Avery wouldn’t meet anyone’s eye. “I don’t want you here.” He told the boy plainly. And The Doctor had to hold his hand out to stop Rose lunging forward as she bit back a growl.

Toby shook his head defiantly. “You can’t send me back. It’s too late. We’re a hundred miles from home.” He said smartly, and The Doctor couldn’t help but smirk at that.

Avery’s head snapped up “It’s dangerous here.” He bit out. “There is a monster aboard. She leaves a mark on men’s skin.”

Toby opened and closed his mouth a few times before finally- “the black spot?” He asked quietly, and then unclasped his hands- revealing the mark upon his palm to the wide eyes of the room. The Time Lords stepped forward as Captain Avery grabbed his son’s wrist to inspect it as he coughed.
A while later, after every inch of Toby had been thoroughly examined by his father, Amy, The Doctor, and Rose sat heavily on a large crate that lined the far wall, while Rory, who was finally starting to feel like himself again, sat on his own silently tracing the spot on his palm.

Rose’s head came from The Doctor’s shoulder as Avery approached them. “There's nothing wrong with the boy. He has no scars.” He informed them.

The Doctor nodded. “Yep. Ignore my last theory.”

Amy patted his hand at that. “He has his good days and his bad days.” She said, and Rose looked over to her with a smirk as his eyes flickered up to Avery’s.

“It’s not just blood.” He said. “She’s coming for all the sick and wounded. Like a… hunter chooses the weakest animal.”

Rose nodded. “He’s got a fever, and the siren knows it.”

The Doctor sighed heavily. “Humans…” He let out. “Second-rate. Damage too easily. It's only a matter of time before everyone gets bruised…” He drifted off at Rose’s telepathic nudge and chide of ‘Rude’ made him glance up to Amy and Avery- both with their eyebrows raised. He cleared his throat awkwardly. “Our ship, it can sail us all away from here.” He spoke quickly, then patted Avery. “You and me, we fetch it. Let’s go-”

He cut himself off, eyes widening as when he tried to stand Avery had pulled his gun again. “You’re not the Captain here, remember.” He threatened him.

Before The Doctor could make another snarky remark about compensating, Toby lifted the lid off a barrel of water on the far side of the room- instantly filling the magazine with the song of the siren- her green arm rising ominously from the water with a loud hiss. The Doctor ran to grab to lid and force it back over the creature. Huffing and collapsing against it when finally it was closed again.

“The water's dangerous!” Avery yelled at Toby. “That's how she gets through! One touch of her hand and you're a dead man!”

The Doctor reached over to rest a comforting hand on the terrified young boy’s shoulder, giving him the most reassuring face he could manage. Toby smiled half-heartedly at him, grateful.

“We’re all cursed if we stay aboard!” The boatswain yelled frantically, clearly spooked by the siren, and no less afraid than he was before at her return.

Rose shook her head, annoyed. “It’s not a curse.” She bit out. “Curses aren’t real. Curses are just a human excuse to not do anything when things get a bit hard. It’s giving up. Are you giving up?”

It wasn’t often that Rose said ‘human’ like that. The Doctor got the feeling she wasn’t just talking about the black spot anymore. He smirked. His beautiful, fantastic wife. Always the strongest person in the room. Always fighting- even when she shouldn’t have to be.

He turned towards the Captain, who was looking at The Doctor’s wife with quite a bit of awe. It was a look he was used to seeing on the faces of men who encountered Rose. He imagines it’s a face he often wore himself. “Right then, Captain,” he said, getting the man’s reluctant attention back. “What’s our next move?”
Captain Avery opened and closed his mouth a few times, until finally pulling a medallion off his chest and walking over to his son. He draped the siren-engraved metal disc over Toby’s head as he spoke over his shoulder to his two remaining crewmembers. “Wait with the boy,” he ordered them.

“Captain, we’re all in danger here.” Garrick protested, pausing in his task of tying up the water barrel.

“I said wait.” Captain Avery repeated himself forcefully, eyes glowing with a dare as he looked over to the pirate who questioned him. “And barricade the door when we’ve gone.” He added, with a look to The Doctor who nodded in understanding.

Amy caught this. “Are you sure you wanna go?” She asked him.

He rocked back on his heels. “We need to get Rory and Toby out of here.” He answered, motioning between the two marked. “She’s out there now, licking her lips, boiling a saucepan, grating cheese…” He drifted off as everyone squinted at him, clearing his throat awkwardly.

“Okay… well.” Amy started, blinking a bit. “Just remember, if you get an itch don’t scratch it too hard.”

“We’ve all gotta go sometime.” He answered flippantly, and that comment spoke miles on the current emotional status of The Doctor and Rose, as she just nodded.

“Worse ways than getting your face snogged off by a dodgy mermaid.” She added dryly.

Amy and Rory shared a look at that, and Amy immediately reached out to grab Rose’s hand before she could follow after The Doctor. “You’ll stay here with me though, yeah?” She asked.

Rose hesitated though, so Amy turned on her big-sad-eyes. The big-sad-eyes that had worked on them since she was seven years old, and finally Rose relented. “Yeah,” she nodded. “Yeah, yeah. I will.” She agreed, and nobody missed the way Toby’s shoulders fell in relief along with Amy and Rory’s. Amy silently wondered if the woman could ever meet a lonely kid and not immediately become their adopted Space Mum. She doubted it.

The Doctor kissed Rose soundly, and ruffled Amy’s, Rory’s, and Toby’s hair affectionately before wishing them good luck and stepping out after Captain Avery onto the mess deck.

“Avery let out a long breath, shaking his head, and pointed to the zigzag plotter. “What's this do?” He asked, as The Doctor went about the console- an odd feeling without Rose now. Like he was
dancing by himself.

“That does very, very complicated. That does sophisticated. That does whizz, bang, far too technical to explain!” He called out flippantly, pointing to the controls as he adjusted other ones.

Avery wrinkled his nose as that and gestured to the spiny thing The Doctor was messing with. “Wheel?” He ventured- recognizing the movement.

The Doctor squinted at him. “Atom accelerator.” He corrected.

The Pirate Captain rolled his eyes. “It steers the thing?”

“No. Sort of. Yes.” The Doctor huffed. The man was watering down his impressive-ness. He felt Rose’s amusement over the bond as she listened in and promptly told her to hush.

Avery smirked and went about the console, pointing out various mechanisms “Wheel. Telescope. Astrolabe. Compass.” He called out- all of them… surprisingly accurate descriptions for the TARDIS’s controls- when looked at from a certain perspective. He looked up to The Doctor’s gobsmacked expression and shrugged. “A ship's a ship.”

“Oh…” The Doctor breathed, shaking his head as Rose laughed at him. He huffed and twirled around the console to the dematerialisation lever (or the mass- if one prefers). “This is how the professionals do it.” He told him importantly, before pulling it with a flourish.

The time rotor stutters. A grating noise like an engine stalling shudders through the console room.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose and looked up to Avery awkwardly. “Er, it's stuck. Not responding.” He admitted, flipping a few controls with no response.

He raised a brow. “Becalmed?”

The Doctor didn’t look up to him again. “Mmm hmm. Yeah, apparently. That's new.” He mumbled, and then glanced up to see Avery smirking through the cloister bell. “Oh, you had to gloat, didn't you?” He accused.

Avery was unsuccessful in wiping the smile off his face. “I'm not gloating.” He denied unconvincingly.

“I saw that look just now!” The Doctor pointed at him, sounding a bit like a petulant child. “'Ha, ha, his ship is rubbish.’” He paraphrased the Captain’s perceived thoughts.

Avery tilted his head, still smirking. “True.”

The Doctor let out an indignant noise and ran to the other side of the console. The TARDIS’s stalling was now giving Rose a headache and he needed to do something- “What is it then?” Avery asked, following The Doctor’s movements. “What’s becalmed the ship if not still water?”

“She can’t get a lock on the plane.” The Doctor grumbled, pulling the monitor towards him, but the screen remained blank.

“The what?” Avery squinted at him.

“The space we travel in. The ocean. Sort of ocean but not water.” He explained. “The TARDIS can’t see. She’s sulking because she thinks space doesn’t exist. Without a plane to lock onto we’re
not going anywhere.”

The pirate shook his head. “I’m confused.” He said plainly.

The Doctor looked up to him at that. “Yeah, well, it's a big club. We should get T-shirts.” He answered flippantly. But the effect was lost as the TARDIS suddenly jolted, making a grinding noise as they buckled their knees and grabbed onto the console for support.

“What's happening?” Avery demanded frantically as a fuse blew and sparks flew.

“Oh, she's had her little sulk! Now she's heading for the full-on screaming tantrum!” The Doctor called over the din of noise now filling the room as he ran to pull controls at random.

“Can you fix it?”

The Doctor yelled as everything he tried failed. “The parametric engines are jammed. Orthogonal vector’s gone. Rose isn’t here, and I'm almost out of ideas.” They were being shook violently now by the angry TARDIS.

Avery gripped the console for dear life as they tilted to the side. “Almost?”

“Well, we could try stroking her and singing her a song.” The Doctor yelled, flinging his hands in the air in an odd parallel from his words.

The pirate was, at this point, willing to believe anything. “Will that help?”

“Hard to say. Never has before.” He called back, huffing as the TARDIS continued to practically scream at him. “I've lost control of her. She's about to dematerialise. We could end up anywhere!”

“That sounds bad!” Avery yelled and more sparks erupted.

“Yes, it is!” The Doctor agreed, and then grabbed Avery by the bicep- pushing him towards the doors. “Out! Out now! Abandon ship! Abandon ship!”

They tumbled out just in time to see a green light encase the police box, and then she was gone.

“Okay- okay, okay…” The Doctor breathed out confusedly, silently asking Rose if she knew what the hell just happened. “TARDIS runs off on its own. That's a bit of a new one.” He mumbled out loud. “Bang goes our only hope of getting them out of here.”

Behind him Avery spoke up. “Not much of a Captain without a ship, are you?” He mocked.

The Doctor’s jaw clenched.

Amy and Rory were talking quietly to each other while Rose sat next to Toby on the barrels, silently listening in on The Doctor. But Toby kept coughing, and his skin was growing more colourless by the second. She ran a comforting hand through his hair as a particularly violent cough overcame him. He smiled up at her. “My mum would have liked you.” He informed her.

Rose knew that was the highest compliment one could receive from a child- especially one who had lost their mother. “I’m sure I would have liked her too.” She said.

“Have you got kids?” He asked her innocently, and really she should have been expecting the question.
No matter how expected though, it didn’t make her heart hurt any less. “No, I haven’t.” She answered, and it was the first time she’d denied it outright like that since Alina. She opened her mouth again, not completely sure if she wanted to correct herself or not, but Amy interrupted her.

“What’s going on?” She was asking Garrick and Mulligan as they were barricading the door. Rose stood up, Toby following along closely behind her.

“We’re not staying here to mollycoddle the boy.” He answered her rudely. “The captain’s gone soft. It’s time for us to leave.”

Toby pushed through the three adults at that. “He told you to wait, you dog.” He admonished him. “He’s your Captain, a Naval Officer. You're honour-bound to do as he tells you.”

“Honour-bound?” The boatswain raised his brows and grinned malevolently down at the naive child. “Do you know what kind of ship this is? Do you know what your father does?”

Rose wrapped her arm around his shoulders. “Don’t listen to him, Toby.”

Garrick went on though. “We sail under the black flag! The Jolly Roger!”

Toby’s features hardened even as deep down he knew it was true. “Liar!” He accused anyway. “He’s no wicked pirate!” He bit out.

“Oh, you think so?” Garrick tilted his head in amusement. “I’ve seen your father gun down a thousand innocent men.” He informed the child cruelly.

Toby pulled away from Rose at that and ran off. The boatswain smiled like he’d won and spoke over his shoulder to Mulligan as the other three adults glared at him. “Get what treasure you can. I'll meet you in the row boat.”

Toby came back through them again though, this time holding a cutlass out in front of him, his features set and determined as he stared down the pirate. “You’re going to remain at your post.” He ordered.

Fear filled Garrick’s eyes as he stared down the edge of the blade- just as they had when Amy and Rose had held the weapons above deck. “I’m not playing with you, boy. You put that down.” He demanded angrily, but his voice shook.

“One more step and I'll use this, you blaggard.” Toby bit out.

“You don't know how to fight with a cutlass, boy!” He argued.

Toby cocked his head. “Don’t need to, do I?” He challenged smartly, and then, without warning, took a step forward- slicing a small cut through skin of the pirate’s hand.

“NO!” The boatswain yelled, grabbing at his hand and staring in horror as the black spot appeared. “You little swabber!” He yelled, stepping towards the child.

Rose shoved Toby behind her, eyes glowing slightly as she glared at the pirate- daring him to even try to lay a hand on the boy. He took a step back.

Amy crossed her arms in front of her. “Congratulations. You made it to the menu. Probably shouldn't go out there now.” She quipped.

Frantically, Garrick reached for his gun. “You little swabber!” He yelled, pulling back the safety as
he aimed it at the child.

Rory held his hand up at that and looked at him incredulously. “Don’t shoot, the powder will blow and kill us all!” The gun shook in his hand, but he didn’t put it down. Rose pushed Toby more firmly behind her.

Mulligan stepped forward and grabbed the keys from Garrick’s belt. “Mulligan, what are you doing?” He demanded as his crewmate moved the last barrel and unlocked the door. Mulligan looked over his shoulder, but didn’t say anything before stepping out the door- slamming it shut behind him.

Amy raised her eyebrows. “No honour among pirates, yeah?” She drawled.

Tears were in his eyes now as his confidence failed him. With a defeated huff he put the gun back in its holster and moved frantically to barricade the door back.

Rose sat back with a huff as the TARDIS’s tantrum made her head spin and vision blur.

The Doctor and Avery ran back through the mess deck, but were stopped as Mulligan came round the corner, shotgun in each hand, bag full of what was presumably treasure draped round his back- if the golden crown hanging from his arm was anything to go by.

“Mulligan! What are you doing?” Captain Avery demanded incredulously. “This is mutiny!”

“She doesn’t want me!” He said frantically, eyes wide, keeping his guns at their chests as he walked up to him, making them spin to let him pass. “She only wants Toby- and the scrawny looking fellow.” He stopped- eyes flicking between the two, before spinning quickly on the spot and running.

The Doctor noticed the food bag as well then. “He’s got the last of the supplies- we should go after him.” He observed, looking over to Avery.

“Nevermind the damn supplies, what about my treasure.” The captain grumbled before taking off after the mutinous crew member.

The Doctor shrugged and followed him just as Mulligan began to shoot over his shoulder. “Don’t get injured!” He yelled, ducking behind a crate to avoid the bullets.

Mulligan scurried into a store room just before the captain could reach him, and Avery banged on the door angrily. “Come out of there, you mutinous dog!”

They heard an ‘ow!’ from the other side of the door, and suddenly the siren’s song started. The Doctor and Avery started frantically checking themselves for black dot or injury, but came up empty handed. Their eyes widened as a green light shone out from underneath the store room door. “She’s inside…” The Doctor breathed.

“She’s come for Mulligan.” Avery finished.

Mulligan screamed, and when the light died down they stepped cautiously inside.

“No water in here.” Avery said. “How did she take him? You said she uses water like a door, that’s how she enters a room.” He picked up the crown now lying abandoned on the store room floor.
The Doctor’s eyes fell on the golden reflection and knelt down to study it. “I was wrong.” He muttered. “Please ignore all my theories up to this point.” He started pacing.


The Doctor wheeled around, speaking quickly now. “We're all in danger. The water's not how she's getting in. When we were down in the hold, think what happened. You, me, Rose, Amy, Rory, leeches.”

“She sprang from the water.” Avery insisted.

“Yes, only when it grew still. Still water. Nature's mirror.”

Avery’s eyes widened in understanding. “So, you mean…”


“You said curses weren’t real.” He interrupted.

The Doctor barely paused. “Folklore springs from truth. She attacks ships filled with treasure. Where else do you get a perfect reflection?”

“Polished metal.” The captain breathed, twisting the crown in his hands as The Doctor hummed in agreement. Avery reached for the medallion on his chest before he remembered giving it to Toby. He looked up frantically as The Doctor caught that movement. “We must warn them.” He said, and they both ran for the magazine.

They ran right into the closed door, both immediately pounding on it. “Amy! Open the door!” The Doctor yelled. “Rose! Rory!”

Rose looked over to Toby as she heard her husband’s frantic warning thoughts, and grabbed the medallion from him just as he was beginning to polish it. Toby barely noticed as the door came crashing in to admit her husband and his father. “I’ve got it!” She yelled, smearing her fingers across the metal surface and tossing it to The Doctor. “Calm down.”

He was breathing heavily now, and reached out to rest a hand on her shoulder as Avery went to his son. “Come on.” The Doctor said, taking Rose’s hand. “There’s more- we need to-” Rose cut him off by pulling him towards the captain’s quarters, calling over her shoulder for Amy and Rory to stay with Toby.

Once there, The Doctor’s grabbed a musket leant against the wall, and began smashing in the windows with the butt of it. Avery came in just as Rose was seizing all the treasure on the floor. “What are you doing?” He demanded.

“We've got to destroy every reflection!” The Doctor called over his shoulder. “Gold, silver, glass, she could spring from any of them.” He took the musket to the mirror hanging- smashing it to bits. He turned to see Avery swallow at the remnants. “Oh yes, yes, I know-” The Doctor rolled his eyes. “Very bad luck to smash a mirror. But look at it this way- there’s a stroppy homicidal mermaid trying to kill all.”

Avery hesitated, but eventually breathed out a reluctant sigh. “How much worse could things get?” He agreed with a nod.

“Yep!” Rose said over her shoulder, tossing more spare gold onto the pile of treasure. “Now you
two help me lug this lot out, will you?”

Avery immediately started doing as she said before he realised what it was he was doing. “Where are we taking it?” He asked her.

She squinted at him. “The ocean.”

“No!” He protested putting his hands out to stop them, and then huffed. “No. This is the treasure of the Mogul of India.”

“Oh, good. For a moment there I thought it was yours.” The Doctor replied, and pulled his hand back to start gathering up the treasure again.

“No, no. Wait.” Avery implored them, stepping between the couple with his treasure and the broken window. “Must we do this?”

Rose practically growled at him. “Any reflection, any mirror, and the siren will attack. Or don’t you want to protect your son?” She bit out. “Go and get the crown from the storeroom.” She ordered, before stepping around him and unceremoniously dumping his loot into the water.

Later, Rose and The Doctor stood on deck, leant against the helm and staring up at the stars. It was late now, the sun already having set when they arrived, and Amy and Rory were below deck attempting to get some much needed sleep, the water still too calm for Rory to leave the magazine. Avery and Toby were down there as well, though Rose imagines getting far less rest.

The Doctor bumped his shoulder against hers. “How’re you doing?” He asked quietly.

Rose let out a long breath, keeping her eyes on the stars. “Same as you. Better than when sulking in the TARDIS.” She shrugged, tired of the question by this point. “Speaking of the TARDIS…” She drifted off.

“I know.” He shook his head. “Well, I don’t know. It was that same green light that took her. The siren must be empathic- could sense she was ill -not being able to lock onto the plane.”

“That doesn’t make any sense though, Doctor. Why would a hunter-” She cut herself off as Avery came up to them then, studying the stars and looking down to his astrolabe.

The Doctor smirked and followed the captain’s line of sight towards the brightest star in the sky. “It’s not one star, it’s two.” He told him. “The Dog Star, Sirius-” he went on as Avery looked over to him curiously. “Binary system.”

Avery shook his head. “I use it to navigate the ocean.” He said, adjusting a dial.

The Doctor allowed the quiet to dominate for a bit more before speaking up again. “I travelled far, like you.” He said eventually. “Space can be very lonely… and the greatest adventure is having someone to share it with you.” He reached out and grabbed Rose’s hand, and she smiled up to him sadly as her heart warmed and broke at the same time. He gave Avery a significant look.

Avery sighed. “If we get out of this I'll take him back to England. He can't stay with me. I'm not the father he needs.” He said, shaking his head.

The Doctor bit back his immediate response to reprimand, and squeezed Rose’s hand as he felt her desire to do the same. They tried so hard to have a child, to bring someone into this universe and be
able to show it to them, and here this father was- shoving his own child away. It was enough to make them want to haul Toby onto the TARDIS themselves- show him what nautical could really mean. The Doctor sighed, studying the pirate. “Who are you, Henry Avery? Respected naval officer, wife and child at home. How did you end up here, wandering the oceans with a band of rogues?” He challenged.

Avery wouldn’t meet their eyes. “I’ve set my course now.” He ground out. “There’s nothing I can do to alter it.”

The Doctor let out a long breath and pulled Rose closer to him as they all looked up to the stars again. He pointed to Sirius once more. “People stared at it for centuries and never knew.” He said, and then raised his brows at Avery. “Things can suddenly change, when you’re least expecting.” He told him wisely, before pulling Rose with him back towards the hatch.

Sudden lightning and thunder halted their progress though. Their heads snapped up as clouds quickly began to cover the stars. “Man the sails!” The Doctor yelled, and Rose ran below deck to grab the rest of them. By the time they returned the water was pouring down on the deck- instantly drenching their clothes and soaking them through to the bone.

“To the rigging, you dogs! Let go the sails!” Captain Avery ordered them instantly.

The boatswain immediately ran to one of the masts and began pulling at the ropes. Amy and Rory shrugged, following his lead. “Avast ye! Put the bunt into the slack of the clews!” The Captain called.

“I swear he’s making half this stuff up.” Amy grumbled, tugging on the rope.

“We’re going to need some kind of phrase book!” Rory yelled towards the captain.

Avery ignored him and called to his son. “Toby! Get my coat! My compass is inside it!”

The boy pulled away from Rose to listen to his father, gathering up the massive woolen thing and trudging through the torrential downpour towards him at the helm.

And then the crown fell from its pockets.

It rolled across the decking, as if in slow motion, as they all stopped to stare. They all help back silent gasps as it tumbled to a stop at Garrick’s feet.

The Siren’s arm erupted from the metal in an instant, and the boatswain disappeared as she soared into the sky. Amy held back Rory as the Siren’s song filled their ears, her feet just hovering over the deck. She held her hand out to Toby.

“Don’t let her take you!” Avery yelled over the rain and song, attempting to run towards his soon but being pushed back by the storm.

Toby took stumbling steps towards her, holding his hand out.

“NO!” Rose screamed, throwing herself in between the child and the monster. The siren screeched, turning red in an instant, flinging Rose backwards with the flick of her wrist- right over the ship’s railing and into the raging seas below.

“ROSE!” The Doctor screamed, running to where she fell.

Toby hardly noticed though as the siren returned to green. He reached his hand out, and he too
disappeared into a cloud of smoke.

She turned on Rory then, but Amy was quicker, grabbing the fallen crown and flinging it into the water.

“NO! NO! NO! ROSE!” The Doctor was screaming as he leant over the railing. He couldn’t feel her. She was fading. He started stepping onto the rigging to dive in after her.

Amy grabbed his arm before he could jump, pulling him back onto the deck. “She’s drowning! If you go in you’ll drown too!” She sobbed, begging him to stay, her tears mixing with the rain as it continued to beat down on them.

And he couldn’t argue with that. But then- then it all fell together. “She’s dying!” He screamed, and Amy thought it was another protest- she gripped his arm tighter. “The Siren, she’s looking for the ill!” He went on, and fished through his bigger-on-the-inside pockets until his hand closed around Rose’s compact.

Amy’s eyes widened when he pulled it out, covering his hands with hers. “What are you doing?! Are you mad?!” She demanded incredulously, and Rory and Avery came up behind her to give him similar looks.

“YES!” He yelled back. “There's still a chance, Amy! She’s not dead yet! All of them might not be! I can reason with a Siren- I can’t reason with the ocean!” He yanked his hands away and opened the compact. As soon as the creature was set free he pointed to the water. “SHE’S DROWNING!” He told her. “GO AND FIND HER!”

“What are you doing?” Amy demanded as the Siren dove into the water and The Doctor grabbed a nearby discarded rusted cutlass. Rory was already trying to follow the creature into the water.

The Doctor sliced his hand open, barely feeling the pain over the relief of Rose breathing again. “I’m saving my wife!” He bit out, as the Siren appeared back on the deck.

Amy caught the sword as it fell from The Doctor’s hands. Both him and Rory stumbled towards the Siren. She looked to Avery. “Well? What do you say?” She asked him, yelling over the rain and song, holding the blade up in question.

He shook his head incredulously. “I say you’re all mad! But you’re my only hope!” He answered, and cut his finger on its edge in conclusion. Amy shrugged and followed suit. They spun around and reached for the Siren just as she took The Doctor and Rory.

Everything went white.

And then it cleared.

The Doctor blinked back the grogginess as he lifted his head from the cold metal floor. Next to him Amy, Rory, and Avery woke as well. A massive five pane picture window surrounded them, and through it they could see the rain and the ship they they were just standing in. The Doctor scanned his TS senses as Amy came to stand next to him. “Where are we?” She asked quietly.

“We haven’t moved.” He breathed. “We’re in exactly the same place as before.”

“We’re on a ghost ship.” Avery said.

The Doctor shook his head. “No. It’s real. Space ship trapped in a temporal rift.”
Rory tilted his head at that. “How can two ships be in the same place?” He asked incredulously.

“There are lots of different universes nested inside each other. Now and again they collide, and you can step from one to the other.” The Doctor explained.

“Okay…” Amy nodded hesitantly. “I think I understand.”

“Good, because it’s not like that at all.” He told her flippantly. “But if it helps.” She mumbled her thanks, and he picked up a discarded piece of metal- flinging it toward the window- it phased right threw and crashed onto the pirate ship. “All the reflections become gateways.” He muttered, looking over to the nearby stairs. He started walking up them, blindly following the feeble light inside his mind that was Rose’s unconscious body.

Rory and Amy, used to this, followed him without question. Avery was a bit slower, but eventually caught up to them as they rounded a corner. A beeping was sounding from somewhere. “The signal.” Amy realised, eyes widening.

“Yes.” The Doctor answered distractedly, not slowing down as they made their way through the quiet ship.

“The distress call.” She went on.

“Uh huh.” He confirmed, turning into a closed door and pulling out the sonic.

“There was a second ship here all the time.” She said.

He nodded. “And the siren is on board.” He finished for her, opening the door to reveal the face of an alien staring back at them.

Avery immediately pulled his gun and The Doctor immediately reached out to lower it- familiar with the drill by this point.

It was only a skeleton. “Dead.” He told them, and then stepped past it into the control room where more skeletal crew were sat at long unused panels.

Amy took in the corpses. “How long has this ship been marooned here?”

“Long enough for the Captain to have run out of grog.” Avery muttered.

Amy shook her head at that. “I don't understand. If this is the Captain, then what's the Siren?”

“Same as us. A stowaway.” The Doctor answered.

“She killed it?” Rory asked.

The Doctor scanned the skeleton of the lieutenant. “Human bacteria.” He said, as the readings came. “A virus from our planet. Airborne, travelling through the portal. That's what killed it. Didn't get its jabs.” He leant against the console, and winced as a squishing noise ensued. He wrinkled his nose and held up his hand- now covered in a sort of alien slime. “Urgh. Look.”

Amy squinted at the gross substance, wrinkling her nose as well. “What is it?”

“Sneeze!” He yelled, disgusted. “Alien bogies.” He flicked his hand and a bit flew off- landing on Rory’s shoe. The Doctor groaned again and wiped the rest on Amy’s coat sleeve as he walked past. She just closed her eyes and nodded- expecting that.
He led them into the sick bay.

Hanging from the ceiling were near thirty metal cots, all at varying levels, each with a body resting on them, all hooked to some sort of machine.

Avery’s eyes fell to the nearest one and gasped. “McGrath! He’s one of my crew!”

Rory stepped up next him and watched the man’s chest fall up and down. “He’s still breathing.” He checked his wrist for a heartbeat on impulse, and was surprised to find it perfectly normal. He looked up to The Doctor who was still at the sick bay’s entrance, at a nearby shelf, holding up what appeared to be square petri dishes.

“My entire crew is here…” Avery realised, spinning around, and then his gaze landed on his son. “Toby!” He exclaimed, running to the boy.

The Doctor’s head snapped up at that, and he found Rose instantly. “Rose!” He yelled, dropping the tissue sample. Amy and Rory coming up beside him.

“We’ve got to get them out of here!” Avery said, beginning to pull on the wires hooking Toby up to the cot’s machines.

“Wait.” The Doctor said, reluctantly pulling away from Rose to scan Toby with the sonic. “His fever’s gone.” He told the captain, before focusing back on Rose. “She’s fine too.” He closed his eyes as his thoughts raced. “The Siren- she’s keeping them alive. Her brain is still active, but all its cellular activity is suspended…” But the spot why the spot she wouldn’t need to mark them no the petri dishes- “It’s not a curse.” He realised, holding up Rose’s hand and the skin sample right next to it. “It’s a tissue sample.” But that didn’t- “Why get sample of people you’re about to kill?” He asked, and oh he needed Rose back in his head.

Every fiber of Amy’s being rebelled at the thought of Rose being killed. “Help me get her up.” She told Rory as The Doctor started to pace again. He was mad now, she was sure of it. They started pulling at the bands around her throat and waist, and frantic beeping went up around them. Rory, familiar with the sound, immediately stepped back.

The Doctor’s head snapped up. “She’s coming.” He said, and pulled them all behind a sheet of plastic. The TARDIS was sitting there. Oh lovely that’s good then they can leave once he figures this out-”

“The beeping, Doctor,” Rory whispered, as the Siren floated into the room, singing her wordless song as she drifted over to Rose. “It’s like at a hospital.”

The Doctor hit himself in the head at that and turned around to kiss Rory full on the lips. “YES!” He exclaimed at a loud whisper as Rory made a disgusted noise and wiped at his mouth.

Avery missed that though, as once Rose fell back asleep the Siren had moved over to Toby’s cot. The pirate stepped out from behind the TARDIS to aim his gun at the creature.

“Avery, no!” The Doctor called, but it was too late. The Siren had already spotted him, and was advancing in her hissing red form. “Ignore all my previous theories!” He yelled.

“Yeah, well we stopped paying attention a while back.” Avery threw back, bracing himself as the Siren came closer.

“Doctor! You’re a doctor!” The Doctor called over her angry rampage, and she instantly fell back on her heels at the title, glow returning to green as she tilted her head at him.
He took the opportunity to wander over to Rose’s cot without alarming her as he spoke to the humans. “This is an automated sick bay. It’s teleporting everyone on board. The crew are dead, and so the sick bay has had nothing to do. It’s been looking after humanity whilst it’s been idle.” He explained to Avery, Amy, and Rory. “Look at her. A virtual doctor able to sterilise a whole room…” He drifted off as Avery went to Toby. “She’s just an interface, seeped through the join between the planes, broadcast in our world. Protean circuitry means she can change her form, and become a human doctor for humans. She’s keeping them alive, but she doesn’t know how to heal them.” He looked up as Amy and Rory came to the other side of Rose’s bed. He attempted to rest his hand over Rose’s, but the interface immediately turned red and hissed at him.

“She won’t let us take them!” Avery yelled angrily.

The Doctor huffed, feeling the pirate’s exasperation as well, as his wife lay unconscious before him. “I’m her husband.” He implored her. “You’re intelligent. Mildly psychic. You must be able to feel that.” She continued to stare at him blankly though. She probably couldn’t with Rose emitting next to no telepathic frequencies at the moment. He held his left hand out desperately and pointed to Rose’s. “Look! Look- rings. That’s human, yeah? Come on. Sophisticated girl like you. That must be somewhere in your core program.” He pleaded desperately. “Please.”

Finally, finally, she blinked in understanding. She held her hand out and a ring of light appeared around it. “Aha!” He exclaimed triumphantly, placing his hand over hers. “Consent form!” He called over his shoulder to Amy and Rory at their questioning looks. The interface disappeared, and he turned back to his wife.

He started pulling at the wires again with Amy’s help, but the frantic beeping returned, and Rory grabbed for their hands to stop them. “She can’t breathe!” He told them, and flipped back the switch The Doctor had turned off.

“We can’t just leave her here!” The Doctor yelled back.

Rose began blinking warily at that, her eyes flitting back and forth as her husband’s frantic mind reasserted itself in her waking one. “TARDIS.” She mumbled.

“What?” Amy asked incredulously.

The Doctor sighed, scrubbing his hand down his face as he followed her thoughts. “If we can get her back to the TARDIS, she might be able to heal herself.” He explained.

Rory squinted at the lack of enthusiasm. “...But?”

“But- the TARDIS has only been able to bring her back from the point of death once before and it was when she had the entire vortex inside her. Forgive me, if I’m not willing to risk it.” He bit out.

“But she can regenerate. You told me that. You said you can’t die.” Amy protested.

Rose wrinkled her nose tiredly. “Only if I’m inside the TARDIS- have to not die on the way there.” She sighed and finally managed to open her eyes fully. “And she hasn’t exactly had my best interests at heart recently- or so The Doctor thinks.”

Amy closed her eyes as the realisation hit her. America. Sending Rose away. Separating them. Losing the baby. He blamed the TARDIS. She looked up to him. “She’s ten feet away.” She exasperated, gesturing behind her to the police box. “It will work.”

“You can’t know that.” He asserted.
“You can’t know it won’t!” She threw back, crossing her arms. “What’s the alternative? Staying here for the rest of your lives? How long are those again? A few thousand more centuries?”

The Doctor shook his head. “I can’t lose her.”

“You won’t!” The two women yelled together.

Rory took a step back as the three of them continued their back and forth to where Avery was standing over Toby. “They’ll have to send this ship back into space.” He informed the pirate. “If the Siren got ashore…”

Avery nodded in understanding, but gestured down to his son. “What about Toby?” He asked.

Rory sighed. He hated this part of his job. “I’m sorry.” He shook his head. “He has Typhoid Fever. Once he returns… it’s only a matter of time.”

Avery let out a long breath. He looked up to where The Doctor and Rose were still going at it, with Amy at Rose’s assistance. They made a good family. Even while bickering. “I’m going to stay with him. Here.” He announced over their yelling. “The Siren will look after him.” They looked over to him- Rose giving him a proud look. He went on with that as fuel. “I can’t go back to England. And what home does he have now, if not with me?”

The alien couple grinned at him- momentarily forgetting their anger. “Do you think you could sail this thing?” The Doctor asked him.

Avery smirked. “Just point me towards the atom accelerator.”

Amy and Rose both looked back over to The Doctor at that. Identical looks upon their faces. If this 17th century pirate captain could gather up the courage to leave Earth in order to keep his sick son alive in an alien spaceship- then surely he could manage hauling Rose ten feet to the TARDIS to be healed, and they could continue on with their lives.

“What if it doesn’t work?” He asked them desperately. “What if she fails us again?”

The TARDIS finally chimed in at that- a loud indignant ringing that one needn’t be telepathic to understand. They all sent him significant looks at that. He closed his eyes. “It just… it feels like we’re cursed.” He whispered, voice small.

Rose reached for his hand at that. “Curses aren’t real.” She said firmly. “And my life with you… it’s too wonderful to be cursed.” She watched his shoulders deflate finally, and she knew she had won him over. “I trust you.” She whispered, squeezing his hand.

The Doctor gave a watery laugh and ran his fingers through her hair. “I’ll see you in a minute.” He told her determinedly, and at her nod he looked up to Amy and Rory. “One… two… three!”

The Doctor pulled at the strap around her waist while Amy the one at her throat, Rory turning off the machine. She sat up, gasping for air, and The Doctor put his arms around her back and under her knees- carrying her at a sprint through the TARDIS doors.

He laid her down on the floor. “Come on…” He whispered as her eyes remained stubbornly closed, her breathing nonexistent. “COME ON!” He yelled at the ship as her heart rate slowed.

A few more excruciating moments passed.

Amy leaned into Rory, shoving her face into her chest. Silently pleading with the TARDIS.
Tears ran down The Doctor’s face unchecked.

And then-

Finally, finally, a golden light filled the room. The heart of the TARDIS came swirling out from console, wrapping itself around Rose.

She breathed.

“Yes!” The Doctor exclaimed, pulling her towards him as she absorbed the time energy. “Yes! Oh God, yes! Thank you!” He said into her hair as the light went down.

Rose, still groggy from nearly dying, simply chuckled into his shoulder. “I told you so.” She mumbled, gaining relieved, teary, laughs from the rest of them.

Chapter End Notes

Wow! This took a long time. I had a crazy stressful week that still isn’t over, but finally this is here. Struggled with motivation on this one more than anything so I can’t thank everyone who commented enough. Getting those emails and reading what y’all have to say means everything to me. ❤
"We’re currently doing a balancing act between the two extremes of our life and it needs to stop.” Rose said by way of greeting as she entered The Doctor’s workshop/lab.

The Doctor looked up from whatever he was doing with the toaster this time to squint at her. “I wasn’t aware our life had more than one extreme.”

Rose shrugged and lifted herself up to sit on his desk, her legs swinging down next to his chair. “I consider hanging around the vortex doing nothing an extreme.”

He quirked an eyebrow at that. “Doing nothing is an extreme?” He repeated.

“For us? Yeah.” Rose answered easily. She tilted her head down to him when he didn’t reply. “Look, I know you’re worried about me. I’m a little worried about me too, if we’re being honest. But we can’t just… give up.”
“We’re not giving up.” He protested with a tired sigh. “We’re... taking time to heal.”

“Well, it’s been nearly two months now since America and save for our brief stint on the pirate ship we’ve done nothing but occasionally stop for food.” Rose said dryly. “I don’t know about you, but I for one can’t heal pretending to live a different life than the one I’ve chosen.” He nodded silently and she reached for his hand. “I think we might need a new tactic.”

He sighed loudly, leaning back in his chair and using his free hand to scrub down his face. “Yeah, yeah I know. You’re right- of course you’re right.” He conceded. “Amy and Rory are going barmy as well.”

“And you and I both know we’d be half mad right now without them.” Rose added.

The Doctor snorted at that. “More than half, I should think.”

Rose smiled and nodded. “So let’s just get back to travelling, Doctor. The TARDIS will keep us away from trouble for as long as we need her to.”

“Will she?” The Doctor challenged before he could stop himself.

It said a lot that the TARDIS remained silent at his lack of faith. Rose sighed heavily and threaded her fingers through his. “I know it’s easier to blame the omniscient time ship for everything that goes wrong, but it really isn’t her fault, love.” She paused, turning his hand over to trace the lines of his palms. “It’s no one’s fault, okay? Sometimes bad things just happen.”

“But if she hadn’t sent you away-” He started.

“Then what?” Rose interrupted him. “I’d have been locked up with you at Area 51 for three months? I’m sure that would have gone fantastically.” At his crestfallen look she reached forward and pulled his chin back up. “Look, as much as we hate to admit it. It was the best scenario we had. It just still didn’t work out in the end. She’s omniscient- not omnipotent, and you know as well as I do that timelines aren’t clear definite paths. She gave us our best chance.”

The Doctor nodded, but Rose could tell he was still holding back. Still keeping secrets. Which, as much as it pained her, she knew couldn’t be helped. Telepathic and near-immortal as they were, they were still just a married couple, dead-set on protecting one another. At least every quarter of a century The Doctor would decide the best way to do that is to keep it all bottled up. Really, he was overdue now. She sighed and looked over his shoulder.

The wall opened up and a woman with a silver eyepatch peeked through. It didn’t phase Rose anymore. She blinked, and the woman was gone, the wall back to its normal state.

She supposed she was keeping secrets as well.

Two more months passed after that, the TARDIS keeping her silent promise to keep them out of trouble. But still, The Doctor was angry with her. He still wouldn’t trust her.

She was rather cross with her Thief for that.

He hadn’t said the real reason, of course, as to why he’d been worried about letting her heal Rose back on the pirate ship, or why he’d insisted on keeping them all hostage in the vortex for so long. Sulking around as he was inside her, periodically checking the pregnancy scan that would conclude nothing. He had theories, of course. None of them good. Most incorrect.
But he was mad at her. Blaming her for every little thing—especially when it came to Rose. And the TARDIS could say nothing of it. She couldn’t say anything.

It was all, really, rather infuriating.

So maybe, just maybe, that’s why she allowed the little box to approach.

The Doctor, Rose, and Rory were all in the console room, laughing over some mad tale the two Time Lords were reliving when Amy came down the stairs to join them.

It wasn’t her entrance, however, that made them all stop. It was a soft knocking at the door.

“The door…” Rose started, furrowing her brows.

“It knocked.” The Doctor finished incredulously, eyes widening as they took slow steps towards it.

Rory looked between the couple and the doors as the knocking continued. “Right…” He said, pointing. “We are in deep space?”

“Very, very deep.” The Doctor agreed, looking over his shoulder to him as he continued towards the sound. Both him and Rose looked confused and nervous, and it was odd— the things the two of them found odd. Vampire Fish from space? Average. Knocking on the front door? Impossible.

The Doctor flung open the doors to reveal—

A box.

A small, glowing little glass box, just hovering there right outside the TARDIS.

“Oh…” The Doctor breathed out, and then a happy incredulous sort of excitement bubbled up inside him as he reached for the box. “Oh, come here you beauty!”

The box whizzed past him though, into the console room, flying about Amy’s and Rory’s heads before finally crashing directly into The Doctor’s chest. He grinned madly as he held it up to his face.

“Doctor, what is it?” Amy asked.

He didn’t look away from the box as he answered. “I’ve got mail!” He exclaimed, twisting it around in his hands and smiling like a child. He ran up the stairs to the console, Rose close on his heels, as the three of them asked for further explanation. He flipped a switch. “Time Lord emergency messaging system. In an emergency, we’d wrap up thoughts in psychic containers and send them through time and space.” He spoke quickly as he pulled the TARDIS out of park.

“Anyway, there’s a living Time Lord still out there, and it’s one of the good ones!” He practically yelled the last bit.

Amy, Rory, and Rose shared a worried look at that though.

“But…” Rory started for them. “You said there weren’t any other Time Lords left…”

The Doctor, confusingly, nodded. “There are no Time Lords left anywhere in the universe! But the universe isn't where we’re going!” He pulled a lever and sent the ship rocking. “See that snake?” He asked, tossing the box to Rory to see the Ouroboros engraved into its side. “The mark of the Corsair. Fantastic bloke. He had that snake as a tattoo in every regeneration. Didn't feel like
himself unless he had the tattoo. Or herself, a couple of times!” He spun around giddily and flipped another lever—sending the TARDIS on a collision course towards nowhere. Sparks flew and engines groaned.

“Oh, what are you doing?!” Rose demanded as she grabbed onto the console, feeling the TARDIS protest to his actions not only physically but in her mind as well.

“We’re leaving the universe!” He answered over the noise, sounding half-mad.

“How can we leave the universe?!” Amy yelled incredulously, stomach turning as the gravity failed.

“With enormous difficulty!” He yelled back, and then pulled himself to the monitor, typing in a few commands and flipping a number of switches. “Right now, I’m burning up TARDIS rooms to give us some welly! Goodbye, swimming pool! Goodbye, scullery! Sayonara, squash court seven!”

Rose made an indignant sound, but her protests were cut off as they banged to a screeching halt. They all stood up slowly as the shaking stopped. Amy huffed and pushed her hair back. “Okay… where are we?”

The Doctor’s eyes were wide with anticipation. “Outside the universe.” He whispered. “Where we’ve never, ever, been.”

The effect of his words, however, was lost, as the sound of the power dying filled the ship and the lights went out around them. Rose’s eyes rolled to the back of her head and her knees gave out from under her. The Doctor just barely managed to catch her before her head hit the glass floor. “Rose!” He let out frantically, holding her limp body and easing her gently down as the panic began to set it.

Rory came up next to him to check for a pulse. “What’s happening?” He asked.

The Doctor looked up to the nurse with wide eyes before standing up to begin pulling at the controls to no avail. “The power, it’s draining. Everything’s draining. But it can’t. That’s, that’s impossible!” He mumbled frantically. “It’s as if the Matrix, the soul of the TARDIS, has just vanished.” He spun back around to his wife. “And Rose is half of the heart of the TARDIS—she’s—she’s just had half of herself taken from her.”

Amy shook her head at that, closing her eyes. “Rose is half TARDIS?” She asked incredulously.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose at that phrasing. “No. Yes. Well-sort of.” He let out, and then knelt down next to her again. “Oh, Rose—Rose I’m so so sorry.” He mumbled.

“Will she be okay?” Amy whispered.

The Doctor pulled out the sonic and scanned her quickly, breathing a sigh of relief and nodding. “Yes, yes—she’s just… mostly human again. Her biology just got completely split in half—”

“That doesn’t sound good.” Rory interrupted.

The Doctor glared up at him. “Well I can fix it!” He asserted, before looking back down to her. “She’ll wake up soon. Just a bit of a shock.”

Right on cue, Rose gasped awake—breathing in a golden light as she did, eyes glowing. A bit of the Matrix had managed to stick around for her. The Doctor closed his eyes in thanks at that. “Oh, my
head.” She let out, bringing her hand to her temple as she winced. “What happened?”

“You passed out.” Rory answered, and then looked up to The Doctor before going on. “The TARDIS, she’s…” He drifted off and Rose raised her eyebrows towards her husband in question.

“The landing may have given her a bit of bother.” He told her guiltily.

Rose stood up at that, allowing the two of them to help her as she looked around the darkened console room. “Oh…” she breathed, spinning in a small circle. “It’s empty…”

Amy looked around at that. “No- it’s the same as its always been. Just dark.” She argued.

Rose shook her head. “She’s not here. It’s just a box.” She whispered, and then, without warning, walked quickly out the doors.

“Rose!” The Doctor called, running after her onto what appeared to be a junk planet. “Rose! Be careful! You’re more human now! I don’t know what that means but-”

“Shush.” She interrupted him, holding her hand out as they all shuffled out the the police box. “Can you feel that?” She asked him quietly, eyes flickering about the dirt and garbage surrounding them.

“No…” The Doctor started hesitantly, squinting at her back worriedly.

Behind them though, Rory spoke up, kicking a discarded can at his foot. “What is this place? The scrap yard at the end of the universe?”

“The landing may have given her a bit of bother.” He corrected him. “Trust me- been to the end of the universe and you do not wanna go there.”

Rory nodded. “Okay.”

Rose wrinkled her nose though. “No, don’t do that. It’s nothing like that.”

The analogy had already stuck for Amy though. “So we're in a tiny bubble universe, sticking to the side of the bigger bubble universe?”

The Doctor corrected him. “Imagine a great big soap bubble with one of those tiny little bubbles on the outside.” The Doctor began.

Rory shook his head at the derailment. “How can we be outside of the universe?” He asked. “The universe is everything.”

Rory nodded. “Okay.”

Rose wrinkled her nose though. “No, don’t do that. It’s nothing like that.”

The analogy had already stuck for Amy though. “So we're in a tiny bubble universe, sticking to the side of the bigger bubble universe?”

The Doctor corrected him. “Imagine a great big soap bubble with one of those tiny little bubbles on the outside.” The Doctor began.

Rory shook his head at the derailment. “How can we be outside of the universe?” He asked. “The universe is everything.”

“Imagine a great big soap bubble with one of those tiny little bubbles on the outside.” The Doctor began.

Rory nodded. “Okay.”

Rose wrinkled her nose though. “No, don’t do that. It’s nothing like that.”

The Doctor corrected him. “Imagine a great big soap bubble with one of those tiny little bubbles on the outside.” The Doctor began.

Rory shook his head at the derailment. “How can we be outside of the universe?” He asked. “The universe is everything.”

“Armpits.” Amy finished for him before he could make another terrible and less accurate analogy. He pointed to her. “Armpits.” He repeated in agreement, hopping up onto an old tyre as he did.
Rory motioned to the junk piles surrounding them. “What about all this stuff? Where did it come from?”

“Well, there's a rift. Now and then stuff gets sucked through it.” He explained, and then his eyes lit up as the sentence provided him with a much better analogy for their location. “Not a bubble, a plughole! The universe has a plughole and we've just fallen down it.”

Rose opened her mouth to congratulate him, but was cut off as a mad woman came running towards them in a ragged blue victorian lace gown with dark wild hair piled on top of her head to match her dark wild eyes. “Thief! Thief!” She screamed. “You’re my Thief!” She propelled herself into The Doctor’s arms. “Look at you. Goodbye. No, not goodbye, what's the other one?” She spoke quickly, and then her eyes landed on Rose.

“Wolf!” She exclaimed, pushing The Doctor away and running to Rose while two decrepit older people came hobbling up behind her, warning of her madness. “My Wolf!” She repeated, ignoring her friends behind her, and then kissed Rose full on the lips.

“Oh!” The Doctor protested, and the mad woman fell back on her heels, stumbling around and mumbling gibberish to herself.


“Why am I a thief?” The Doctor asked incredulously. “What have a stolen?”

She stepped up to him again at that. “Me. You're going to steal me. No, you have stolen me. You are stealing me. Oh tenses are difficult, aren't they?” She rambled even more quickly than The Doctor did on a good day.

The other woman, the one who didn’t seem as mad, leant forward, hand going to her hip. “Oh. Oh, we are sorry, my dove. She's off her head.” She explained vaguely. “They call me Auntie.” She introduced herself tiredly, shaking their hands.

The askew man followed her lead. “And I'm Uncle. I'm everybody's Uncle.” He said to The Doctor, and then leant forward conspiratorially with a look towards the mad woman. “Just keep back from this one. She bites!”

She stepped away from where she’d been playing with Rose’s hair at that. “Do I?” She tilted her head. “Excellent!” And with that lunged forward to bite The Doctor’s neck with a great deal of force.

“OW! OW!” The Doctor yelled while everyone yelled in protest, until finally Rose could pull her off of him.

“Oh, biting’s excellent.” She mused vaguely, seemingly unphased by all the uproar it just caused. “It’s like kissing- only there’s a winner!”

“So- so sorry.” Uncle apologised boredly. “Idris. She’s doolally.”

“No.” Idris (apparently) argued. “I’m not Doolally. I’m…. I’m….“ She kept getting stuck on the ‘m’ and drifting off. “Oh, it’s on the tip of my tongue.” She sighed and tilted her head at The Doctor. “Oh but now you’re angry– no, no you’re not. You will be angry. The little boxes will make you angry.” She told him.

“Sorry? The little what?” He asked.
“Oh, ho, ho!” She exclaimed suddenly, reaching out to grab at him. “Your chin is hilarious!” Her eyes flickered over to Rory suddenly. “It means the smell of dust after rain.”

Rory shook his head at the walking non-sequitur. “What?”

“Petrichor.” She answered.

“But I didn’t ask.”

She studied him. “Not yet. But you will.”

Rose stepped forward at that, getting in the woman’s face, ignoring her husband’s pull on her arm. “I know you.” She whispered.

Idris’s eyes glowed at that. “Well of course you do.” She whispered right back- and it was the first time she’d said something quietly.

“Alright.” Auntie spoke up. “Idris. I think you should have a rest.”

Idris spun on her heel. “Okay.” She agreed easily. “I’ll just… see if there’s an off switch.” She said, and with that, instantly went limp. They all let out surprised ‘whoas’ and The Doctor and Rose caught her and lent her against a nearby chair before she could hit the ground.

“Is that it?” Uncle asked. “She’s dead now- ah. So sad.” He said boredly.

“She’s still breathing.” Rory informed them, squinting up at him.

Uncle shrugged and let out a noncommittal noise that said he didn’t really mind either way. He turned as another joined them. “Nephew, take Idris somewhere she can not bite people.”

The Doctor turned around at that and grinned when he was met with the face of an ood. “Oh, hello!” He exclaimed, and ignored Amy’s and Rory’s startled gasps.

“Doctor, what is that?” Amy demanded, and it was clear she was getting real fed up with just how miscellaneous this plug-hole-of-the-universe planet was.

“Oh, no, it’s alright.” The Doctor waved her off. “It’s an Ood. Oods are good. Love an Ood. Hello, Ood!” He stepped up to Nephew, waving his hand a bit. “Can’t you talk?” he asked, when there was no reply, and glanced down to the translator orb. “Oh, I see. It’s damaged. May I?” He asked, and took it when the Ood nodded his consent. “It might just be on the wrong frequency.” He mumbled, sonicking the device.

“Nephew was broken when he came here. Why, he was half dead. House repaired him. House repaired all of us.” Auntie explained from behind.

The Doctor clicked the two halves back together and instantly a hundred voices spoke over one another. “If you are receiving this message, please help me.” A man’s voice spoke over the others. The Doctor held his breath as he spun in a small circle, eyes wide. “Send a signal to the High Council of the Time Lords on Gallifrey. Tell them that I am still alive. I don’t know where I am. I’m on some rock-like planet-”

The Ood twisted the orb again, and the voices stopped.

Rose was frozen in place from the influx of telepathic distress frequencies from the Time Lords. Because that’s what those voices were. Time Lords. Rose would recognise the telepathic signature
anywhere. It wasn’t as absolute as The Doctor’s, obviously, and somehow more… processed, but it was still very clearly Gallifreyan.

She could feel the hope coming off of her husband in waves.

It made her exceptionally nervous.

His eyes were flicking frantically back and forth. “But that’s- that’s not possible. That’s- that’s…” He spun back to Auntie and Uncle. “Who else is here? Tell me. Show me. Show me.” He demanded.

Auntie took a step back. “Just what you see. Just the four of us- and the House.” She answered. Her voice was deep and broken, like it wasn’t used to itself. “Nephew- will you -take Idris somewhere -safe where -she can't- hurt -nobody?” It was like a stutter that didn’t repeat.

The Doctor didn’t look over as Nephew dragged the still unconscious (sleeping?) mad woman away. “The House? What’s the House?”

Auntie motioned grandly about the scrap yard. “House is all around you, my sweets. You are standing on him. This is the House. This world.” She said it proudly. “Would you like to meet him?”

“Meet him?” Rose asked, raising her eyebrows. The longer they stayed here the more it didn’t make sense. Usually around this time, when The Doctor’s hopes were too high to ever be lived up to, she’d want to be dragging The Doctor back into the TARDIS to keep him from heartbreak, but… she really didn’t want to step back into that box. Whatever it was right now it was not the TARDIS.

The Doctor wasn’t paying any attention to Rose’s thoughts. “I’d love to.” He answered Auntie.

Uncle did that not-really-a-smile thing again. Like he wasn’t actually capable of feeling the emotions necessary to smile properly. “This way. Come, please. Come.” He said, limping off into the massive wrecked spaceship behind them.

Amy stepped up next to Rose and grabbed her elbow. “What’s wrong? What were those voices?”

Rose shook her head. “Time Lords. It’s not just the Corsair.” She answered quietly, like she worried if she said it too loud her husband may get even more excited.

It was too late for such precautions though. “Somewhere close by there are lots and lots of Time Lords!” He exclaimed, and ran off in the direction of Auntie and Uncle.

Rose watched him go sadly for a moment before sighing and following. He was too enamored with the feeling of more telepathic frequencies in his head again. He didn’t notice how wrong they felt. He didn’t notice the absence of one very important-

‘I'm, I'm. Big word, sad word. Why is that word so sad? No. Will be sad. Will be sad.’ A new voice rang through Rose’s head. She gasped and grabbed for her temples, stopping in her tracks in the dusty metal corridor.

“Rose!” The Doctor, Amy, and Rory all exclaimed, but she barely heard them as she focused on this new, but vaguely familiar telepath in her head.

‘Hello?’ Rose tried, and it was an odd feeling, projecting her head-voice towards a mind that wasn’t The Doctor’s.
‘No, that isn’t it.’ The woman replied. ‘Oh. This is odd, isn’t it? Go on, Wolf. You’ve found me- no, will find me. Yes, that’s it.’ She spoke without much sense, and then threw up messy barriers before Rose could question her.

Rose opened her eyes at that to find her husband directly in her face. “Rose, what’s-” he started, but Uncle’s reappearance in the corridor cut him off.

“Come, come.” He said, motioning them further into the destroyed internal mechanisms of the ship that created a sort of makeshift room. “You can see the House and he can look at you, and he.” He stopped mid sentence without seeming to notice.

The Doctor leant over the green glowing metal grating Uncle had led them to. “Ah, I see.” The Doctor observed. “This asteroid is sentient.”

Auntie nodded. “We walk on his back, breathe his air, eat his food-”

“Smell its armpits.” Amy muttered.

Suddenly, Uncle’s and Auntie’s back’s straightened up- there eyes going unfocused as they looked straight ahead. A voice, not their own, filtered through their mouths- like they were marionettes. “And do my will.” The deep, refined male voice finished. “You are most welcome, travellers.”

Amy’s eyes widened. “Doctor, that voice. That's the asteroid talking?”

“Yes.” He answered her shortly, not looking away from Auntie and Uncle- the House’s puppets. “So you're like a sea urchin. Hard outer surface, that's the planet we're walking on. Big, squishy, oogly thing inside, that's you.” He turned finally, walking on the ground for emphasis.

“That is correct, Time Lord.” House confirmed, pointedly calling him by his species.

“Ah. So you've met Time Lords before?” The Doctor smirked, and the hope was still there.

“Many travellers have come through the rift, like Auntie and Uncle and Nephew.” House answered vaguely. “I repair them when they break.”

“So there are Time Lords here, then?” The Doctor asked again more specifically.

“Not any more, but there have been many TARDISes on my back in days gone by.” House said, voice vague and reminiscent of another time.

Rose thought that answer should have made The Doctor’s shoulders fall, but it seemed only to serve as fuel, making him more determined. It was the first time in more than a century- nearly two now, that he’s had any hope of finding another Time Lord (a Gallifreyan one, from home), and he wasn’t going to let anything as simple as denial stop him now.

“Well, there won't be any more after us. Last Time Lords. Last TARDIS.” He informed the House, but the words weren’t as laced in sadness as they usually were- his unwavering optimism getting the better of him. Rose closed her eyes against the storm she could already feel coming- even if the Storm himself didn’t know it yet.

“A pity. Your people were so kind.” House said, giving the simultaneous air of unaffected yet at the same time deeply distraught. “Be here in safety, Doctor. Rest, feed, if you will.” He offered them, and then Auntie and Nephew fell back to their usual hunched forms.

“We’re not actually going to stay here, are we?” Rory asked, giving Rose a significant look that she
nodded in understanding to.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels. “Well, it seems like a friendly planet… Literally.” He said, and Rory sighed at the tone as The Doctor turned back to the planet’s inhabitants. “Mind if we poke around a bit?” He asked.

“You can look all you want.” Auntie told them, and then stepped up to Amy. “Go. Look.” She patted the young girl’s face. “House loves you.” She told her ominously. They all noticed for the first time Auntie’s disproportionately large, manly hand.

“Come on then, gang.” The Doctor spoke before the human’s could question her. “We’re just going to… er, see the sights.” He smiled politely before shoving them back through the rough-hewn corridors.

The new telepathic presence reasserted herself in Rose’s head again. Speaking Gallifreyan now. ‘Isathero-ke z’ro esvetrellioahtse’ She said, and Rose sucked in a breath, only just managing to continuing walking as the woman switched back to English. ‘Ah! What was that? Do fish have fingers? Like a nine year old trying to rebuild a motorbike. What am I saying? Why am I saying that? Wolf? Why is it only you? Thief? Where’s my thief? Thief!’

She must have yelled the last bit as The Doctor stopped suddenly, holding his arm out to them and telling them all the hush despite the fact that they hadn’t been talking.

Rory sighed and waited for them to start walking again. “So, as soon as the TARDIS is refuelled we can go, yeah?” He asked.

“No.” The Doctor and Rose said together, but for very different reasons. She didn’t elaborate however, and he did. “There are Time Lords here. I heard them and they need me.” He said firmly, spinning to face them.

Amy shook her head, crossing her arms. “You said there weren’t anymore Time Lords, you told us about your people, and…” She drifted off awkwardly, before finally steeling herself and saying it anyway. “You told us what you did.”

“I can explain.” He defended himself quickly, looking down and turning back around. “I can tell them why I had to.”

Amy met Rose’s helpless eyes. They both knew there was no way this was going to end well, but neither one of them wanted to say it out loud. “You want to be forgiven.” She said instead.

He wouldn’t look at any of them. “Don’t we all?”

Amy nodded sadly and sighed in defeat. “What do you need from me?”

The Doctor smirked and patted his pockets. “My screwdriver.” He said. “It’s in the TARDIS. I left it in my jacket.”

Rose squinted at him and folded her arms, the lie obvious to her with him in his head, but only Rory caught the look. “You’re wearing your jacket.” He challenged.

“My other jacket.” The Doctor answered quickly.

Rory raised his eyebrows at that. “You have two of those?”

“Okay,” Amy interrupted before The Doctor could pronounce offense. “I’ll get it.” She told him,
and then levelled the Time Lord with a look. “But, listen to me. Don’t get emotional, because that’s when you make mistakes.”

He wrinkled his nose at that. “Oh, you sound exactly like Rose.” He complained.

Amy raised her chin at that and smirked. “Good.” She said simply, and then pointed to the woman in question. “I’ll call you from the TARDIS.”

With that she turned on her heel to walk back the direction they came, Rory paused for only half a second longer to silently ask Rose if he was going along with this, at her small nod he finally turned and followed Amy.

Rose turned on him once they’d gone. “You gonna tell me why you’ve sent them away?”

He sighed, “they’re human. This is Time Lord stuff, and it’s tricky.” He said simply, shrugging. “Would send you off too if I thought I could get away with it.” Rose raised her brows at that, not surprised by the fact itself so much as the fact that he admitted it. At the look he went on. “You’re human right now- more so than usual- enough to make it unlikely you could regenerate. If it were up to me I would have left you in the TARDIS to begin with.”

The So we’re not good enough? Was on the tip of her tongue, but she knew that wasn’t fair- she knew that wasn’t it. Instead she shook her head. “I don’t think even the TARDIS is safe right now.” She said, and instantly felt the double meaning even if she wasn’t sure what that double meaning was.

“Anything’s safer than a cross Time Lord.” He countered.

“The safest place for me is always next to you.” She threw back. It’s something she’s been saying since she was nineteen years old, and it was usually a good way to shut up his ‘I need to protect Rose Tyler at all costs’ moods.

“And vice versa.” He agreed, punctuating the statement with a kiss to the tip of her nose, and smirking victoriously when she failed to hide her smile. He wrapped his hands around her waist while hers went to his shoulders. “I’m not willing to sacrifice your life for any number of Time Lords- not even if the whole of Gallifrey was hiding around here somewhere.” He told her seriously.

Rose smirked. “That would have made the list for Most Romantic Things You’ve Ever Said- if we weren’t currently standing in an armpit.” She whispered impishly.

The Doctor laughed at that and spun her away from him. “Cheeky,” he commented dryly before pushing her in front of him down the corridor.

Her phone rang just as they were about to turn the corner, and she tossed it over to him. “Your go.” She said lightly, and he rolled his eyes before bringing it to his ear.

“I’m worried about him.” Amy told Rory as she unlocked the TARDIS.

“He’ll be fine.” Rory assured her, following her over the threshold. “He’s a Time Lord.”

Amy rolled her eyes at that. “It’s just what they’re called- it doesn’t actually mean he knows what he’s doing.” She huffed.
Rory shrugged noncommittally. “Well, he’s got Rose.”

“Mm,” Amy agreed half-heartedly as she glanced around the darkened control room. For whatever reason, the statement didn’t seem to provide as much security as it usually tended to. “Is it just me or does she seem a bit… not herself recently?”

Rory raised a brow at her. “Well, she did just lose her second child in a row. I think she deserves to be a little less cheery than usual.”

Amy’s eyes widened as she realised she’d allowed herself to forget that. “Yeah, yeah- no you’re right. Sorry. I guess I’m just not used to it. Rose with less conviction, it’s like-”

“You with less conviction?” Rory offered, snorting a bit as he walked past her to the other side of the console. Amy bit back her proud smile and pulled out her mobile to ring the woman in question.

The Doctor answered with a short “Pond,” and Amy sighed.

“Hey we’re here. Screwdriver’s in your jacket, yeah?” She asked, looking around the jacket-less room.

“Yeah, it’s around somewhere. Have a good look.” He said vaguely.

Behind her the door made a loud double clicking noise and she spun on her heel in surprise, hanging up the phone as she did.

“Oh, you had to lock them in- really?” Rose asked him incredulously as he tucked the sonic back into his jacket pocket.

“Think of it this way, it’s like locking the door behind you when you leave the kids at home alone.” The Doctor brushed off her tone, and then reached out to grab her hand. “Now, come on.”

They followed the indistinct chatter into another makeshift room of the crashed ship. “Where are you?” The Doctor mumbled, closing his eyes to hone in on the telepathic signatures. “Where are you?” They wandered over to a small alcove, and Rose pushed back the curtain covering it. He stepped inside, and the voices got louder. “Well,” he breathed, looking around the small space, “they can’t all be in here.” He said lightly, looking back over to her.

Rose, however, was staring intently at the small metal cupboard set behind him. He turned around slowly, placing his hand against the rusted metal. When Rose’s hand landed on the small of his back he finally managed to open the doors- instantly filling the room with the loud desperate calls of Time Lords. Inside, more than a dozen messaging boxes sat, forgotten.

“Please do you read me…”

“Structural integrity failure. Damage to dimensional stabiliser-”

“… If you can hear me, come and help.”

“If anyone is out there please send word-”

Rose squeezed her eyes shut against the onslaught of pain, while the Doctor balled his hands into tight fists- focusing on the anger instead. Uncle and Auntie came up behind them.
“Just admiring your Time Lord distress signal collection.” He bit out. “Nice job. Brilliant job. Really thought I had some friends here… but this is what the Ood translator picked up. Cries for help from the long dead.” He turned slowly to look at them finally, leveling them with a hard look. “How many Time Lords have you lured here the way you lured us?” He asked, voice just barely on the edge of calm, teetering dangerously towards hostile. “What happened to them all?” He demanded.

“House…” Auntie started. “House is kind and he is wise-”

The Doctor snapped, taking a step towards them and leering over them as he spoke, making them back up. “House repairs you when you break. Yes, I know.” He growled. “But how does he mend you?” He turned his eyes on Uncle’s. “You've got the eyes of a twenty year old.” He told him.

“... Th-thank you.” Uncle mumbled, looking sideways.

“No. Oh, no, I mean it literally-” He pulled out the sonic to scan him. “Your eyes are thirty years younger than the rest of you.” He tossed the man’s hat off to reveal the blue pointed ear stitched into the side of his head. “Your ears don't match, your right arm is two inches longer than you're left, and how's your dancing? Because you've got two left feet.” He summarised, moving down the list. “Patchwork people. You’ve been repaired and patched up so often, I doubt there's anything left of what used to be you. I had an umbrella like you once.” He grumbled, picking up Auntie’s overly large right arm.

“Oh, now, it's been a great arm for me, this.” She started, but The Doctor wasn’t listening, zeroing in on the snake tattoo inked into the stolen skin.

“Corsair…” He said quietly, grabbing forcefully at the wrist.

Auntie still was unphased by the nearly unguarded rage coursing through the Time Lord in front of her. “He was a strapping big bloke, wasn't he, Uncle?”

“Big fellow.” Uncle agreed.

“Yeah, I got the arm and then- Uncle got the spine and the kidneys.” She informed him, oblivious to the storm behind his eyes.

The Doctor’s eyes flickered between the two of them. “You gave me hope, and then you took it away.” He bit out. “That's enough to make anyone dangerous. God knows what it will do to me.” They leaned away from him at that, and he followed. “Basically…” He whispered, and then screamed, finally reaching a boiling point. “RUN!”

Auntie listened, but Uncle, still too slow on the uptake stayed behind to shake his head at them. “Poor old Time Lords. Too late. House is too clever.” He informed them, and then turned to leave.

Rose’s phone rang again, and she answered this time. “Yeah?” She managed to get out brokenly. Amy didn’t notice the tone though. “No sonic screwdriver.” She said shortly. “Also the doors seemed to have locked behind us. Rory thinks there's a perfectly innocent explanation, but I think you lied to us.”

Rose closed her eyes. “Time Lord stuff.” She managed to repeat. “Needed you out of the way.” She’d meant to add ‘of danger’ to the end of that, but her head still wasn’t on straight.

“What, we’re not good enough for your smart new friends?” Amy demanded angrily, because of course she did. She was so much like how Rose was when she was younger.
“No,” Rose shook her head. “No, Amelia, that’s not it and you know it. It’s just… complicated, okay? And I’d love to explain it all to you later, but right now, just trust us. Just stay put, okay?”

“Well we don’t exactly have a choice.” Amy grumbled, but Rose was too distracted now to hear her, as The Doctor was mumbling to himself. She clicked the phone shut to listen to him.

“The boxes will make you angry. How could she know?” He asked, but didn’t wait for a reply before he was running through the ship again.

When they came upon the room in which Idris was locked in cage, The Doctor immediately began yelling at her. “How did you know about the boxes? You said they’d make me angry. How did you know?” He demanded.

“Oh, it’s my Thief.” She said lightly, unaffected by his tone.

And suddenly, it clicked. The voice in her head. The nicknames. It’s Idris that was speaking to her. *But that isn’t possible*-

Idris tilted her head towards Rose. “But of course it is, my Wolf.” She said, speaking out loud to Rose’s thoughts.

“Who are you?” The Doctor ask quickly, angrily, not listening to her.

Idris smirked, letting out a little laugh. “It’s about time.” She said, loving the hundreds of meanings that came with the three short words. She tilted her head towards Rose. “Rose knows. Rose always knows.” She mused.

Rose’s eyes widened as The Doctor turned to look at her questioningly. She shook her head at him, and took a step towards Idris. “You’re the woman in my head.” She said quietly, not saying the second part of her theory.

“Always have been.” Idris answered, eyes glowing, confirming.

“I don’t understand.” The Doctor protested. “Who are you?”

Her head snapped over to meet his eyes. “Do you really not know me?” She asked him. “Just because they put me in here?”

The Doctor looked to the cage surrounding the woman. “They said you were dangerous.”

“Not the cage, stupid.” Idris reprimanded him, and then stood up, bringing her fingers to her temples. “In here.” She whispered, and then wrapped her hands around the bars. “I’m the- ...Oh, what do you call me? We travel. I go-” She cut herself off to make the exact same pleasant whooshing noise the TARDIS makes when they land.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows at her incredulously. “The TARDIS?”

“Time And Relative Dimension In Space. Yes, that's it. Names are funny. It's me. I'm the TARDIS.” She let out the string of thoughts quickly.

Rose was too busy staring at her to catch the disbelieving look The Doctor was giving her, so he continued to argue. “No, you're not. You're a bitey, mad lady. The TARDIS is up and downy stuff in a big blue box.” He dismissed, turning to face away from her.

“Yes, that’s me.” Idris agreed to his back. “A Type Forty TARDIS. I was already a museum piece
when you were young, and the first time you touched my console you said—"

“...I said you were the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.” The Doctor finished, breathlessly, still not turning back around.

“And then you stole me.” Idris smirked. “And I stole you.”

There was a long pause as The Doctor took all of it in. “I borrowed you.” He said shortly.

“Borrowing implies the eventual intention to return the thing that was stolen.” Idris threw back simply. “What makes you think I would ever give you back?”

Rose bit back a smirk, understanding the feeling more than probably anyone could, and waited patiently for her husband to get what she hadn’t needed proof for. The telepathic presence of the woman was so familiar because it had already been there for more than a century. “You’re the TARDIS?” He finally asked incredulously, spinning back around to face her.

“Yes.” Idris replied shortly.

“*My* TARDIS?”

Idris pulled her chin back at that. “*My* Doctor.” She corrected, but then went on. “But let’s be honest, Doctor, neither one of us has belonged to ourselves nor each other in a long time. Not since Rose came and stole both of our hearts.” She tilted her head. “Maybe I should call her the Thief.”

Rose grinned brightly at that and looked up to her husband, but instantly bit back the smile at the incredulous look he was giving her. It was obviously taking him much longer to accept this reality than it was her.

“Oh,” Idris breathed, taking a step back. “We have now reached the point in the conversation where you open the lock.”

The Doctor stared at for a moment longer, before finally conceding, pulling the sonic back out of his jacket and aiming it at the cage.

She stepped out lightly and came right into Rose’s personal space, scanning her eyes. “Are all people like this?” She asked.

“What?” Rose asked, feeling her poking around her head.

“So much bigger on the inside.” She breathed. “I’m-” She huffed, walking away and towards The Doctor. “Oh, what is that word? It’s so big, so complicated. It’s so sad.”

“But why?” The Doctor asked, ignoring her spiel. “Why pull the living soul from a TARDIS and pop it in a tiny human head? What does it want you for?”

Idris shook her head. “Oh, it doesn’t want me.”

“How do you know?” The Doctor challenged.

Idris set them into a back-and-forth. “House eats TARDISes.” She answered.

The Doctor furrowed his brow at that. “House what? What do you mean?”

“I don’t know.” She shrugged noncommittally. “It's something I heard you say.”
“When?”

“In the future.”

“House eats TARDISes?” He repeated.

“There you go.” She nodded. “What are fish fingers?”

He pulled his chin back, not believing that one. “When do I say that?”

“Any second.”

His head snapped up in sudden realisation. “Of course. House feeds on rift energy and TARDISes are bursting with it. And not raw, all lovely and cooked.” He took a hard left at the analogy. “-Processed food. Mmm, fish fingers.” He mused distractedly.

“Do fish have fingers?” Idris asked, and Rose reeled at the memory of her saying that in her head nearly half an hour ago now.

The Doctor shook his head, stuttering a bit as he tripped over his words in a frantic effort to keep up with the thoughts. “Yeah- but- you- you can't eat a TARDIS.” He protested. “It would destroy you. Unless- unless…”

“Unless you deleted the TARDIS Matrix first.” Idris finished for him.

He chuckled incredulously. “So it deleted you.” He said, like he didn’t believe it

She leaned into him, and began speaking like reciting lines from a textbook. “But House can't just delete a TARDIS’s consciousness. That would blow a hole in the universe. So he pulls out the Matrix, sticks it in a living receptacle and then it feeds off the remaining Artron energy-” She took a deep breath. “Oh. You were about to say all that. I don't suppose you have to now.”

“She’s stealing your thunder, Doctor.” Rose said amusedly. “Spose she might just be more impressive than you.” She teased him.

The Doctor huffed indignantly while the TARDIS grinned brightly over to her Wolf.

Rose only had a second to delight in that though when she realised- “Amy and Rory!” She yelled suddenly, looking up to her husband frantically.

His eyes widened. “I sent them back in there. They’ll be eaten!” He exclaimed, turning on his heel and running at a dead sprint back towards the TARDIS- or the police box anyway, Rose close behind pulling out her mobile.

“AMY! RORY! GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE!”

“He's not trusting us and he's being emotional.” Amy stressed as she paced around the console. “This is bad. This is very, very bad.”

Rory was about to comment on how much she sounded like him herself, but was distracted by eerie green light now filtering through the door window- outside an emerald smoke was surrounding the TARDIS. “Yeah, I think it probably is.” Rory agreed, pointing to the doors and getting Amy to look to them too.
Amy winced at the sight. “Sometimes I hate being right.” She breathed, and her phone rang just as the Rory was running to open the doors to no avail.

“Rose, something’s wrong.” She said frantically, pulling randomly at levers and switches while the green smoke continued to surround them.

“It’s House. He’s after the TARDIS. Just get out, both of you!” The Doctor answered, yelling, and they were clearly both running now.

“We can’t!” Amy yelled back. “You locked the door, remember?”

“But I’ve unlocked it!” He protested.

“You stupid well haven’t!” She growled, and the cloister bell began ringing as a wind swept through the console room. “Doctor, I don’t like this!” She screamed, but it didn’t matter. She tossed the phone aside when the line went dead.

She held her hand out to her husband as they began dematerialising. “Rory, hold my hand.” She whispered.

“Listen,” he said, squeezing it. “Whatever happens, at least we’re together. And we’re in the TARDIS, so we’re safe.”

Amy nodded, “yeah,” she breathed, even as Rose’s earlier warning that this wasn’t the TARDIS rang in her ears.

And right on cue the vaguely threatening voice of House filled the room. “Well, you’re half right.” He said. “I mean, you are in the TARDIS… What a great adventure. I should have done this half a million years ago.” He mused. “So, Amy, Rory, tell me- why shouldn’t I just kill you right now?”

The Doctor aimed the screwdriver at the TARDIS again as they careened around the corner, but still the doors refused to budge. He screeched to halt and snapped his fingers with no result. “OPEN! OPEN THESE DOORS!” He ordered the ship angrily.

But the heart of the TARDIS was no longer in that blue box, and therefore it was no longer listening to The Doctor. The light on top was green now, and the police box disappeared into the unknown with Amy and Rory still inside.

Rose pulled the phone back to her ear. “Amy? Amy can you hear me?” She asked desperately, but the other end was silent. She looked over to her husband worriedly.

He shook his head. “I really don’t know what to do.” He breathed.

Rose grabbed his hand and they ran back to the makeshift living quarters of the wrecked ship.

“It’s gone!” The Doctor yelled to Idris -the TARDIS- where she was sitting idly next to Auntie and Uncle. Rose sat down next to her as her husband continued to pace anxiously.

“It?” Idris repeated indignantly.

Rose tilted her head curiously at that. “Is the box still a ‘she’ if you’re not inside?” She mused.

The TARDIS seemed so consider this for a moment as she looked at her Wolf. “Is your body still female once your soul has left?” She tossed back, but it wasn’t to make a point- it was to raise
another valid question.

Rose frowned as she considered that. “Well, House didn’t eat the box. It was hijacked. I suppose pronouns are now up to House.”

Idris nodded. “These humans typically refer to House as both ‘it’ and ‘he.’” She informed her. Rose nodded appreciatively, and looked up to find her husband watching the conversation incredulously.

“If you two are done-” He started reprimanding them, and Rose and Idris shared a look. “Amy and Rory have just been taken by a killer asteroid consciousness. I’m not sure now is the time to be having a debate over gender identity and pronouns.”

Neither one of them had a chance to respond to that however as Auntie and Uncle stood up. “Well, Unkie,” Auntie said, “it’s time for us to go, and keep together.”

“Go?” The Doctor repeated, squinting at them. “What do you mean, ‘go’? Where are you going?”

“Well, we're dying, my love.” Auntie informed him, rather emotionlessly. “It's time for Auntie and Uncle to pop off.”

“I’m against it.” Uncle said vaguely, but followed Auntie to the other side of the room.

“It’s your fault, innit, sweets?” Auntie aimed towards the Doctor and he and Uncle sat down again. “Because you told House it was the last TARDIS. House can't feed on them if there's none more coming, can he? He’s gone to find more.”

The Doctor shook his head. “It won’t.”

“Oh, it'll think of something.” Auntie replied easily, still unwavering in her faith in House even after he’d left her to die- which she did, immediately after that, just slumped over and quit breathing.

Rose and The Doctor stared incredulously as Uncle stood up. “Actually, I feel fine.” He started, taking a step forward, only to immediately hit the ground lifeless.

The Doctor shifted from one foot to another anxiously as he scanned their bodies with the screwdriver. “Not dead! You can’t just die!” He argued the reality disbelievingly, only to get lifeless readings back. Eyes wide, he turned back to the two women helplessly.

Idris stood up suddenly. “We need to get where I landed, Doctor, quickly.”

The Doctor stared at her. “Why?” He asked.

“Because we are there in three minutes.” She answered him easily. “We need to go... now.” And with that she ran off, only to stop dead in her tracks with a small “ow!” Holding her hip, she spun around to face the Time Lords with wide eyes. “Roughly how long do these bodies last?” She asked them.

The Doctor scanned her with the screwdriver. “You’re dying...” He breathed.

She yanked the tool away from him. “Yes, of course I'm dying. I don't belong in a flesh body. I could blow the casing in no time.” She shot back, and then caught the looks on their faces. “No, stop it. Don't get emotional- Hmm. That's what the orangey girl says.” She set her gaze on The Doctor. “You're the Doctor. Focus.” She ordered.
“On what?” He exclaimed loudly, turning on his heel. “How? I'm a madman with a box, without a box! I'm stuck down the plughole at the end of the universe on a stupid old junkyard- Ooo!” He straightened up suddenly with that last noise, a smile spreading across his face.

Idris put her hands to her hips. “Ooo- what?” She mimicked him.

“I’m not!” He grinned.

Rose raised her eyebrows, trying to read his frantic thoughts. “Not what?” She asked, not unlike the TARDIS just had.

“Because it's not a junkyard!” He said happily, going up to her and spinning her around delightedly. “Don't you see? It's not a junkyard!”

“What is it then?” Idris called to their twirling forms, huffing slightly.

The Doctor stopped him and Rose to turn to her. “It's a TARDIS junkyard!” He practically sung, bouncing on his toes and grabbing both of them by the hand. “Come on!”

He dragged them towards the edge of a small cliff, from which they could see nearly the entire junkyard. “A valley of half-eaten TARDISes,” he breathed, looking over to them. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking.”

Rose bit the inside of her cheek, because she knew exactly what both of them were thinking and it definitely was not the same thing.

Idris spoke up first though. “I’m thinking that all my sisters are dead.” She said quietly. “That they were devoured, and we are looking at their corpses.”

The Doctor cleared his throat awkwardly. “Ah- sorry. No. I wasn't thinking that.”

Rose shook her head. “No. You were thinking you could build a working TARDIS console out of broken remnants of a hundred different models.” She supplied.

“And you don't care that it's impossible.” Idris finished breathlessly.

“It's not impossible as long as we're alive.” The Doctor insisted, not taking his eyes off the timeship graveyard. “Amy and Rory need us. So yeah, we’re going to build a TARDIS.” He set his jaw determinedly, and led them into the rubble.

As Amy and Rory opened and closed their mouths a few times, looking around desperately for anything to help them, House began commenting on his new existence. “Corridors. I have corridors. So much to learn about my new home…” He mused, before turning his attention back to the humans. “But you haven't answered my question, children.”

“Er, question?” Rory hedged.

How a bodiless being managed to roll its eyes was a puzzle, but one House managed to solve. “You remember.” He said vaguely. “Tell me, why I shouldn't just kill you both now?”

“Well, because…” Amy started, drifting off as she drew a blank. She nudged her husband. “Rory, why?”

He looked to her sharply, but tried as she gave him a pleading look in return. “Because… uh…
because killing us quickly wouldn't be any fun.” He settled on. “And you need fun, don't you? That's what Uncle and Auntie were for, wasn't it? Someone to make suffer.” He didn't notice the incredulous look Amy was giving him now. “I had a PE teacher just like you.” Amy hit him and he shifted his weight awkwardly. “You need to be entertained, and killing us quickly wouldn't be entertainment.” He summed up, wondering why he decided this was their best option.

House seemed to like that though. “So entertain me.” He ordered boredly. “Run.”

Amy and Rory took off towards the stairs.

It took Rose a while to realise Idris was speaking Gallifreyan in her head again. Just one phrase. Repeated over and over again. 'Isathero-ke z'ro esvetrellioahtse.' Rose blinked as she had trouble translating the last word.

‘Stars.’ Idris supplied, and Rose squinted at her. It made sense. Time Lords had near fifty different words for stars, but Rose had heard most of them, and the general term was usually ‘stell`laponse’ or some variation thereof. At the thought Idris continued. ‘It’s specific to what I’m saying.’ She explained vaguely.

‘What- how? What do you mean?’ Rose stumbled over her question confusedly.

Idris shook her head though. ‘You’ll learn soon enough, my Wolf.’

‘You can’t just tell me now?’ Rose asked, even though she could feel the timelines reject the idea almost instantly- whatever it was, to know too soon would create a paradox even she couldn’t contain. Idris just gave her a knowing look in response, and Rose sighed.

The Doctor turned around suddenly. “Are you two talking?” He asked them incredulously- finally recognising the unfamiliar frequencies he was getting from Rose. It was her communicating with a telepath that wasn’t himself. “How’s that possible?”

Idris shrugged noncommittally, picking up what appeared to be a decommissioned atom stabiliser and examining it. “We are one.” She answered, mimicking the inflection of Bad Wolf.

The Doctor scoffed and went back to tying the rope around the huge chunk of vortex forced metal he’d found and deemed salvageable.

Rose bit back her laugh, she’d seen him get jealous of plenty of his former incarnations, but somehow jealous of their own ship was a new kind of ridiculousness. He looked up to her sharply when he sensed her amusement, and she sent as much love and comfort as she could over the bond. He huffed, pushing his floppy hair out of his eyes and got back to work- though with straighter shoulders.

‘You two are keeping secrets from each other, but still your love has not suffered.’ Idris commented. ‘How very human.’

Rose didn’t feel the need to argue humanities. ‘And you know what all those secrets are, but refuse to let on.’ She threw back. ‘In fact, you know the answer to every question we’re asking ourselves, but still can’t help.’ She finally turned around to face the TARDIS. ‘But still I don’t blame you. That seems an incredible weight to bear.’

Idris raised her brows at that. ‘It is a weight you have held yourself, my Wolf.’
Rose shrugged and looked over her shoulder to her husband. ‘Maybe that’s why he’s the one struggling with that reality.’

‘Seven hundred years on a sentient omniscient time ship you’d think he’d be used to it.’ She complained, and the feeling was so similar to one the TARDIS projected so often when she was annoyed with The Doctor, but with words- the familiarity of it nearly knocked Rose off her feet.

‘And how often in those 700 years was the knowledge you held back this personal?’ Rose asked wisely, and smirked when Idris opened and closed her mouth a few times. ‘I’m not asking you to tell us what’s going on, I know that wouldn’t be a good idea. But I am asking you to look at it from our perspective- our linear perspectives. You have the advantage of knowing no matter how bad things get, that they’ll work out in the end. We don’t have the luxury of seeing ourselves happy in the future. We have to wait through our sadness.’

The TARDIS had always been sort of envious of her Time Lords’ abilities to communicate so effectively with each other- not only with their telepathy, but coupled with speech, and in so many different languages- she had been sure that if she could ever speak with words, she’d never find herself unable to say what she was thinking.

Her Wolf had, of course, proven her wrong.

House mocked them as they ran through the doorless corridors- unable to find anything with a semblance of familiarity or direction in the endless grey walls. “So, are we having fun yet? I’m rather enjoying the sensation of having you running around inside me.”

Amy screeched to a halt, as suddenly the floor in front of her dropped off at a ninety degree angle. Rory caught her waist just before she fell into the abyss.

“Oh, I’ve turned off the corridor anti-gravs, so do be careful.” House informed them boredly.

Amy huffed, in front of them it appeared that the adjacent hallway had decided to carve straight through the other perpendicularly, which, apparently, is how it is actually oriented without the antigrav. “Come on.” She breathed, taking Rory’s hand. Support beams lined the octagonal TARDIS corridors every few metres, and there happened to be one directly where the floor turned to ceiling at their feet. They could use it to edge their way around to the other side.

They hit the ground running again. “Y’know of all the mazes to get trapped in- the infinite time ship really would not have been my first choice.” Rory commented dryly. “Who knows what he could-”

Right on cue, a bulkhead door slammed shut, separating the two of them. “No!” Amy screamed, hitting the door angrily. Of course his stupid face had to go and tempt fate-

She heard her name being called- but not from the other side of the door, from somewhere behind it. “Amy. Amy. Amy.” It was Rory’s voice. He sounded tired. She walked curiously around the corner to find him sitting against another door.

“Rory?” She asked confusedly… but she’d just left-

“Where have you been?” Rory demanded, standing up quickly at her entrance.

She squinted at him. “I stepped through that door and it came out here.”
Rory looked behind him to the place where he’d seen her disappear. “But you’ve been hours.” He protested.

“No, I haven’t.” She insisted, and they shared a look. The TARDIS had always had corridors and staircases that led to the same place, but there’s no telling which of them (or if either of them) was right about how much time had passed. Time moved differently in the TARDIS- they’ve always known that. “It's House,” Amy breathed. “It’s messing with the TARDIS. Come on, back this way.”

They began running again, but not ten seconds passed before another bulkhead slammed shut between them. “No!” Rory yelled, running full force into the door and sighing.

Amy kicked the door, but didn’t bother sticking around this time, instead turning the corner, expecting to find Rory again but instead...

A greying old man, bearded and dirty, was crouched against the stanchion, muttering to himself. His wild eyes snapped up to meet hers, and Amy gasped at the familiarity.

“Amy?” The elderly Rory croaked.

“Oh- Oh, my God. Rory?” Amy stuttered, taking a hesitant step forward.

Rory hit his head against the wall. “You left me.” He accused her. “How could you do that? How could you leave me?”

Amy shook her head. “How long have you been here?” She asked, crouching down to him, unable to accept what was in front of her.

It's only been minutes- seconds.

“Two thousand years I waited for you.” He bit out. “You did it to me again.”

It was like a scene straight from her nightmares. Amy shook her head vehemently, tears springing to her eyes. “I didn't mean to. I didn't mean to. I'm sorry.” She sobbed, and then screamed as he lunged for her. She fell back as he started crawling towards her. “Rory, what are you doing?” She begged.

His eyes were wild- unforgiving, broken. “They come for me at night. Every single night, they come for me and they hurt me. Amy, they hurt me over and over and over and over…” He grew quiet as his head fell back to the floor.

“Rory-” She started, standing up as the lights were dimming around them.

His head snapped back up. “HOW COULD YOU LEAVE ME?” He yelled, and she screamed again, jumping back. “HOW COULD YOU DO THAT TO ME?”

Amy backed away as he started crawling forward again, a bulkhead snapped shut between them.

She turned around slowly, and in the flickering light of the corridor she could make out the phrases repeated over and over again. Hate Amy Kill Amy Die Amy was written on the walls in blood. A decaying corpse laid in the center.

“No!” Amy screamed, falling to her knees. “No! Rory, I'm so, so sorry.” She cried, choking on her own sobs, ears ringing.

“Amy?” Rory’s voice called out behind her, and when she turned around the lights were bright again. Her Rory stood there, watching her worriedly. She looked back down to the corpse but it
was gone—so was the graffiti. She ran into her husband’s arms, furtively wiping the tears from her eyes.

Rory had only just stepped away from the door that separated them a few moments ago, but obviously it hadn’t been so simple for her this time. “It’s messing with our heads.” He mumbled into her hair, and then took her hand, vowing not to let go this time. “Come on, run.”

Rose had wandered off to their makeshift console to continue adding on the controls that they could find, and Idris took the opportunity to talk to The Doctor finally.

She was reciting a section from her manual. “-bond the tube directly into the Tachyon Diverter.” She finished, holding up a light bulb for her own examination.

The Doctor huffed as he was pulling on the rope tied around the vortex force metal. “Yes, yes, I have actually rebuilt a TARDIS before, you know.” He snapped. “I know what I’m doing.”

She didn’t look up. “You’re like a nine year old trying to rebuild a motorbike in his bedroom.” She said dryly, before finally meeting his eyes. “And you never read the instructions.”

He scoffed. “I always read the instructions.”

She raised her eyebrows at that. “There’s a sign on my front door. You have been walking past it for seven hundred years. What does it say?” She asked.

The Doctor was still tugging on the rope. “That’s not instructions.” He argued around his struggles. “There’s an instruction at the bottom.” She replied. “What does it say?”

“Pull to open.” He grunted.

“Yes. And what do you do?”

“I push.” He bit out.

She rolled her eyes. “Every single time. Seven hundred years.” She said. “Police Box doors open out the way.” She huffed, making a motion with her hands for emphasis (because that was something she could do now for the moment).

The Doctor threw his rope down in frustration at that. “I think I have earned the right to open my front doors any way I want.” He snapped, marching towards her purposefully.

She raised her brows again and tilted her chin down. “Your front doors?” She repeated incredulously. “Have you any idea how childish that sounds?”

“You are not my mother.” He muttered, turning back around on his heel.

“And you are not my child.” She said to his back.

He spun around and walked towards her again at that, months of anger resting heavy on his shoulders. “You know, since we’re talking— with mouths, not really an opportunity that comes along very often, I just want to say, you know, you have never been very reliable.” He growled.

“And you have?” She threw back.
The Doctor ignored that. “You didn't always take me where I wanted to go.” He continued.

“No, but I always took you where you needed to go.” She protested.

He fell back on his heels. “And what do you call this?” He asked her. “Now? Me and Rose. Forced to relive Alina- keeping secrets from each other. Do you even remember Alina? Does that not mean anything to you?” His eyes searched hers angrily.

Idris drew back at that. “Of course I remember Alina. Do you think I could forget that much pain? That much sorrow?”

“But yet you let us go through it again.” He bit out.

“I’m not a God-” She started.

“Then maybe you should quit acting like one!” He yelled, cutting her off. “You took them away from me in America. You made that decision for us.”

“I gave you your best chan-”

“Yeah, yeah I know the line!” He interrupted her again, turning away as the furious energy built up again.

She watched his shoulders move up and down as he seethed. Why, oh why, did she think confronting this would be a good idea? She felt her Wolf give her a little nudge forward-apparently she had been listening. Idris took a deep breath. “It’s going to work out.” She told him. “I know… Rose explained… that that’s not- an easy thing to accept. But I do know what I’m doing.” She failed to keep the indignant tones out of her voice and sighed. “Isathero-ke z’ro esvetrelloahtse.” She told him.

He finally looked to her again at the phrase. “That doesn’t apply here.” He grumbled, squinting as confusion won out over anger.

“Doesn’t it?” She challenged.

He shook his head. “What do you know? Why isn’t the scan working? What isn’t Rose telling me? What aren’t you telling me?” He let out the series of questions, begging her for a proper answer.

“I promise you I’m keeping you safe.” She whispered, and he closed his eyes in frustration, but she went on. “You will find out soon. Very soon. And I’m sorry.”

“Why are you sorry?” He asked.

She shook her head. “That it couldn’t have been sooner. I tried. I really did try, my Thief.” She closed her eyes and reached for the timelines in front of her. “I exist across all of space and time- but still in infinite planes, I am limited.” She apologised quietly.

He let out a long breath, and finally, finally, accepted it. “Soon, you said?”

She opened her eyes and looked up to him hopefully, nodding.

The Doctor tilted his head and moved to pick up the rope again. “Then we better get a move on. Eh, old girl?” He said, silently forgiving her.

She smiled sadly and moved to join her Wolf.
She stumbled, grasping at her side in pain, Rose caught just before she could fall. “You okay?” She asked.

Idris looked up to her. “One of the kidneys has already failed.” She told her worriedly, but immediately shook off the fear, straightening up. “It doesn’t matter. We need to finish assembling the console.”

Rose bit her lip like she wanted to argue, but decided against it- looking instead to the mostly completed makeshift console in front of them. “Using a console without a proper shell… It's not going to be safe.” She said.

“This body has about eighteen minutes left to live. The universe we're in will reach Absolute Zero in three hours.” Idris replied, not meeting her Wolf’s eye. “Safe is relative.”

The Doctor came then with the last piece of vortex force steel they’d been able to find, and Rose moved to help him set it with the others. Three sheets of it now covered roughly half of their console- just enough to get them through the vortex relatively safely. He handed Rose the sonic to weld the pieces in place while he moved to pick up the time rotor and install it in the center console. “How is this thing going to make it through the rift? How?” He muttered to himself, going around it to check on what few controls they’d managed to scrounge together. “We’re almost done… uh, thrust diffuser? Yeah. Er, retroscope? Okay. Uh… blue thingy…”

“That would be the brake, dear.” Rose supplied, giving him a significant look as she adjusted the atom accelerator.

Idris was meanwhile examining a wire coat hanger The Doctor had decided would do well enough as an energy conductor. “Do you ever wonder why I chose you all those years ago?” She asked him without looking up.

He looked to Rose questioningly but she only shrugged in response so he squinted at the TARDIS. “I chose you- you were unlocked.” He answered vaguely, moving to connect some wires.

“Of course I was.” Idris threw back. “I wanted to see the universe, so I stole a Time Lord and I ran away…” She glanced up to him, and tilted her head. “And you were the only one mad enough.”

Rose grinned at that but The Doctor wasn’t listening anymore as he popped back out from under the small console. “Right!” He exclaimed, taking a step back with Rose’s hand in his so they could admire their handy work. “Perfect! What could possibly go wrong?”

Rose groaned internally at the phrase, and right on cue the ‘blue thingy’ sprung lose and flew from the panel into the dirt. They wouldn’t be having any brakes then. That’s fine.

The Doctor cleared his throat awkwardly. “That’s fine. That always happens.” He mumbled, and then straightened up. “No, hang on. Wait.” He turned on his heel to grab the velvet ropes resting on a pile behind them, and then hooked them to guard the sides of the console that weren’t protected. “There we go!” He said proudly.

“Practically child proof.” Rose replied dryly.

“Alright, come along.” The Doctor said, ignoring her glib and pulling them both onto the hunk of metal they were using for a floor.

He and Rose both worked to get into the time vortex, but when he threw the materialization lever-nothing happened. “Augh!” He screamed in anguish. “It isn’t working! I can’t- I’ve got nothing.”
Idris’s eyes glowed at that, and Rose smirked as she read her thoughts. “Oh, my stupid idiot.” The TARDIS chided him. “You have what you’ve always had.”

Rose grinned up at him and grabbed his hand, her eyes were glowing now too as they both turned golden with time energy. “Us.” She whispered, and her and Idris both placed a sparkling palm to the time rotor- sending them reeling into the vortex.

“Oh you’re beautiful!” The Doctor exclaimed over the sudden onslaught of noise, unclear of weather he was talking to the women or the console, or all three of them at once. “We’ve locked onto them. They’ll have to lower the shields once we’re close enough to phase inside though!” He looked over to Idris. “The telepathic circuits are online- do you think you could get a message to Amy?” He yelled as the ricocheted towards the rift.

Rose felt Idris’s immediate aversion, and she squinted curiously towards to woman, but the questions she sent were ignored. “Which one’s Amy?” She asked The Doctor, and Rose knew it was a lie- could feel its metallic pulse in her head. “The pretty one?”

“Yes!” The Doctor yelled though, not having the benefit of the time ship’s thoughts in his head.

Idris sent Rose a warning glance before she closed her eyes- you’ll understand soon enough, the look said, but not now, not yet. Rose sighed in exasperation, but nodded in understanding and begrudging acceptance.

Amy and Rory were making their way up a ladder now. Somehow, Nephew had managed to get aboard the TARDIS and was pursuing them through the corridors at the will of House.

Suddenly Rory got a headache- but not one that just bloomed behind his eyes, no, more like one that flew at him full force and nearly knocked up off the ladder with the sheer weight of it. “Argh!” Rory let out, wrapping one arm around the rung of the ladder and using his free hand to rub between his eyes. Distantly, he heard Amy asking him what was wrong, but he could barely her here over the woman in his mind, yelling at him over the din of noise behind her.

“Hello Pretty!” She called inside his mind.

“What the hell is that?” Rory breathed.

The Doctor appeared in his mind’s eye then- shoving the woman out of the way. “Don’t worry! Telepathic messaging!” He yelled, and then squinted and looked over to the woman again. “No, that’s Rory!” He said, but then something rocked and he was pulled somewhere else.

The woman was unaffected by The Doctor’s interruption. “You have to go to the old control room. I’m putting the route in your head. When you get there use the purple slider on the nearest panel to lower the shields.” She told Rory.

The Doctor appeared again before Rory could question what the hell she meant by ‘old control room.’ “The pretty one?” He asked incredulously.

She shoved him out of the way and continued giving Rory instructions. “You’ll have about twelve seconds before the room goes into phase with the invading Matrix. I’ll send you the pass key when you get there. Good luck.” And then she was gone.

Rory shook his head as it became his own again. “It was that woman.” He told her. “That mad woman and The Doctor.”
Amy’s eyes widened as she looked up to him above her. “The Doctor?”

He nodded. “We have to keep going.”

They were rolling through the vortex.

“How’s he going to be able to take down the shields anyway? The House is in the control room.” The Doctor asked as him and Rose flung themselves around the console in a desperate attempt to keep it together.

“I directed him to one of the old control rooms.” Idris answered simply.

“There aren’t any old control rooms.” He argued. “They were all deleted or remodelled.”

She shook her head. “I archive them, for neatness. I’ve got about thirty now.”

The Doctor squinted at her incredulously. “But I’ve only changed the desktop, what, a dozen times?”

She nodded. “So far, yes.”

The console rocked again and he caught Rose deftly before looking over her head towards Idris. “You can’t archive something that hasn’t happened yet!”

She raised her eyebrows, giving him a significant look. “You can’t.”

The were barrelling through the corridors now, Rory blindly leading them down the route she’d put in his head, the Ood close behind. “Where is this place?” Amy asked just as they came to a dead end.

Rory shook his head at the sealed door in front of them. “This is where she told me to go. She said she’d send me the passkey- Ow!” He cut himself off, hands flying to his temples as another headache was thrown at him.


“Petrichor?” Amy breathed, a memory attempting to resurface as Rory turned around.

“What do I do? Do I say it?” He asked desperately, the lights were flickering in the adjacent corridors- Nephew was coming. “Crimson. Eleven. Delight. Petrichor.” He repeated to the door, but still nothing happened.

Amy closed her eyes as she attempted to force the memory back to light. “Petrichor… Petrichor…”

Rory was pacing back and forth. “I said it!” He yelled, trying to get the woman’s attention back, but of course the telepathic messaging wouldn’t go both ways for him.

Amy’s head snapped up as she finally remembered. “Petrichor. She told you what it meant. The smell of wet dust, remember? So…” Her eyes widened. “Oh, it's the meaning, not the word.” She breathed.

Rory still didn’t get it though. “The meaning of what?”
“The TARDIS interface is telepathic.” Amy explained. “You don't say it, you think it.”

The lights flickered again, closer the time, and Rory looked over her shoulder to see the Ood standing at the end of the corridor now. “It's coming.”

“Quiet.” Amy snapped, pushing past him to face the door. Her fingers fell to her temples as she concentrated. “Crimson. Eleven. Delight. The smell of dust after rain… Crimson, eleven, delight, the smell of dust after rain.”

*Crimson.* Her hair, a flag, an apple, a rose.

*Eleven.* Her birthday, the candles… her Doctor, the eleventh.

*Delight.* Her wedding. Rory.

*Petrichor.* The smell of dust after rain. The smell of dust after rain… the smell of dust after-

The doors flew open and Amy and Rory rushed in. “What is this place?” Amy let out as they ran up grating towards a console. “Another control room?” She asked, pressing her hands to the console, lighting it up in a blue glow that bounced around the darkened room.

Rory didn’t answer as he flew to the panel indicated inside his head. “Right. Shields down.” He muttered, pulling the levers as he did. They heard a sound like something turning off, and he had to assume he’d done the right thing as House’s voice came over them again.

“How did you find this place?” He asked curiously. “It’s not on my internal schematics…” They didn’t answer as House opened the door again and Nephew came though. “I had hoped you could join Nephew as my servants. But you two are nothing but trouble. Nephew, kill them.” House ordered lightly.

“Augh!” Rory let out. Another message.

“We're coming through!” She yelled over a whole lot of noise and wind on her end. “Get out of the way or you'll be atomised!”

Rory nodded. “Where are you coming through?”

“I don’t know.” She shook her head apologetically and then disappeared again.

Rory opened his eyes. “Oh, great. Thanks.” He breathed sarcastically. A golden light was forming right where Nephew was standing though, and Rory grabbed Amy’s hand. “Come on.” He said, pulling her to the far side of the console, and they both wrapped themselves around the coral struts as a small explosion ripped through the room, sending sparks flying.

The Doctor, Rose, and Idris appeared along with a pile of sparking junk. “Doctor! Rose!” Amy yelled, grinning at their arrival.

The Doctor ran to wrap her in a hug, but Rose had her arms full supporting Idris. “Not good…” the woman breathed. “Not good at all. How do you walk around in these things?” She threw to Rose and The Doctor.

“Just hold on.” Rose answered, walking her out of the broken down console and onto the old one. “We’re not quite there yet.” She looked up to the humans. “Amy, Rory- this is the TARDIS.”

Rory raised his brows at that. “The TARDIS is a woman?”
"The TARDIS has always been a woman, now she’s just got the body as well." Rose threw back. Idris tripped as her organs began failing one by one—quickly now. "Well, sort of does." Rose amended, catching the woman deftly.

House reasserted himself then. "The environment has been breached." He said. "Nephew, kill them all."

Amy and Rory instantly jumped back on alert at that, but looked around when nothing happened. "Where’s Nephew?" Rory asked.

"He was standing right where you materialised." Amy added.

"Ah… well…" The Doctor said, wrinkling his nose a bit. "He must have been redistributed then."

"Meaning what?" Rory raised his brows, already guessing at the meaning.

"You’re breathing him." The Doctor answered shortly, and ignored their subsequent disgust. "Another Ood I failed to save…" He said, looking over to Rose.

House spoke again then. "Doctor. I did not expect you."

"Well, that's me all over, isn't it?" The Doctor replied flippantly, mind racing as he tried to figure out what they were gonna do now. "Lovely old unexpected me."

"The big question is, now you're here, how to dispose of you?" House mused. "I could play with gravity…" Suddenly they were all yanked towards the grating as it felt like a massive weight had been pressed down on them.

They were released a moment later, but it was a short lived relief. "Or I could evacuate the air from this room and watch you choke…" House added, and suddenly it felt like the air was being ripped from their lungs.

"You really don't want to do that." The Doctor managed to choke out.

The air flooded back and they all clutched at their chests, breathing deeply. "Why shouldn't I just kill you now?" House asked them, with the air of someone asking something inconsequential.

"Because then I won't be able to help you." The Doctor spoke on a whim, pacing the console now. "Listen to your engines. Just listen to them." He pointed up and they are heard the noise like groaning metal as House failed to get them out of the rift. "You don't have the thrust and you know it. Right now I'm your only hope for getting out of your little bubble, through the rift, and into my universe. And mine's the one with the food in." He lied. "You just have to promise not to kill us. That's all, just promise."

Amy’s head snapped over to look at him incredulously. "You can't be serious."

The Doctor shot her a warning look. "I'm very serious. I'm sure it's an entity of its word." Rose pushed Idris’s hair from her face as Rory knelt down beside them. She was burning up, her pulse racing. She was mumbling in Gallifreyan both out loud and in Rose’s head now, though most of it was muddled and indiscernible. Rory looked to her curiously for translation, but Rose shook her head as House spoke again.

"You want me to give my word? Easy. I promise."
The Doctor nodded. “Fine. Okay. I trust you. Just delete, oh... er, thirty percent of the TARDIS rooms- you'll free up thrust enough to make it through. Activate subroutine Sigma Nine.”

“Why would you tell me this?” House sounded amused, near laughing.

“Because we want to get back to our universe as badly as you do,” he shrugged. “And I'm nice.”

“Yes. I can delete rooms...” House confirmed as he went through the mainframe. “And I can also rid myself of vermin if I delete this room first. Thank you, Doctor. Very helpful. Goodbye, Time Lords. Goodbye, little humans. Goodbye, Idris.”

A bright light came. The TARDIS went through the rift. It was empty.

And then it wasn’t.

The five of them blinked as they reappeared in the main control room, though it was still green.

“Yes. I mean, you could do that, but it just won't work.” The Doctor said flippantly, pulling Amy to standing next to him. “Hardwired fail safe. Living things from rooms that are deleted are automatically deposited in the main control room. But thanks for the lift.”

“We are in your universe now, Doctor. Why should it matter to me in which room you die? I can kill you just as easily here as anywhere.” He paused. “Fear me. I've killed hundreds of Time Lords.”

“Fear me.” The Doctor threw back. “I've killed all of them.”

Rose was holding Idris’s hand tightly as she continued to whisper in Gallifreyan. ‘Isathero-ke z`ro esvetrellioahhte.’ She said again amongst a jumble of thoughts. Rose shook her head, tears in her eyes as she felt her fading. “I don’t understand.”

The Doctor looked over to Rose and they shared a miserable look, but he still had to get back to House. “Yeah, you're right. You've completely won. Oh, you can kill us in oodles of really inventive ways...” He was rambling for time. “Yep, you've defeated us. Me and my lovely wife, and our friends here... and last but definitely not least, the TARDIS Matrix herself- a living consciousness you ripped out of this very control room and locked up into a human body. And look at her.” He motioned over to Idris’s unmoving form on the glass floor.

“Doctor, she's stopped breathing.” Rory whispered.

“Enough. That is enough.” House said dryly, bored now.

“No. It's never enough. You forced the TARDIS into a body so she'd burn out safely a very long way away from this control room. A flesh body can't hold the TARDIS Matrix and live. Look at her body, House.” The Doctor growled, and right on cue Idris’s eyes flew back open as her body began to glow. “You took her from her home. But now she's back in the box again, and she's free.” The TARDIS Matrix, streamed from her. The time energy swirled around the control room in rivulets of golden light.

“No. Doctor, stop this. Argh! Stop this now.” House protested as the TARDIS began pressing in on him.
“Oh, look at my girl! Look at her go! Bigger on the inside!” The Doctor exclaimed, walking around the console. “You see, House?”

“-Make her stop!” House yelled uselessly.

“That's your problem. Size of a planet, but inside you are just so small.” He bit out.

“-Make it stop!”

The Doctor didn’t blink at the protests. “Finish him off, old girl.”

More yelling from House ensued, and then the control room went dark again with the silence. Idris’s body disappeared, but then reappeared standing at the foot of the stairs, light still streaming from her. “Doctor, are you there? It's so very dark in here.” She called.

The Doctor spun around to see her, taking a step forward as next to him Rose grabbed his hand. “I'm here.” He assured her. It was obvious she couldn’t see him anymore, not while still partially inside Idris and partially in the ship.

“I've been looking for a word.” She told him. “A big, complicated word, but so sad. I've found it now.”

Rose bit back a sob as she heard the word in her head. “What word?” He asked.

“Alive.” The TARDIS breathed, a smile on her lips. “I'm alive.”

The Doctor shook his head, tears falling freely now. “Alive isn't sad.”

“It's sad when it's over.” She answered. “I'll always be here… but this is when we talked, and now even that has come to an end.” She took a deep breath. “There's something I didn't get to say to you.”

“Goodbye?” The Doctor choked on the word and held Rose’s hand tighter.

“No. I just wanted to say hello.” She finally got her eyes to focus on him- to see him. “Hello, Doctor. It's so very, very nice to meet you.”

And then she turned to golden dust, and light filled the console room once again.

A few hours later, after Amy and Rory had found the new bedroom Rose had made for them and managed to collect themselves after a very long day of running, the returned to the control room to find The Doctor and Rose under the console- Rose sitting on the floor with her back against the cloister bell, The Doctor in the hammock seat, welding goggles in place, and tool belt around his waist.

“How’s it going under there?” Rory called through the glass floor.

“Just putting a firewall around the Matrix.” The Doctor answered, splicing two wires together as the humans came down the stairs to join them. “Almost done.”

“Are you going to make her talk again?” Amy asked, sitting down on the steps.

“We can’t.” Rose answered, and Rory and Amy noticed for the first time that she was glowing slightly- being so close to the heart of the TARDIS.
“Why not?” Rory asked, stepping forward to distractedly mess with two of the wires hanging in front of him.

“Spacey-wacey isn’t it?” Amy teased.

“Well, actually, it’s because the Time Lords discovered that if you take an eleventh dimensional matrix and fold it into a mechanical then-” He cut himself off on a yell as Rory put the two wires he was fiddling with together and sparks erupted in a cloud of smoke. “Yes, it’s spacey wacey!” He finished angrily, standing up to grab the wires from Rory and blow on them, pulling the goggles off as he did.

“Sorry…” Rory mumbled, and then looked over to Rose. “At the end there… what was it she just kept repeating over and over to you?”

Rose tilted her head. “Oh, was she saying it out loud too?” She asked, and Rory nodded. She looked up to her husband as he took his seat on the hammock again. “Some Gallifreyan phrase: ‘Isathero-ke z’ro esvetrellioahtse.’ She wouldn’t tell me what she meant by it though.”

He stiffened minutely, only enough for Rose to catch it, and let out a long breath. “I suppose we’ll find out soon enough.”

Rose decided not to press it, and she looked to Amy warningly when she opened her mouth to question it. Amy, catching the look, huffed, but changed directions nonetheless. “So what next then?” She asked him instead.

“Nearly finished. Two more minutes, then we're off. The Eye of Orion's restful, if you like restful. I can never really get the hang of restful.” He smiled down to Rose. “What do you think, dear? Where shall we take the kids this time?”

Rose smirked and patted the bit of TARDIS next to her. “Wherever we need to go.” She said.

“Look at you pair.” Amy said, shaking her head amusedly. “It’s always you three, isn’t it? Long after the rest of us are gone. A man and his wife- off in their box to see the universe.”

“Oh, you say that like it’s a bad thing.” Rose grinned.

“But really, it’s the best thing there is.” The Doctor finished.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the wait. Those of you that read the Before The Madness series know that I've been super unmotivated on top of a lot of stress. Please leave comments, they are my fuel, and a big reason why this chapter was so late is the lack of them.

❤
Nine months had passed now since Rose had found out she was pregnant, and The Doctor was getting anxious. He’s barely slept anymore searching for answers. Not that he ever slept much to begin with.

They still hadn’t given Amy and Rory back either, by silent agreement deciding not to mention how long they’d been on the TARDIS until one of them did. As such though, they’ve sort of allowed the two of them to turn the whole place into a mess and not expected them to pick up after themselves- to the point that even the TARDIS was refusing to clean after them.

Half-empty take out containers were scattered about the control room along with random bits of clothing, stray shoes, and dirty dishes. Muse’s Supermassive Black Hole was blaring through the TARDIS speakers while Amy and Rory played darts using the board they’d pinned up a few weeks ago, with little more protest from the two Time Lords other than shared looks of disgust when they’d turned around.

Rose was laid across the long jump seat, flipping through a magazine, and she glanced up when Rory threw another dart. “Forty-six.” Amy announced, looking over her shoulder to him. “Rubbish-y, rubbish, rubbish.” She shook her head in disappointment.

Rory scoffed indignantly and glared over to Rose as she snorted. “It’s a double top!” He protested over the music.

The Doctor used Rose’s momentary distraction to pull up the pregnancy scan again. It’s been running nonstop in the background for months now and still it refused to give him an answer- flipping back and forth between positive and negative endlessly. He glanced up to his wife as she nudged him telepathically, giving him a curious look at his obvious discontent.

He turned the music down, gaining the humans’ attention. “Who wants fish and chips?”

Rory raised his hand and Amy shrugged with a small nod of agreement. The Doctor grinned as Rose stood up with a nod of her own as well. “Excellent! I’ll drop you all off. Take your time! Don’t rush!” He exclaimed, quickly, rushing around the console with the now-blank monitor to begin flying them out of the vortex and towards London.

Rose immediately scoffed at that though. “Yeah, nice try.” She laughed.

Amy’s brow furrowed as she and Rory came up the stairs. “What are you trying to do all off on your own?” She asked, and the question felt wrong- The Doctor without Rose “Things to do.” He answered her words instead of Rose’s look. “Things involving… other things.”
Amy and Rose glanced to each other, and they both crossed their arms in front of them, giving him matching reproachful looks. They looked so much like each other it nearly knocked The Doctor off his feet and had him spilling every secret he’d ever kept. “We’ll be staying then.” Rose said firmly.

Amy nodded, and behind her Rory gave The Doctor an apologetic look, but he wasn’t stupid enough to try to defend him and get on the women’s bad sides.

The Doctor looked to Rose pleadingly, but after a second all his defenses went down. He opened and closed his mouth a few times like he was trying to decide how to tell her-

And then the TARDIS rocked sideways.

Amy screamed as she was knocked towards the railing, grabbing onto it for dear life. “What’s going on?” She demanded.

“Solar tsunami! Came directly from your sun!” He yelled over the noise of the TARDIS alarms (like he didn’t already know that they were crashing). The ship was careening on the tidal wave of radiation- heading directly for Earth at speeds far too quick to end well.

They flipped nearly 360 degrees and Rose nearly hurled. “Gyrator’s gone out.” She said, pulling at what controls she could reach. “Target tracking is a no.” She huffed as the plotter in her hand did squat, opting instead for the hand brake. “Everybody hold on!”

Amy screamed again and ran to the captain’s chair, shoving her head between he knees and clasping her hands behind her neck like on a crashing plane, while Rory hit the floor with his knees tucked to his chest and his forehead pressed against the glass like in a tornado drill. The Doctor and Rose just glanced at each other and held onto the console- letting out a string of Gallifreyan curses.

The Doctor stood up quickly as they came to a sudden stop, while the rest of them rose more slowly, panting. “Textbook landing.” He let out, smiling dorkishly, and moved to lead them all to the doors- seeming to accept that they were with him. “Behold!” He exclaimed, flinging the door open. “A cockerel!” He said the first thing his eyes landed on- the rooster-themed weathervane atop a monastery. “Love a cockerel.” He mumbled distractedly as they all filed out behind him. “And underneath- a monastery- 13th century.”

“Oh!” Amy breathed, looking up the great stone church in front of her. “We’ve gone all medieval.”

Rory tilted his head. “I’m not sure about that.”

She tilted her chin down to him and raised her brows. “Really? Medieval expert, are you?”

Rory squinted. “No… it’s just that I can hear Dusty Springfield.” He said, pointing vaguely upwards. And sure enough from somewhere in the monastery You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me was playing loud enough for the notes to reach their ears.

Rose and The Doctor had already wandered over to a nearby hole in the ground. A supply pipe was running down the center of it- the words ‘Danger Corrosive’ printed on its side. “These fissures are new. Solar tsunami sent out a huge wave of gamma particles. This is caused by a magnetic quake that occurs just before the wave hits.” He explained, referring to the damage in the Earth.

Rose looked up towards the church. “Monastery’s still standing though.”

The Doctor sighed and followed her line of sight. “Yeah, for now.” He nodded back towards the pipe. “They’re pumping something nasty off this island.”
Rory and Amy had apparently not been listening to the two Time Lords. “My mum’s a massive fan of Dusty Springfield.” Rory commented distractedly, still tuned to the music.

The Doctor stood up. “Who isn’t?” He asked, and then spun on his heel to lead them up a nearby set of stairs. “Right, let’s go- satisfy our rabid curiosity.” His back straightened suddenly, pulling him to a halt once they’d entered the courtyard. An odd telepathic frequency was coming from Rose- faint, muted, barely there. In fact, he was sure that if he hadn’t been so on edge and attuned to her every move for the last week he wouldn’t have felt the difference at all. His head snapped around to look at his wife with wide eyes.

She didn’t seem to notice though. “What is it?” She asked, confusion written clearly upon her features.

The Doctor opened and closed his mouth a few times again, before finally shaking it minutely. “Breathe.” He whispered quietly on impulse, only loud enough for her to hear because she was standing so close. Before she could question him further however alarms started sounding all around the monastery. “There are people coming!” He announced grandly to their group, and then tilted his head. “Well, almost,” he amended.

“Almost coming?” Amy asked, brow furrowed.

“Almost people.” He corrected her quickly, spinning on his heel and grabbing Rose by the hand to drag her down the corridor.

“Come on!” Rose called over her shoulder to the two humans.

They took off after them, though Rory huffed in annoyance. “Y’know, when something runs towards you, it is never for a nice reason!”

They only laughed in response and turned a corner.

They found themselves in a small room surrounded on one side by widow alcoves, and in each sat a large metal harness hooked up to wires and machines. A person- living- laid on each, apparently unconscious. Amy spun in a small circle as she walked to join the Time Lords in the room’s center. “What are all these things?” She asked.

“The almost people?” Rory offered on a question.

Rose shook her head- she was just as clueless as they were about this particular branch of technology. She had no idea why the TARDIS had brought them to Saint John’s Island in the 22nd century, but she could tell by The Doctor’s thoughts that he knew exactly why. Their arrival hadn’t been an accident.

“What are they?” Amy pressed The Doctor. “Are they prisoners, or are they meditating, or what?”

“Well, at the moment they fall into the ‘or what’ category.” He answered flippantly, though none of them could call him out on it as an automated warning came over the PA system.

“Halt, and remain calm.” The Tannoy ordered.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels. “Well we’ve halted.” He said, waving his hands about as he looked around to them. “How are we all doing on the calm front?”

Their persuiters entered the room then, two men holding massive tamping irons in front of them as sort of spears, and a woman behind them. “Don’t move!” One of the men called. His orange
uniform jacket labeled him as Jimmy, next to a business logo with the initials MP.

His other armed friend came up next to him- Buzzer he was called. “Stay back, Jen.” He warned the girl. “We don’t know who they are.”

Jennifer stayed where she was behind them, but she lifted her chin determinedly. “So let’s ask them.” She said. “Who the hell are you?” They all had thick northern accents.

The Doctor grinned at them, seemingly unaffected by the massive metal blades in his face. “Well, I’m The Doctor, this is Rose, and Amy and Rory, and it’s all very nice isn’t it?” He answered.

The other three were now looking confusedly between the harnessed humans and the ones standing in front of them though. “Hold up,” Amy said, head snapping back and forth between the identical faces of the men. “You’re all… what are you all? Like identical twins?”

Jimmy, Buzzer, and Jennifer all tilted their heads at her- apparently, whatever they were was supposed to be common knowledge.

Two more entered then- they were both wearing far more protective gear though. “This is an Alpha Grade industrial facility.” The woman- Cleaves, her suit said- started. “Unless you work for the military or for Morpeth Jetsan, you are in big trouble.”

The Doctor didn’t miss a beat. “Actually, you’re in big trouble.” He said, taking a step towards the woman who was obviously in charge there, taking out the psychic paper as he did.

She squinted at the fake credentials. “Meteorological Department?” She read out incredulously, snatching the small wallet from him. “Since when?”

“Since you were hit by a solar wave.” The Doctor answered easily, referencing the radiation they themselves had gotten stuck in- landing them there.

“Which we survived.” Cleaves threw back.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows and looked around the small room. “Just- by the look of it.” He said, thinking the the bursts pipes out front. “And there’s a bigger one on the way.”

“Which we’ll also survive.” She answered defensively. She glanced over her shoulder to the man she’d entered with. “Dicken, scan for bugs.” She ordered.

Dicken grabbed a nearby detector while Buzzer ordered their backs against the wall, their hands went up as they did as they were told and Dicken began scanning them. “You're not a monastery, you're a factory. Twenty second century army-owned factory.” The Doctor observed out loud for his companions’ sakes.

“You’re army?” Amy asked them incredulously.

Cleaves tilted her head, sneering at her. “No love, we’re contractors, and you’re trespassing.”

Dicken finished his scan. “It’s all clear, boss.” He informed her.

“All right, weatherman, your ID checks out.” She sighed, flipping the wallet closed. “If there's another solar storm, what are you going to do about it? Hand out sunblock?” She said derisively.

The Doctor let out a little laugh and looked behind him, getting Rose, Amy, and Rory to chuckle along with him. He turned back around and set Cleaves with a hard look. “I need to see your critical
systems.” He told her, but it was less of a request and more of a demand.

“Which one?” She bit out, clearly unused to being told what to do.

The Doctor didn’t back down. “You know which one.”

The five contractors led them into another room of the monastery. In the center of the room sat a large vat of an odd off-white substance, somewhere between a liquid and a solid—like cornstarch and water. It bubbled ominously from where it was next to another large empty rectangular tub. Rose and The Doctor moved to look more closely at the substance, while Amy and Rory stayed at the tub’s edge.

“Meet the government’s worst kept secret.” Cleaves said, standing opposite the Time Lords. “The Flesh. It's fully programmable matter. In fact, it's even learning to replicate itself at the cellular level.”

“Right. Brilliant… Lost.” Amy breathed.

Cleaves squinted at her. “Okay…” She started, moving to face the redhead. “Once a reading's been taken, we can manipulate its molecular structure into anything. Replicate a living organism down to the hairs on its chinny chin chin. Even clothes. And everything's identical. Eyes, voice-”

“Mind, soul.” The Doctor interrupted her, not taking his eyes off the Flesh. There was a knowing quality to his voice— he wasn’t just speculating. Rose squinted at him, trying to read his thoughts.

“Don't be fooled, Doctor.” Cleaves said tightly. “It acts like life but it still needs to be controlled by us—from those harnesses you saw.”

Rory took a step back at that, looking at all of them. “Wait. Whoa. Hold it. You’re all flesh now?”

“I'm lying in a harness back in that chamber.” Cleaves answered easily, smirking a bit. “We all are, except Jennifer here.” She nodded to the girl who hadn’t had an identical in the harness before looking back to Rory’s put-off expression. “Don't be scared. This thing—” she motioned to her own body, “just like operating a forklift truck.”

The Doctor had his hands clasped in front of him on the edge of the vat. “You said it grows. Only living things grow...” He argued.

“Moss grows.” She threw back flippantly. “It’s no more than that.” She took a deep breath and looked to Amy and Rory again to continue her explanation. She clearly preferred talking to the couple that wasn’t trying to order her around. “This acid is so dangerous we were losing a worker every week. So now we mine the acid using these doppelgangers— or Gangers. If these bodies get burnt or fall in the acid—”

“Then who the hell cares, right Jen?” Buzzer interrupted, finishing the thought jokingly.

Jen looked up at being called out, and shook her head as she realised she was meant to finish the explanation now. She looked to the Time Lords watching her carefully. “Nerve endings automatically cut off like airbags being discharged. We wake up and get a new Ganger.” She told them.

Jimmy wrinkled his nose. “It’s weird, but… you get used to it.” He shrugged.
The Doctor pulled out the sonic and began scanning the Flesh as Cleaves ordered Jennifer back to her harness and the young girl left to enter her Ganger.

“Hang on, what are you up to pal?” Buzzer demanded, bringing everyone's attention back to The Doctor.

The Doctor’s arm was shaking and he had to grab onto this elbow to keep control of the device in his hand. “Stop it.” He let out frantically, and finally managed to click the screwdriver shut. He pulled back, breathing heavily. “Strange…” He mumbled. “It was like for a moment there it was scanning me.”

He looked to Rose for a moment before reaching his hand out over the vat, he paused for only a second, and then placed his palm against the Flesh.

“Get back, Doctor! Leave it alone!” Cleaves demanded as the Doctor groaned, scrunching his eyes up as it felt like his mind was being invaded. Next to him, Rose buckled forward, rubbing at her temples and screaming out in pain caused the barraging frequencies- like endless feedback.

“Doctor!” Rose shouted, and he managed to yank his hand back with a shout.

“I understand…” He breathed, panting slightly now as he fought to catch his breath. He reached out for his wife and she moved into his side gratefully, pressing her forehead into his shoulder.

He rubbed his hand down her back and looked up to Cleaves. “Incredible. You have no idea. No idea. I mean, I felt it in my mind. I reached out to it, and it to me.”

Dicken shook his head confusingly. “What are you two?” He asked, wide-eyed at the odd couple and the scene they’d just caused.

“Don’t fiddle with the money, Doctor.” Cleaved warned him.

“How can you be so blinkered?” He nearly yelled. “It's alive! So alive!” His arm impulsively wrapped around Rose’s waist. “You're piling your lives, your personalities directly into it.”

An electric bang and a bright flash came from outside, and Rose’s head snapped up. “It’s the solar storm.” She announced, staring out the window. “It’s close.”

“Buzzer, have we got anything from the mainland yet?” Cleaves asked her employee.

He shook his head. “No, the comms are still too jammed with radiation.”

It wasn’t exactly a no, but Cleaves took it as permission to keep going anyway. “Okay. Then we'll keep pumping acid until the mainland says stop.” The light over the Flesh turned on and Cleaves smirked. “Now why don't you stand back and let us impress you?”

Rose stepped back from her husband and looked into his eyes imploringly. ‘What aren’t you telling me?’

‘Rose, I promise you I’m going to explain all of this. I just have to figure it out first.’ He took her hands in his, ignoring the curious glances from the Flesh-Humans behind them.

She shook her head. ‘Why won’t you let me help you?’ She paused, and her attention was drawn to just over his shoulder where an eye-patched woman was looking through an imaginary hatch in the wall again.
The Doctor felt that familiar confused fear course through her again. He gave her a knowing look.
‘I could ask you the same thing.’ He said, and her eyes flickered back up to his apologetically. ‘We just can’t stop trying to protect each other can we?’

‘I’m just worried if I saw it out loud it will make it real.’ She whispered.

He nodded in understanding. ‘Me too.’

They both spun on their heels as Amy’s voice reached them. “Yeah, they do that. Don’t worry about it.” She was saying to the contractors, and next to her Rory snorted.

“Are they human?” Dicken asked.

Amy tilted her head. “Are you?” She threw back.

Dicken nodded shortly- giving her that one. The Doctor and Rose shared a knowing smirk and walked around to the other side of the tub. “Thihau’ne suz akkulsiatem?” Rose spoke to him in Gallifreyan instead in order to fill the silence full of stares. She asked for confirmation that it wasn’t an accident they were there.

He shook his head, and the tub in front of them began to fill with the oobleck from the vat. “Jajnjconwhodren fida se Flesh. Duhetnevor ad ulcapzequetuchem.” - He already knew about the Flesh, now he needed to understand it.

“What language is that?” Cleaves asked them, staring at them incredulously- they only glanced up to her, not bothering to answer. When they looked back down a face was forming in the Flesh.

The substance moved and formed around the general outline of a bipedal until it became more human, and then more Jen. Suddenly, it was her, and she sat up with a loud gasp as her lungs filled with air for the first time. Her head snapped around to The Doctor.

“Well I can see why you keep it in a church.” He let out, muscles tense. “Miracle of life.”

“No need to get poncey.” Buzzer replied boredly. “It’s just gunge.”

The Doctor glared at him at that, but was distracted as more thunder crashed when Jen jumped out of the tub. “Did I mention the solar storm?” The Doctor growled, looking around to them all. “You need to get out of here.”

Jimmy shook his head. “Where do you want us to go? We’re on a tiny island.”

Rose stepped forward at that. “We got here didn’t we? We can get you all off right now.”

“Don't be ridiculous.” Cleaves said, giving them all significant looks. “We've got a job to do.”

An alarm rang out warning them of the oncoming storm. The Doctor looked up to the ceiling and let out a long breath, head snapping back down to look at Cleaves. “How do you get power?” He asked.

“We're solar. We use a solar router.” She answered like it was obvious somehow. “The weathervane.”

“Big problem.” The Doctor muttered.

Jimmy was beginning to look properly panicked- the only one other than the TARDIS inhabitants who appeared to be taking the situation seriously. “Boss, maybe if the storm's back we should get
underground.” He said. “The factory's seen better days. The acid pipes might not withstand another hit.”

“We have two hundred tons of acid to pump out. We fall behind, we stay another rotation.” She shot back, narrowing her eyes at him. “Anyone want that?”

The Doctor pulled her away from the group by the elbow. “Please, you are making a massive mistake here.” He implored her, leaning in slightly in an attempt to get across just how vital it was that she listen to him. He could feel the timelines coursing around them- almost as much as Rose could now. “You're right at the crossroads of it. Don't turn the wrong way. If you don't, if you don't prepare for this storm, you are all in terrible danger. Understand?”

She didn’t back down- clearly angry with this man trying to come in and have her yield any sort of control to him. “My factory, my rules.” She growled, yanking her arm away and turning on her heel.

He swore elegantly in Gallifreyan before pointing to Jennifer. “I need to check the progress of the storm. Where's your monitoring station?” He demanded. She hesitated making a small noise, and he snapped at her impatiently. “Monitoring station!” He repeated.

She jumped a bit. “Three lefts, a right and a left. Third door on your left.” She finally answered.

Before The Doctor could turn away he heard Rose’s small ‘Rude’ in the back of his head. “Thank you.” He said meaningfully to the girl, and then looked to Amy and Rory as he ran for the door, silently getting them to follow him and Rose.

By the time they reached the monitoring station the monastery was shaking dramatically- small bits of stone crumbling down around them. The Doctor was already knee-deep in his ramble as he ran to the computer terminals. “Waves disturbing the Earth's magnetic field. There is going to be the mother and father of all power surges.” He took a deep breath as his analogy caught up to him, and focused on typing in commands on the sparking keyboard. “See this weathervane, the cock-a-doodle-do? It's a solar router feeding the whole factory with solar power. When that wave hits, ka-boom!” He spun around and grabbed Rose by the waist- kissing her like his life depended on it. He pressed their foreheads together when he finally broke away. “Stay here.” He practically begged her.

Rose’s protests died on her lips as she looked into his eyes. She nodded and felt his relief wash over him. “Where are you going?” She asked.

He let go of her and ran up the steps back to the door. “I’ve got to get to that cockerel before all hell breaks loose!” He yelled, and the paused, stopping in his tracks. “Never thought I’d have to say that again…” He mused, and then his eyes snapped back down to Rose as that faint distant frequency came from her again- she was calling out for help without even realising it. “Breathe.” He told her.

Rose sucked in a breath suddenly as she realised she hadn’t been. “Doctor…” She started.

He shook his head. ‘Later,’ he whispered, hating himself for it as with one final desperate look he ran from the room and out to the courtyard.

He hauled himself up the ladder leading to the weathervane, electrically charged radiation zapping around him as fire rolled through the polluted skies. Sparks flew around him when he reached the power box, and he yanked it open with a yell of pain. He pulled desperately at the panels, but it was no use, lightning struck the monastery, and he fell back onto the ground- unconscious.
Rose blinked groggily awake and winced at the pain in the back of her head from hitting the stone floor, she looked over to Amy and Rory beside her. “For want of a better word… ow.” Rory let out, and both girls nodded in agreement. Rose hauled herself to her feet just as she felt The Doctor’s mind reawaken.

“Rose!” He yelled from the courtyard, jumping up and running blindly towards her telepathic frequency- but stopping short as he ran into Cleaves. “Cleaves!” He exclaimed. “You’re not in your harness!”

She turned to him slowly, clearly disoriented, and theories began running through The Doctor’s mind with reckless abandon. “I’m sorry, Doctor. You were right.” She mumbled.

“You’ve lost all power to the factory.” He informed her, looking around distractedly as Rose supplied him with that bit of information.

She didn’t seem to hear him. “Doctor, I abandoned my team.” She said miserably.

He looked back down to her just as Rose entered the harness room. “Then let’s go find them.” He said, running again in the direction of his wife. “How long do you reckon we’ve been out?” He threw over his shoulder as they made their way down the corridor.

“Not long…” Cleaves answered. “A few minutes, maybe?”

The Doctor checked on his time senses. “Oh I’d hazard we were unconscious for a teensy bit longer…” He said, fitting puzzle pieces together.

She raised her eyebrows. “Well, how long?” She asked.

“An hour.” He answered, stopping in his tracks. “I’ve seen whole worlds turn inside out in an hour.” He muttered. “A lot can go wrong in an hour.” He turned into the harness room, ignoring Cleave’s long suffering sigh behind him as she followed.

Rose, Amy, and Rory were watching Dicken and Jimmy help Buzzer down from the harness when they arrived. “I feel like I’ve been toasted.” Buzzer grunted.

“What the hell happened?” Jimmy asked, looking up to Rose.

Rose bit her lip. “Solar Tsunami. Electrically charged radiation just wrecked this monastery—there’s no telling how bad the damage is.” She tilted her chin down and looked at them all carefully. “Are you hurt?”

Jimmy snorted. “It feels like the National Grid’s run through my bones— but apart from that.”

Buzzer looked to the far wall as he attempted to stand on his own again. “I hope the meter's not bust. I still want to get paid.” He replied flippantly.

Dicken shook his head and huffed. “I thought we were going to die.” He answered honestly.

Rory snorted. “Welcome to my world, mate.” He said, earning dual, identical hits to his arms from Amy and Rose.

The Doctor clapped his hands together, announcing his and Cleaves’ entrance. “Where’s Jennifer?” He asked, looking around the room.
Amy swallowed as they all began calling her name to no avail. “Doctor, these are the real people so… where’s their Gangers?” She asked.

“Don't worry.” Cleaves answered her. “When the link shuts down the Gangers return to pure Flesh. Now, the storm's left us with acid leaks all over, so we need to contact the mainland. They can have a rescue shuttle out here in no time—”

She cut herself off as the first notes to a Dusty Springfield song started up.

“That’s my record.” Jimmy said, eyes wide. “Who’s playing my record?”

“You’re Gangers…” The Doctor breathed, turning in a small circle. “They’ve gone on a walkabout.”

Cleaves shook her head stubbornly though. “No, it's impossible. They're not active. Cars don't fly themselves, cranes don't lift themselves, and Gangers don't…”

The song got louder, and they all ran in the direction of the dining hall.

Jimmy and Buzzer were the first ones to reach the plastic sheets marking the room, and they push them aside angrily as the step down the stairs. “No way…” Jimmy muttered, slowing down as they entered. The dining hall had been left in shambles- their Gangers having gone through everything they owned.

“I don’t… I don’t- I don’t believe this.” Cleaves stuttered.

“They escaped through the service door at the back!” Buzzer said, pointing towards the ajar door in question. “This is just like the Isle of Sheppey.”

The Doctor pulled Rose around with him to the head of the table. “It would seem the storm has animated your Gangers.” He observed, sitting down.

Cleaves was still looking about the room with wide eyes. “They’ve ransacked everything.” She whispered in a horrified breath.

“Not ransacked, searched.” The Doctor corrected her mildly.

“Through our stuff!” She shot back.

“Their stuff.” Rose corrected her this time.

Jimmy stared at the couple ominously. “Searching for what?”

“Confirmation.” The Doctor answered. “They need to know their memories are real.”

Buzzer spoke up again from behind them. “Oh so they’ve got flaming memories now?”

Rose looked over her shoulder to him, “They want to connect to their lives.” She said, giving him a hard look that he squinted at.

“Their stolen lives.” Cleaves bit out.

The Doctor shook his head, sighing. “No, bequeathed. You gave them this. You poured in your personalities, emotions, traits, memories, secrets, everything. You gave them your lives.” He surreptitiously reached for Rose’s hand under the table. “Human lives are amazing. Are you surprised they walked off with them?” Rose didn’t miss the way Jimmy’s chest heaved as he
looked down nervously, and she noticed the wedding ring tied around his neck - the only one of the contractors who was married then.

“I'll say it again. Isle of Sheppey.” Buzzer said, and Jimmy glared over to him while the rest didn’t look over. “Ganger got an electric shock, toddled off, killed his operator right there in his harness. I've seen the photos. This bloke's ear was all hanging-”

“Even if-” Jimmy cut off Buzzer’s gruesome account, “-this has actually happened, they can't remain stable without us plumbed in to them.” He turned to Cleaves. “Can they boss?”

She stared at him for a second, clearly lost for an answer. Finally she shrugged, “guess we'll find out.”

Rose reached her free hand out to Amy and she reluctantly took the seat adjacent from the two Time Lords, placing her chin in her hands and examining the house of cards in front of her with mild interest.

“That's me.” Buzzer said, catching her look. “It's good to have a hobby.” Sudden realisation graced his features as he didn’t remember building this particular one. “So what, my Ganger did that all on its own?” He asked incredulously, looking to the alien couple.

The Doctor raised his brows at him. “Who taught you to do this?” He asked.

“My granddad.”

“Well, your Ganger's granddad taught him to do it, too. You both have the same childhood memories, just as clear, just as real.” He told him.

Buzzer shook his head. “No.” He muttered, hitting the structure with the back of his hand, sending cards flying across the table.

“Scared, disorientated, struggling to come to terms with an entire life in their heads.” The Doctor said, looking around to all of them seriously before standing up and making his way over to the kitchenette in the corner.

Jimmy watched The Doctor’s back as he shoved some cold pasta on a plate into the microwave. “We need to protect ourselves.” He insisted.

“Are you a violent man, Jimmy?” The Doctor asked over his shoulder.

“No.”

“Then why would the other Jimmy be?” He asked smartly, and Rose smirked as Jimmy swallowed without a good response.

Cleaves wrinkled her nose as the microwave continued to spin. “Don't tell me you can eat at a time like this, Doctor.”

He didn’t feel the need to respond to that, or Rose’s telepathic prodding with the same question. “You told me we were out cold for a few minutes, Cleaves, when in fact it was an hour.”

She shrugged, squinting up at him. “Sorry, I just assumed.”

“Well, it's not your fault. Like I said, they're disoriented.” He muttered, and felt Rose get it. He turned back to his companions. “When you three got to the alcoves, who was in harness?” He
asked them.

“Jimmy and Dicken were helping Buzzer out.” Amy answered.

“And Jennifer was nowhere to be found.” Rose added, and Rory nodded, moving to take the seat across from his wife, giving her a significant look.

The Doctor hummed at that, and used a tea towel to get the now piping-hot plate from the microwave, handing it over to Cleaves wordlessly. She took it in her bare hand without complaint. He raised his brows. “It's hot,” he informed her after a few moments.

She instantly hissed and dropped the plate as she suddenly felt its heat, sending it crashing to floor and breaking to pieces.


Cleaves yanked her hand back. “What are you talking about?” She demanded.

Rose stood up at that, stepping in between the woman and her husband. “It's okay.” She said calmly.

Cleaves shook her head frantically. “Why didn't I feel that?”

Rose held her hands out placatingly. “You will. You'll stabilise.” She promised.

“No, stop it.” She muttered, backing up. “You're playing stupid games! Stop it!” She was screaming now.

“You don't have to hide.” The Doctor said, stepping up next to Rose as Cleaves turned her back on them, shoulders heaving up and down as she struggled to catch her breath. “Please, trust me. I'm the Doctor.”

She spun around and her face had gone pale, features disappearing slightly, leaving only two holes and a line for a nose and mouth as her eyes sunk inwards- reverting back to Flesh. Buzzer grabs a knife off the table and Jimmy instantly moves to hold his more trigger-happy colleague back, Rory stepping in front of them while Amy sat frozen in her seat.

“Where's the real Cleaves, you thing? What have you done with her?” Buzzer yelled from behind Rory, struggling against Jimmy’s hold.

Rose ignored the men behind her. “That's it. Good, you remember.” She said calmly, taking a step forward despite the Ganger-Cleaves’ stiff posture and heavy breathing. “It’s fine. You’re okay.” She assured her.

“This is early Flesh.” The Doctor muttered. “The early stages of the technology. So much to learn.” Rose cut him off with a telepathic ‘Rude.’

Amy shook her head, staring at the Ganger. “Doctor, what's happened to her?” She breathed, wide-eyed.

“She can't stabilise. She's shifting between half-formed and full-formed, for now at least.” He answered her quickly, and Rose looked over her shoulder to glare at her husband.

Being talked about like she wasn’t standing there set her off though. “We are living!” She
screamed, and pushed Rose out of her way, running past them all and out of the dining hall.

The Doctor just managed to catch Rose as she lost her balance, and she huffed, pushing her hair out her face. “Oh, now look what you’ve done!” She yelled to the whole lot of them. They all glanced down to their toes as if being reprimanded by their mum. She rolled her eyes and ran after Cleaves-them following suit.

The Doctor grabbed Rose’s waist just in time to pull her back as a pipe burst directly in front of her- spewing acid everywhere. “It’s too dangerous in here with acid leaks!” He yelled angrily.

“Explosion must’ve ruptured the feeds. We’re going to need the suits.” Jimmy said, and turned to Buzzer and Dicken. “You two go get them, catch us up in dining hall.” He ordered, and they gave short nods before running in the opposite direction.

“Back, back, back!” The Doctor yelled again, shooing the five of them back up the corridor away from the pipes.

Jimmy stopped at an emergency locker set in the wall. “Aha!” He exclaimed, pulling the kit out. “Distress flares!”

“We won’t need those if we can get to the TARDIS.” Rose said, looking up to her husband, and then over to Amy and Rory. “You two head back to the dining hall with Jimmy.” She told them, giving them the look that meant she wasn’t going to hear any arguments. “I want us to keep together, okay? No more wandering off.”

“Says the queen of wandering off.” The Doctor snorted, unable to help himself. She hit his chest without bothering to glance over to him.

Amy and Rory both smirked at that, but nodded nonetheless, dutifully following Jimmy back to the dining hall. Rose turned to her husband as soon as they were out of earshot.

“I think it’s time you tell me what you know about the Flesh. You said they wouldn’t be violent.” She said, raising her eyebrows as she crossed her arms in front of her. It’s been a long time since she didn’t know anything about what they were dealing with.

“But I did say they were scared and angry.” He replied, and then stared at her as she waited for him to answer the other half of her question. His eyes flickered back and forth in hers, opening and closing his mouth a few times in succession, before finally he whispered, “breathe,” and grabbed her hand- pulling her towards the TARDIS without further explanation.

When they reached the courtyard in which they parked they found the TARDIS was sunk into the acid-softened ground- only the very top of the police box visible. “Oh, what are you doing down there?” The Doctor moaned.

The TARDIS dinged indignantly in their heads- huffing telepathically. The Doctor wrinkled his nose and Rose giggled at their ship’s sass. “Oh.” He let out, and then looked down as he heard sizzling- his shoes were melting in the acid beneath his feet. “Augh!” He yelled, toeing out of them quickly and hopping over to the small solid bit of Earth Rose had managed to occupy.

“Well, there goes that plan.” Rose said dryly, eyeing his football-patterned socks. “Since when are you sporty?”

“Oh… Aikman Road.” He answered mildly, glancing around them as he held onto her waist. “Come on.” He said, taking her by the hand again as they ran back into the monastery- tossing plans around in their heads as they went.
Dicken and Buzzer were ranting angrily when the Time Lords returned to the hall. “Those damn Gangers got to the acid suits!” Buzzer yelled.

“There is acid leaking everywhere.” Dicken shook his head, looking up to Jimmy. “Did you see the boss’ eyes? I’ve never seen a Ganger look at me like that. I don't know what they are now, but they ain't us.”

Rose scoffed, pushing the plastic aside loudly to announce their entrance. “They’re exactly you. Which means they’re just as scared and angry as you lot are right now.”

Rory sighed at that, leaning heavily against the table. “Which means bad news for us.” He commented, getting nods from Amy and Rose.

Amy glanced down to The Doctor’s socked feet. “Since when are you sporty?” She asked instead of wondering where his shoes had gone.

“Oi!” The Doctor exclaimed, clearly offended now at getting the same question twice. “I'll have you know I was quite good at the football!”

Rory squinted at the phrasing, and wondered vaguely when The Doctor had ever played football, but decided it really wasn’t the most pertinent line of questioning at the moment. “Anyway,” He said, bringing the conversation back. “What do we do now? We’re still missing the real Cleaves and the real Jennifer.”

Rose closed her eyes for second, rocking back on her heels as she thought. “You two stay here with them.” She said finally, and held up her hand as they both started to protest. “They’re likely to come back here, and I’d prefer at least someone with a level head be here if that happens.” She told them, successfully getting them to close their mouths. “The Doctor and I will go look for whoever else we can find and bring them back here.”

“And what then?” Buzzer bit out. “We talk it out over bangers and mash?” He asked sarcastically.

Rose didn’t back down though. “If that’s what it takes.” She shot back. “I happen to make great shepherd's pie though if you’d prefer.” Amy snorted back a laugh at the cheek, while Rory tilted his head- giving her that, and The Doctor beamed down at her proudly. She rolled her eyes and grabbed her husband’s hand. “Come on.” She said, pulling him back down the corridor- towards the acid room.

They spot the acid suits first- and then the Gangers next. Cleaves, Jimmy, Buzzer, and Dicken all huddled defensively in the corner, looking up to the couple on the mezzanine.

“Hello.” The Doctor smiled kindly. “How are you all getting on?”

Ganger Cleaves stares at them warily. “Why don't you tell us?”

“Well,” he started, going down the stairs with Rose close to his heels. “We have two choices. The first is to tear each other apart. Not my favourite. The second is to knuckle down and work together. Try to work out how best we can help you.” He grinned as he came to a stop right in front of them.

A few long moments ticked by, until finally she nodded, and they rest of them followed.

The Doctor and Rose explained the situation as they made their way back towards the dining hall.
“Now, I know its hard for you to hold your fully human form. That's why you keep shifting between the Flesh stages, but do try. It'll make the others less scared of you.”

Ganger Jennifer turned up only shortly after the Time Lords left, and Amy sighed, gathering the hostile originals on one side of the table while Rory sat Jennifer down on the other. Buzzer didn’t wait to start accusing her. “Where's Jen? What have you done with her?” He demanded angrily.

She shook her head. “I haven't seen her, I swear. But look, I'm her. I'm just like her. I'm real.” She insisted, and Amy couldn’t help but get a weird feeling in her stomach- like the Ganger was trying to replace the real Jen. It just didn’t seem right.

“You're a copy.” Jimmy bit out, with much the same face Amy was making. “You're just pretending to be like her.”

Amy pulled her husband aside as the four of them entered a sort of staring match of wills. “Rory, we don't really know anything about them yet.” She whispered.

Rory tilted his head. “Well, The Doctor and Rose seem to trust them-”

Amy shook her head. “But how put together do they really seem right now?” She asked him fairly, referring to the current bachelor-pad-like state of the TARDIS and their general laissez-faire attitudes since America. He huffed in exasperation- if they couldn’t trust their judgement, who could they?

Ganger Jennifer spoke up again. “Jimmy, Buzzer. Come on, you guys. We've worked together for two years.” She pleaded.

“I worked with Jennifer Lucas, not you.” Buzzer practically spit at her.

Amy gave Rory a significant look, before holding her hands out to the lot of them. “Okay, let's not do anything at all-”

“Until the Doctor gets here!” The Doctor exclaimed, saying the words with the redhead, as he pushed the plastic aside, allowing entrance to Rose and the Gangers behind him. “Hello!”

Jimmy stood up as his exact double came to the end of the table- identical in every way except the ring hanging from his own neck. “This is…” He breathed.

Ganger Jimmy was wide-eyed. “You're telling me.”

Ganger Cleaves crossed her arms. “All right, Doctor, you've brought us together. Now what?”

He leaned against the table. “Before we do anything, I have one very important question… Has anybody got a pair of shoes I could borrow? Size ten. Although I should warn you, I have very wide feet.” He looked around to blank faces, and huffed. “No? Fine. Football socks it is then.”

Rose rolled her eyes and patted his arm consolingly as she looked up to the people surrounding them. “The Flesh was never just moss. These are not just copies. The storm has hardwired them. They are becoming people.” She told them.

“With souls?” Jimmy asked- clearly looking for the philosophical loophole.

“Rubbish!” Dicken protested.
The Doctor shrugged, not really wanting to contemplate religion. “We were all jelly once. Little jelly eggs sitting in goop.” He said instead.

Amy wrinkled her nose. “Yeah, thanks. Too much information.”

The Doctor sighed. “We are not talking about an accident that needs to be mopped up. We are talking about sacred life. Do you understand?” He looked around to all of them seriously, and only his friends saw the sadness behind his eyes- all his experience with the loss of sacred life. Rose held a similar expression. He went on. “Good. Now, the TARDIS is trapped in an acid pool. Once we can reach her, we can get you all off this island, humans and Gangers, eh? How does that sound?”

Jimmy’s eyes lit up at that. “Can I make it home for Adam's birthday?” He asked.

His Ganger straightened up. “What about me?” He asked. “He's my son too.”

“You?” Jimmy scoffed. “You really think that?”

“I feel it.”

“Oh, so you were there when he was born, were you?”

The Ganger didn’t hesitate- a dreamy look overtaking him with memories. “Yeah. I drank about eight pints of tea, then they told me I had a wee boy and I just burst out laughing. No idea why…” He looked up to the original Jimmy. “I miss home, as much as you.”

The Doctor’s stomach twisted painfully with the talk of childbirth and fatherhood in his current predicament. “Look, I'm not going to lie to you. It's a right old mess, this.” He sighed. “But as you might say up North: ‘oh well, I'll just go to't foot of stairs. Eee by by gum.' ” He dorkishly attempted to lighten the mood with a frankly horrible imitation of a northern accent.

Rose grimaced. “No, no. Please don’t do that.” She said, all her memories of her original Doctor’s voice now near-tarnished with that.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels awkwardly. “Or not.” He let out, and then clapped his hands together. “Good. Right. First step is we get everyone together, then get everyone safe. Then, get everyone out of here.”

“But we're still missing Jennifer and Cleaves.” Amy spoke up.

“I'll go and look for them.” Jimmy offered.

Ganger Jimmy stepped up as well. “I'll give you a hand, if you like.” He said, following him. “Cover more ground.”

He stared at him for a moment before finally nodding. “Yeah, okay. Thanks.”

The original Cleaves entered before they could leave however, in her hand what appeared to be a sort of taser gun lit up with electricity coming from the coil box in her hand. “This circus has gone on long enough.” She practically growled, aiming the weapon at the Gangers.

Her Ganger just sighed. “Oh, great. You see, that is just so typically me.”

Cleaves glared at her double. “Doctor, tell it to shut up!”

The Doctor looked pained as he took in this human scene of violent fear. “Cleaves, no, no, no, no.”
She didn’t seem affected by his disappointed pleads though. “Circuit probe.” She said, referring to
the makeshift weapon in her hands. “Fires about oh... forty thousand volts? Would kill any one of
us, so I guess she'll work on Gangers just the same.”

“It's interesting you refer to them as it, but you call a glorified cattle prod a she.” The Doctor
replied dryly, moving in between her and the rest of them.

She glanced at him sideways, taser still held in front of her. “When the real people are safely off
this island, then I'll happily talk philosophy over a pint with you, Doctor.”

Amy shook her head, as she watched the frazzled woman. “What are you going to do to them?”
She asked incredulously.

“Sorry. They're monsters. Mistakes. They have to be destroyed.”

The Doctor held out his hand. “Give me the probe, Cleaves.”

She stepped away from him, keeping her eyes on the Gangers and probe still firmly in her grasp.
He Ganger rolled her eyes, setting her with a hard look. “We always have to take charge, don't we,
Miranda? Even when we don't really know what the hell is going on.”

Buzzer’s Ganger attempted to rush her, but without even blinking she electrified him- three times
the volts hit his chest, and he crashed into the nearby rack of plates before falling to the floor,
lifeless. The Doctor and Rose ran over to him. “He’s dead.” Rose said quietly, looking up to
Cleaves.

She was unaffected by the words. “We call it decommissioned.”

“You stopped his heart!” The Doctor yelled. “He had a heart! Aorta, valves, a real human heart!
And you stopped it!”

Jennifer’s Ganger started backing up at that, pushing the other Gangers with her as she began to
panic. “What happened to Buzzer will happen to all of us if we trust you!”

The Doctor stood up, and moved towards her. “Wait, wait, just wait.” He pleaded.

Rory looked over to Cleaves, and saw her charging up the probe again- aiming right for Jennifer.
“No!” He yelled, jumping on her and knocking her to the ground- disconnecting the weapon.

The Doctor turned at the noise, and the Gangers took the opportunity to run. “Wait!” He called
after them, but it was too late. He spun back around to where Cleaves was standing up, breathing
heavily. “Look at what you have done, Cleaves.” He bit out.

“If it's war, then it's war!” She yelled back. “You don't get it, Doctor. How can you? It's us and
them now.” She turned to her team. “Us and them.”

Dicken and Buzzer nodded. “Us and them,” they repeated.

She turned to Jimmy, and he studied her for a while. Eventually though, he sighed. “Us and them.”
He agreed, though he sounded more reluctant.

The Doctor and Rose turned to each other at that, letting out exasperated breaths as their eyes met.
Things just got a whole lot harder.

The two of them moved to the other side of the room and began speaking in rapid Gallifreyan.
Amy and Rory shared a look before walking over to Buzzer’s Ganger’s body. They found a tarp in one of the cabinets and began wrapping him up, all the while quietly whispering over what the Time Lords could be talking about.

The Doctor turned around suddenly, pointing to where the contractors were gathered together. “The most fortified and defendable room in the monastery.” He demanded, but none of them looked over.

“Cleaves,” Rose said more loudly, calling her out by name to get her attention. “The most fortified and defendable room in the monastery.”

She sighed. “The chapel.”

“Thank you.” The Doctor said shortly, turning back to his wife and picking up whatever alien conversation they’d been having again.

Cleaves spoke to their backs though. “Only one way in. Stone walls two feet thick.”

The Doctor’s back stiffened- he obviously did not want to hear from her at the moment. “You've crossed one hell of a line, Cleaves.” He said darkly, not turning to look at her. “You've killed one of them. They're coming back, in a big way.”

Rose let out a long breath and walked around him to gather the others. “We need to go. Right now.” She ordered, herding them all towards the door and sending them into a run.

“What about the flares?” Jimmy asked as the careened around the corner.

The Doctor and Rose stopped in the door frame, counting heads as they all ran into the chapel- the Gangers were at the other end of the corridor now, marching towards them dressed in the acid suits. “We'll worry about the flares when we're locked inside!” The Doctor answered, pushing Jimmy through the door. “Amelia Pond. Rory Pond.” He pushed them inside, slamming the door shut behind them. The contractors immediately started working to barricade the door.

“Pass me the barrel!”

“We need something heavy. Anything you can find.”

Rose’s back suddenly straightened as another telepathic presence entered her head. “Doctor…” She whispered confusedly, turning on her heel to stare into the darkened side of the room.


The Doctor’s eyes widened as he stepped up next to Rose. “Show yourself.” He demanded. “Show yourself!”

“Rose? Doctor?” Amy asked, voice small, fists clenching at her sides as she peered into the dark.

Jimmy pressed himself up against the barricade. “This is insane.” He panted. “We're fighting ourselves.”

“Yes. Yes, it's insane, and it's about to get even more insaner. Is that a word?” The Doctor answered him over his shoulder, not taking his eyes from the dark where heavy breathing could be heard. “Show yourself, right now!”

Amy shook her head and grabbed Rory’s hand. They were scaring her. “Doctor, Rose, we are
trapped in here. We can't get to the TARDIS and we can't even leave the island.”

Finally, the man from the shadows showed himself- a perfect imitation of The Doctor. “Correct in every respect, Pond.” The Ganger Doctor said, smirking. “It's frightening, unexpected, frankly a total, utter splattering mess on the carpet, but I am certain, one hundred percent certain, that we can work this out.” He grinned, rocking back on his heels. “Trust me. I'm the Doctor.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy Easter, loves! ❤️ I love all your questions, and I promise all will be answered within the next two chapters! I'm so so so excited for the turns we're about to make here!!

In the meantime, please keep leaving comments! The more support this story gets the faster new chapters come out ;)


The Same Wavelength

Chapter Summary

s06e06: Almost People

Chapter Notes

NOTE: The Doctor and his Ganger DO NOT do the switching thing from the original episode.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rose fell to her knees, grabbing at her head and squeezing her eyes shut in pain as the Ganger Doctor screamed out in anguish.

His head snapped up suddenly, eyes wild. “What's happening? I wonder if we'll get back. Yes, one day. Argh. I've reversed the polarity of the neutron flow. Allons-y!” He rambled without sense, yelling out the random string of thoughts as he yanked on his hair.

Rose was close to tears. The feedback loop created from two identical telepathic frequencies was ringing in her ears, and that coupled with the pain radiating from the Ganger Doctor was almost more than she could bare. “Stop! Please!” She begged desperately, and Amy fell down next to her, wrapping her arms around the older woman protectively, hiding the cold fear that ran through her veins at seeing Rose weak by yelling at the Ganger.

“Can’t you see you’re hurting her!” She bit out angrily, glaring daggers at him.

The Ganger Doctor was panting and he grabbed onto the lapels of the original Doctor desperately. “The Flesh is struggling to cope with our past regenerations.” He explained, trying to remain calm as Rose was crying next to him. “Hold on!” He pleaded with them both.

Rose screamed again and both Doctors winced. “Why? Why? WHY?” The Ganger Doctor repeated over over, practically spitting in the other’s face as he pulled him closer.


The Ganger Doctor pushed him away. “Would you like a jelly baby?” He asked before screaming again.

“Just hold on.” The Doctor begged him, falling to his knees to hold Rose’s other side. “You can stabilise.” He said, and Rose let out a broken sob, pressing her forehead into The Doctor’s shoulder.

The sound seemed to sober the Ganger Doctor. He squeezed his eyes closed and pressed his fingers to his temples. “I've reversed the jelly baby of the neutron flow. Would you like a Doctor, Doctor, I'm, I'm the. I can’t.”
Rose’s eyes turned golden and her head snapped up suddenly- the Wolf deciding that it could take no more. “You can and you will.” She ordered, voice echoing. “My Doctor.” She whispered the last words, as she reached into his mind and straightened the competing frequencies. They both let out a gasps, Rose collapsing back into The Doctor’s arms while the Ganger Doctor stumbled backwards- his head finally on straight.

“Oh, Rose. Rose, Rose I’m so sorry. Rose.” He rambled, but it wasn’t without purpose now.

Rose was breathing deeply as she sat up straight again, trying to catch her breath. “Quite all right.” She finally managed, giving the Ganger Doctor a weak smile.

As The Doctor helped Rose to her feet, Rory pulled Amy up. The redhead was unwilling to accept Rose’s quiet acceptance though. White hot anger now boiled beneath her surface as she continued to glare at the copy, arms folded in front of her. Behind them, the contractor’s Gangers were beating angrily against the door and the barricade, but Amy barely heard them over the ringing in her ears. “Rose, stay back from him.” She said, as the Time Lords stepped closer to The Doctor’s Ganger.

Rose stopped to look over her shoulder to the girl. “Amy, it’s alright. I promise. I can feel him in my head, remember? He’s the Doctor.”

Amy didn’t back down, however. “Yeah, I do remember. That’s why you were just screaming on the floor- because of him. He was hurting you.”

Rose heard the fear behind the angry bite to her words, and she let out a long breath, turning back around to walk up to Amy and take her hands in hers. “I’m sorry I scared you.” She said quietly. “There was just more in my head than I was ready to handle. Him too. He couldn’t control it. The Doctor would never hurt me. You know that.”

“Yeah, I know the real Doctor wouldn’t. But I don’t know him.” She was still too shaken to take Rose’s word at face value, and Rose sighed, squeezing her hands reassuringly before letting go to rejoin The Doctors.

Her steps were still wobbly, but she did her best to hide that fact from Amy. She failed to hide it from her husbands though. Their twin concern- identical in every way, ricocheted through her head, and they both caught her as she stumbled. “Whoa, sorry.” She let out as they held her elbows steady. “That’s gonna take some getting used to.”

The banging from the door stopped suddenly, and they all looked over.

“I think I liked it best when they were being noisy.” Buzzer whispered from where he was still pressed against the barricade.

“Haven’t you got any weapons?” Amy asked them, ignoring the looks she was sure she was getting from the Time Lords. “Like big guns with bit on?”

“Yeah, big guns would be good right now.” Buzzer nodded, rolling his eyes.

Jimmy huffed. “Why would we have guns? We're a factory. We mine-” He cut himself off as behind him the door started sizzling- steam rolling off of it in waves.

“Acid.” Amy finished, and she turned to the Time Lords desperately.

Rose had seemed to somewhat regain her footing as she stood between the Doctors. They were speaking quietly in Gallifreyan between the three of them, seeming to try to decide on something-
the Ganger Doctor toeing off his boots at one point so that they were identical in every way—right
down to the football patterned socks. Rose turned around at the word ‘acid’ however. “Looks like
the chapel’s not so defendable afterall.” She said in English.

The Ganger Doctor smirked, turning to The Doctor. “Are you thinking what I'm thinking?”

The Doctor tilted his head. “Inevitably.”

“I'm glad we're on the same—” The Ganger Doctor started.

“Wavelength.” The Doctor finished, raising his brows to Rose between them—who was feeling that
‘wavelength’ even more so than the both of them. “You see, great minds—”

“Exactly.” The Ganger laughed. “So, what's the plan?”

The Doctor shrugged. “Save them all—humans and gangers.”

“Tall order. Sounds wonderful.” He replied merrily.

The Doctor chuckled. “Is that what you were thinking? It's just so inspiring to hear me say it!”

The Ganger Doctor was practically giddy. “I know!”

Rose rolled her eyes and rubbed at the bridge of her nose, no longer in pain, but at the sudden
realisation that she now had to deal with *twice* the amount of her husband’s ego. “Doctors, come
on.” She said exasperatedly, pulling them both by the hands and over to where Amy and Rory
stood with the contractors.

“Hello. Sorry, but we had to establish a few ground rules.” They greeted the rest of them.

“Formulate a protocol.” The Doctor elaborated.


“A protocol between us.” The Doctor said, motioning between the three of them. “Otherwise—”

The Ganger Doctor wrinkled his nose. “It gets horribly embarrassing.”

“And potentially confusing.” The Doctor rocked back on his heels.

Amy looked between the two of them tiredly. “Well, I'm glad you've solved the problem of
*confusing*.”

The Ganger Doctor paused for a moment, pointing to her. “That's sarcasm.” He observed.

“She's very good at sarcasm.” The Doctor nodded.

They both turned suddenly to their wife. “Breathe.” They whispered, and Rose sucked in a breath—
eyes wide. '*When are you going to start giving me answers?' She bit out desperately in their heads, but
they only shook their heads in reply.

“We have to get you off this island.” The Doctor said. “And the Gangers too.”

Cleaves head snapped around at that. “Sorry, would you like a memo from the last meeting? They
are trying to kill us!” She yelled angrily.
Rose set her with a hard look. “They're scared.” She defended them. “You would be too. Actually- that’s the whole point.”

Amy shook her head. “Rose, Doctor, we're trapped in here.” She said, and Rose didn’t miss the lack of plural on The Doctor’s name.

The Doctor sucked in a breath through his teeth as he spun in a small circle. “Right, see, I don't think so. The Flesh Bowl is fed by cabling from above-”

“But where are the earthing conduits?” The Ganger Doctor finished.

The Doctor was scanning the walls with his eyes. “All this piping must go down into a tunnel or a shaft or something, yes? With us?” He took long strides over to the corner and pulled back a bit of scrap metal that hadn’t made it into the barricade. “Yowza!” He exclaimed, finding the ventilation shaft- big enough for them to fit through easily. “An escape route.”

“Yowza?” Amy mouthed wordlessly, looking to both Rory and Rose who only shrugged.

The Doctor grinned, rocking back on his heels. “You know, I'm starting to get a sense of just how impressive it is to hang out with me.” He said, and Rose rolled her eyes, jabbing him in the side.

The Ganger Doctor was still stuck on the exclamatory though. “Do we tend to say yowza?” He asked, wrinkling his nose.

The Doctor huffed. “That's enough, let it go, okay?” He glanced surreptitiously over to Rose for emphasis as he spoke to his double. “We're under stress.”

They all shuffled through the shaft, and ended up in a corridor on the far side.

Buzzer grunted as he pulled himself back to standing and they all started down the dim, stone lined, corridor. “The army will send a recon team.” He said, stepping up next to Jimmy and Dicken.

“We need to find a way to contact the mainland.” Cleaves said to her team over her shoulder.

“We still haven’t found Jen.” Rory reminded them.

“No, this place is a maze.” The Doctor mumbled. “Takes a long time to find someone in a maze. I bet you lot have got a computer map, haven't you?”

Cleaves nodded. “If we can get power running, we can scan for them. Be a lot quicker-” She cut herself off with a cough, and they all joined her, suddenly struggling for air in the cramped corridor.

“Doctor, you said earlier to breathe-” Rose started, reaching out for him.

“Very important, Rose. Breathe.” The two of them said together as they coughed at different times.

“Yeah, well, I'm struggling to.” Rose heaved.

“Acid interacting with the stone.” The Doctor began explaining.

The Ganger Doctor was leaning heavily against the wall now. “Creating an asphyxiant miasma.”

“A what?” Cleaves asked incredulously.
“Choking gas.” The Doctor put into layman's terms, struggling to get the words out as even his respiratory bypass failed—so much for superior biology. “Extra heavy. If we can get above it—”

“The evac tower.” Cleaves nodded, moving past him to lead them all up a nearby set of stairs. “It's this way.”

Soon they were all shoving themselves into the narrow door of the topmost room of the tower. Rose was clutching at her stomach. “Oh. I think I coughed so hard, I pulled a muscle or something.” She groaned, and both the Doctors turned to her in mild panic, the one closest to her reaching his hand out to rub down her arm. She nodded reassuringly. “It's okay, it's better. It's easing off.” She said.

Her assurances didn’t seem to really placate either one of them, but nonetheless they moved to start working on the long-dead wires behind the control console in the center of the room.

Jimmy looked up as from somewhere in the monastery the bell was tolling twelve o’clock. “It's midnight.” He whispered, a small smile playing at his lips. “It's Adam's birthday. My son's five… Happy birthday, bud.”

The Doctor’s gut twisted at the sharp reminder that another birthday is coming soon now too—one they are not at all prepared for.

Cleaves squinted at the Doctors. “Can you really get the power back?” She asked them incredulously as they both worked pulling out various wires and cable boxes.

The Ganger Doctor stood up, examining a wire in his hand. “Oh, there's always some power floating around.”

The Doctor stood up as the Ganger squatted back down. “Sticking to the wires, like bits of lint.”

Amy glared at them, and watched as Rose sat down in one of the spinny chairs at the computer’s terminal. “Can you stop finishing each other’s—”

“Sentences?” The Doctor finished ironically, and then caught himself, looking down abashedly. “No probs.”

“Yes.” The Ganger Doctor agreed.

Rose laughed, as they both ducked back behind the console, and Amy huffed, sitting in the chair next to her. “Come on.” She whispered, turning Rose’s chair around so that she could look at her seriously. “Okay, how can they both be real?”

Rose shrugged. “Because they are.”

The Ganger Doctor popped up again, smiling grandly at his wife before looking to Amy. “We both contain the knowledge of over nine hundred years of memory and experience.”

The Doctor joined them again. “We both wear the same bow tie, which is cool.” He added, straightening the neck piece in question.

His Ganger pointed to him. “Because bow ties are—”

“And always will be.” The Doctor finished.

Rory spoke up finally from where he was standing behind Amy. “But how did the Flesh read you?
Because you weren't linked up to the it.” He asked, more interested than accusatory.

The Doctor tilted his head. “Well, it must've been after I examined it. Thus, a new, genuine Doctor was created.”

The Ganger Doctor reappeared with a flourish. “Ta-da!” He exclaimed, earning a giggle from Rose.

Amy looked over to The Doctor’s wife. “Can’t you tell which is which? In your head or whatever?”

Rose bit her lip as she considered how to answer that. She could- but only because they themselves knew which one they were, and it sort of lingered as an afterthought with everything that passed through her head on their ends. Their telepathic frequencies themselves though were identical in every single way. If the Ganger Doctor hadn’t known he was Flesh- Rose wouldn’t either. She took a deep breath, and finally decided she wouldn’t feed Amy’s prejudices. “Nope. Can’t tell them apart. Completely identical telepathic frequencies.” She half-lied, and then tapped her temple for emphasis. “It’s like Doctor Surround Sound up in here.” She joked.

Rory laughed at that while the Doctors smirked, but Amy wouldn’t let it go that easily. “No getting away from it.” She said, turning to the Doctors and crossing her arms. “One of you was here first.”

Rose huffed, sitting back in her chair. “If it doesn’t matter to me, Amy. Why are you so worried about it?”

Amy’s head snapped around to look at Rose, hair flying out behind her. “Because one of them hurt you.” She said, and a fierce determination to protect her loved ones showed through her eyes- it was a look both Rose and The Doctor were used to seeing in each other, and it sobered all three of them.

“I didn't mean to.” The Ganger Doctor whispered.

Rory’s hands fell to her shoulders as she glared at the Doctor’s Ganger. “But you did,” she bit out. “Pond…”

She glared at him. “Don’t call me Pond.” She practically growled, before standing up and stomping over to the other side of the room. Rory followed after her dutifully, but not before giving the Time Lords a regretful and apologetic look.

Rose let out a long breath, sharing a heartbroken look with the Ganger Doctor, and The Doctor sighed as he continued a fiddle with the wires in front of him. Suddenly, the console lit up as the power came back to it. “Aha!” He exclaimed, coming around to claim the seat Amy had vacated. “Communication a go!”

Cleaves came up behind them at that, immediately going straight for the comlink. “Saint John's calling the mainland. Are you receiving me, Captain? Come in.” She sighed as static met them. “We'll never get a signal through this storm.” She grumbled, before trying again. “Saint John's calling the mainland. Come in, this is urgent.”

Finally, finally another voice broke through the static. “We're just about reading you, Saint John's. How are you doing? We've had all kinds of trouble here.”

Cleaves let out a sigh of relief. “Requesting immediate evacuation. We're under attack. The storm's affected our Gangers. They're running amok.”
“Your Gangers?” The Captain asked incredulously.

“Yes, our Gangers are attacking us.” She confirmed. “We need you to take us off the island immediately and wipe them out.”

The Ganger Doctor gave a terrified look to Rose at that as the Captain responded. “Copy that, Saint John's. Shuttle's despatched. Hang on.”

“You'll need to airlift us off the roof of the evac tower.” Cleaves said. “And Captain, any further transmission sent by me must come with the following codeword. I'm typing it, in case they're listening in.” She typed it into the terminal, and a few minutes later the Captain came back.

“Got it. We'll swing in, get you out and decommission the Flesh.” He said.

Rose wrinkled her nose at that word again. ‘Decommission’ as in kill. Her brow furrowed as she looked between her husbands. Cleaves ended the communication, and Rose squinted at The Doctor as he began typing rapidly into the controls. “What are you doing then?” She asked.

“Making a phone call.” He answered.

Rose raised her a brow. “Who to?”

“No one yet.” He answered flippantly. “It’s on a delay.”

Rose sighed, nodding slowly. More vague answers and poorly concealed secret keeping. She stared at the far wall, hearing distant clacking footsteps echoing like heels in a metal corridor- not anything on the other side of the wall in front of her. “Why?” She asked him, not taking her eyes off the stones.

“Because, Rose,” The Doctor smirked slightly, but there was sadness -worry- behind his eyes. “I am and always will be the optimist. The hoper of far-flung hopes and the dreamer of improbable dreams.” Her eyes flickered back to his at that, and he couldn’t help but lean forward and place a kiss to her forehead. “The wheels are in motion.” He whispered.

Rose couldn’t help the small gasp that escaped her when over his shoulder an invisible hatch in the wall opened again, and the eyepatch lady stared at her menacingly. “Doctor…” She let out, voice small, and suddenly both of them were next to her. “She’s back.”

“Who?” The two of them asked together.

Her eyes flickered over to the others, making sure they were out of earshot, before she answered. “This woman. This woman with an eyepatch. She’s been showing up since America- since we were on the run. At first I thought I was going mad, but… it’s kept going on. She slides open bits of the wall like a hatch and just… just stares at me.” She shook her head. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I didn’t want to-”

“It’s okay.” The Doctor cut off her apologies, squeezing her hand in his.

“Or, it will be.” The Ganger Doctor amended, taking her other hand.

“What is it? Who is she?” She asked them desperately. “Can we please just stop with the secrets?”

The Doctor reached up to ran his free hand through her hair, holding it there, cupping her face. “Not until I know you’ll be safe.” He whispered, and he practically choked on the words as tears hovered on the edge of his vision.
The ominous words made Rose’s stomach twist horribly, but she nodded nonetheless—trusting him.

Suddenly though, the Ganger Doctor stood up, spinning on his heel as his chest heaved. “It’s in my head.” He whispered, and Rose’s breath caught in her throat as she felt it— that unfamiliar feeling of another telepathic presence in her bond mate’s head. “Why?” He let out, turning back around to look at them with wide eyes.

“Why?” Rose repeated, shaking her head in confusion.

“It's all the eyes say. Why?” He was near tears. “I can feel them as they work each day, knowing the time was coming for them to be thrown away again. Not again, please. And then they are destroyed and they feel death, and all they can say is, why?”

The Doctor squinted up to his double, leaning back in his chair. “Why?”

The Ganger Doctor’s eyes snapped down to his. “Did you sense it?” He asked.

“Briefly.” He answered, and Rose nodded in agreement. “Not as strong as you.”

Rory, Amy, and the contractors were all watching them carefully, and the Ganger Doctor cleared his throat awkwardly as he realised, spinning around to face them. “It would appear I can connect to the Flesh.” He told them.

“**You** are the Flesh.” Amy grumbled.

The Ganger Doctor glanced to her sadly, but continued anyway. “I'm beginning to understand what it's been through, what it needs.”

“What **you** want. You are it.” Amy snapped.

“Amelia!” Rose reprimanded her as she felt the sharp sting of the Ganger Doctor’s hurt. “Stop it, this instant.” She said—her voice and the look she gave left no room for arguments, and Amy hung her head, keeping her eyes squarely on her toes.

The Ganger Doctor sent Rose a thankful look before he went on. “It's much more powerful than we thought.” He said, and looked to Cleaves. “The Flesh can grow, correct?”

She squinted at him. “Its cells can divide.” She answered carefully, unwilling to give the Flesh anything resembling human qualities—likely for the sake of her own conscience.

“Well, now it wants to do that at will.” He sighed, rubbing at the bridge of his nose. “It's in pain, its angry. It wants revenge.”

A long silence passed after that, in which Cleaves and her team studied the two Doctors while they had silent conversation with Rose—until finally Rose stood up to go talk to Amy in the corner. “Hey,” she started, placing her hand on Amy’s crossed arm, “look at me.”

Amy sniffed but did look up—hurt written clearly upon her features.

Rose’s eyes flickered over to Rory. “Give us a minute, yeah?” She whispered, and Rory nodded, moving to join the Doctors at the console. Rose tucked a stray hair behind Amy’s ear once Rory had left. “I didn’t mean to yell at you, I’m sorry.” She apologised quietly, and waited for Amy to nod before continuing. “I just need you to trust me, okay? I would never do anything to hurt you or anyone else.”
“I know that.” Amy protested.

“Then what’s the problem?” Rose practically begged her—needing to understand where this was coming from. She gets weary, but Amy was being downright hostile towards the Doctor’s Ganger.

“It’s just…” Amy sighed. “It’s just that neither one of you has been particularly forthcoming these past few months, okay? And I get it, I do. But… I’m just worried your head’s not on straight. What if you’re reading this wrong?” She paused and Rose noticed the fear in her eyes for the first time. “What if he tries to hurt The Doctor like he hurt you?”

Rose let out a long breath as her heart clenched. “Amy, he is The Doctor. You know The Doctor would never hurt me intentionally?”

“Of course I do.”

“Okay then, Amy. He is the same person. All logic applies.”

Amy sighed. “Okay, fine. Hurting you was an accident. But what about him? I also know that The Doctor would do anything to protect you— to keep you. What if the Ganger Doctor wants to replace the real one? What happens at the end of all this? We just swan off back into the TARDIS with two of them?”

Rose rubbed at the bridge of her nose. They hadn’t exactly thought that far ahead, and even trying to now was giving her headache. They weren’t exactly planners, them. They just sort of rolled with the punches. The walking embodiments of crossing bridges when they came to them. “No- I don’t know. We’ll figure it out. Just, for now, please, trust us—trust me.” She answered exasperatedly.

“And what if your wrong?” Amy challenged.

Rose sighed, and she was about to reply, but was cut off as the voice of the evac pilot came over the comm unit, and the two of them ran to join the others as he spoke. “This is the shuttle. We’re right above you, but we can’t get low enough. Gamma static could fry our nav-controls. Sit tight. We’ll get to you. Just—” It cut to static.

Jimmy hit the side of the console a few times. “Hello? Can you hear me?” He yelled, but only static continued, then suddenly one of the security cameras flickered into view.

Amy let out a little gasp. “That’s Jennifer.”

“Yeah, but which one?” Cleaves squinted at the grainy footage—like she might be able to tell via video live feed. “She’s heading for the thermostatic room.”

Amy straightened up, antsy to start moving again. “Let’s go then.” She said, looking around to Rose, Rory and The Doctors— who she couldn’t tell apart now that she’d taken her eyes off them.

That question was answered though as The Doctor pulled the sonic screwdriver from his pocket and tossed it to the Ganger Doctor.

“Hang on—” Amy started to protest, but she caught Rose’s look just in time and her mouth snapped shut.

Cleaves, however, had no qualms with ticking Rose off. “We can't let him go. Are you crazy?”

The Doctor chuckled. “Am I crazy, Doctor?” He asked his double.
The Ganger Doctor tilted his head in consideration. “Well, you did once want to plumb your brain into the core of an entire planet just to halt its orbit and win a bet.” He answered, earning a glare from The Doctor, a giggle from Rose, and wide-eyes from the rest of them.

Rose took a step forward. “I’ll go with you then.” She offered.

The Ganger Doctor immediately shook his head though. “No you won’t. You’ll stay here- with him. Safer that way.” He said, and Rose didn’t miss that self-deprecating frequency coming off of him. It was something she’d been used to feeling a century ago- that ‘woe is me, I am not good enough for Rose Tyler’ attitude he used to carry around. The one that had taken her nearly half a century to stamp out of him. She sighed, and held back the impulse to rub at her temple.

Over their shoulders, Buzzer caught his boss’s look and nodded, taking a deep breath. “Well then, he’ll need company.” He said, cutting off Rose’s chance to argue. “It’s fine. I’ll handle it.”

The Ganger Doctor nodded. “Thank you, Buzzer,” he said, and then spared a half a second to kiss Rose deeply (like it was the last time he would be able to), before spinning on his heel and leading Buzzer out the door with him.

Rose turned to The Doctor and raised her eyebrows at him as she felt his jealousy. ‘Really, Doctor? Jealous of yourself?’ She teased him, and he wrinkled his nose at her.

Cleaves furrowed her brow at the readings in front of her as they turned red. “These temperature gauges are rising.” She mumbled. “Jennifer must have shut off the underground cooling vents…”

Dicken’s eyes widened. “There’s a million gallons of boiling acid under our feet.”

The Doctor jumped into action at that, looking over Cleaves’ shoulder. “And now it’s heating up the whole island… How long till it blows?” He asked, and right on cue the whole room rumbled beneath their feet- a few loose stones coming down in the process.

Dicken shook his head. “Gangers or no Gangers, we need to get the hell out of here.”

Cleaves tried the comms again. “Shuttle, we need evac. Where are you? Can you hear me? Can you-” She cut herself off with a wince of pain, holding her head in her hand.

“Cleaves? Cleaves?” The Doctor said worryingly, pulling her over to the chair. “Cleaves, sit down.”

“I’m fine.” She insisted, but her face said otherwise. “I’m waiting for results, so let it go.”

The Doctor let out a long breath. He’d scanned her earlier with the sonic when he saw he rubbing at her head. “It’s a very deep parietal clot.” He informed her.

Cleaves looked up to him at that. “How can you possibly…” She shook her head. “Inoperable?” She asked instead.

“On Earth, yes.” He told her.

“Well, seeing as Earth’s all that’s on offer-” She caught the looks both Rose and him were giving her. “Hm,” she chuckled. “I’m no healthy spring chicken, and you’re no weatherman. Right?” She looked between the alien couple, and remembered the strange language they’d been speaking earlier. They gave small half-hearted smirks as confirmation.

The room started shaking again then- harsher this time, and Rory and Amy held hands as they
stared up at the ceiling in fear. “Okay, something just cracked.” Rory said, pointing up. “I heard it.”

“Yeah, we can't stay here.” The Doctor nodded, grabbing Rose’s hand. “Let's go.”

Jimmy was already heading for the exit. “He's right. Let's shift.”

Cleaves made one last desperate attempt at the comms again though. “Cleaves to Shuttle. Respond. We need to move, and we can't be collected from the Evac tower.”

The Pilot came back quickly. “Give us the codeword.” He said.

“The codeword is-” Cleaves started, but another rumble went up, this time coupled with alarms. The console in front of her went dead. She started pressing buttons at random frantically.

“Cleaves?” The Doctor pulled on her arm. “Cleaves, it's dead. It's dead. We need to get out of here. We need to get back downstairs and get those vents back on. Come on.” He finally managed to yank her away, and they all ran for the door as another loud explosion ripped through the room.

The Ganger Doctor and Buzzer ran through the dark courtyard, using the sonic like a sort of human metal detector. “I’m getting something!” He exclaimed suddenly, picking up speed as they ran around some fallen barrels.

“Is it human?” Buzzer asked.

“Yeah, it's human, but it's fading, it's fading! This is bad! Fading is very… bad.” He drifted off as the signal did, and he turned his head to find Jennifer’s lifeless body lying motionless on the ground. “The signal’s gone.” He said quietly, falling to his knees and resting a hand on her face. “She’d dead… she was hanging on to the edge of life, but she just slipped away.” He let out a long breath as he took in the young girl. “Oh, Jennifer… I’m so sorry.” He whispered, and looked up to Buzzer. “She’s been out here for hours.” He told him.

Buzzer shook his head. “But if the real Jen’s lying out here…”

The Ganger Doctor looked off towards the chapel. “Then whatever the other Jennifer is doing in the thermostatic room-”

He was cut off as Buzzer hit him over the head with his torch- knocking him to the ground.

Rose and The Doctor skidded to a halt in the corridor as the other telepathic presence shut off, turning to each other fearfully, and ignoring the protest their sudden stop had brought. “Not dead,” The Doctor said.

“Unconscious,” Rose finished with a small nod, and they both took deep breaths before turning the corner they’d just stopped short of.

They were greeted by a dozen Flesh eyes- smeared onto the wall in a sort of horrifying display. “Ah. The eyes have it.” The Doctor whispered, shining the torch light across them as the others let out small gasps.

“Why are they here?” Amy asked.
“To accuse us.” The Doctor answered, not looking over to her.

Cleaves shook her head. “Ignore them.” She ordered, and pushed past the Time Lords and the eyes. “It’s not far.” She threw over her shoulder as she made her way down the corridor- the rest of them following a bit more slowly.

The Doctor and Rose ran to the controls as soon as they reached the thermostatic room, but The Doctor groaned as they’re actions did nothing. “It's a chemical chain reaction now. We can't stop it. This place is going to blow sky high.”

Cleave’s sighed. “Exactly how long have we got?”

The Doctor rubbed a hand down his face. “An hour? Five seconds? Er, somewhere in between.”

They all looked up as another alarm went off. “Out!” Rose ordered, pushing them all back through the door.

They ran into Jennifer, coming the other direction. “Oh, thank God!” She exclaimed. “I’ve been looking everywhere for you all. Listen, I’ve found a way out. Through the crypt, there’s an underground tunnel.”

Cleaves squinted at her. “From the crypt?” She questioned. “That’s not on the schematics.”

“It goes right out of the monastery.” Jennifer insisted, turning on her heel and dragging the rest of them along with her.

Rose and The Doctor shared a weary look, hesitating, but sighed and followed after her anyway.

When The Ganger Doctor came to, the Gangers of Cleaves, Jimmy, and Dicken stood over him. He let out a long breath as his vision swam into focus. “Got anything for a sore head?” He quipped.

“This is how they'll always treat us.” Cleaves said. “Do you see now? After all, you're one of us, Doctor.”

The Ganger Doctor sighed, and reached out for Rose (and by extension- himself) on impulse. ‘Jennifer Lucas is dead.’ He informed them.

The Doctor and Rose froze in the crypt as the Ganger Doctor’s message reached them- but it was too late. When they spun around Jennifer’s Ganger was slamming the door shut- locking them all inside with the boiling vat of acid.

“Oi!” Amy yelled, banging on the door and glaring at Ganger Jennifer through the window. “What are you playing at?” She demanded. The Ganger Doctor appeared then, and Amy’s face nearly turned as red as her hair in anger. “Oh, I knew it!” She screamed at him. “I knew you would turn on us!”

The Doctor pulled her away by the waist, and Cleaves took her spot in the window to look her Ganger in the eye. “Where’s Buzzer?” She asked. “What have you done to him.”

Her Ganger shook her head sadly. “I’m sorry. We have to be free.”

Cleaves’ heart broke for her (twice now) murdered colleague, but still she refused to show
weakness. Instead, she smirked. “I’m sorry too, Miranda. Of all the humans in the world, you had to pick the one with the clot!” She tapped the side of her head. “But hey, them’s the breaks! Welcome to the human race!” She gave her Ganger a rather rude gesture as she backed away.

Rose and Rory were attempting calm Amy down as The Doctor ran to the controls. “This is going to overheat and fill the room with acid, just as a point of interest.” He informed them, gesturing to the giant vat of acid in the center of the room.

Cleaves leaned heavily against the railing of the mezzanine. “And we can’t stop it?”

He looked up to her. “Just as a point of interest? No.” He answered, but ran anyway to the crane, gesturing for Jimmy and Dicken to help him out lowering the massive iron cover onto the acid.

“It’ll never hold her.” Jimmy grunted, even as he helped.

“Well, if you’ve got a better plan I’m all ears.” The Doctor shot back, grunting as he moved to the other side of the vat. “In fact, if you’ve got a better plan, I’ll take you to a planet where everyone is all ears.”

The lid slammed down, but instantly it started sizzling as the monastery continued to rumble. “It’s eating through.” Rose said, leaning closer, and The Doctor pulled her back just as the acid sprayed—just barely missing her. They shared a terrified look and silently prayed his Ganger was having better luck on his side of the plan.

The Gangers had somehow managed to gain control of the comms after the humans had lost it, and the pilot now spoke to them in the dining hall. “We're dropping down on our approach. Stand by for evac.” He said.

Ganger Jennifer smirked. “The humans will be melted, as they deserve, and then the factory will be destroyed. Once we get to the mainland, the real battle begins. The humans won’t stand a chance.” She was practically giddy with power as she grinned and pointed at The Doctor’s Ganger. “You’re one of us, Doctor. Join the revolution.”

The Ganger Doctor raised his brows and looked down to his watch. In three... two... one... Right on time the phone rang, and he got to his feet. “Ah, that'll be the phone. Somebody get the phone. Jimmy, get the phone. No? Fine, I'll get the phone.” He ran over to Jimmy’s things and picked up his mobile— or rather, his holographic communication system.

“Thank you for booking your holo-call with Morpeth Jetsan, bringing the world together.” A computerised voice said, and a little boy in pajamas appeared before them, standing underneath the words Morpeth Jetsan Pre-Booked Holo-Call 011-109-4455.

“Ha!” The Ganger Doctor smiled as the boy rocked back and forth on his feet. “Hello, Adam, I'm the Doctor. Well, other Doctor. It's complicated and boring... Anyway, who cares! It's your birthday!”

Adam grinned and jumped up and down. “Yay!”

“Yay!” The Ganger Doctor repeated, hearts twisting just a bit. “Now, have you been getting up very early and jumping on the bed?”

“Yes,” Adam agreed, nodding excitedly. “Really high!”
The Ganger Doctor nodded. “I expect chocolate for breakfast. If you don't feel sick by mid-morning, you're not doing it right. Now, I think you want to speak to Dad…” He said, tuning to give Jimmy’s Ganger a significant look.

Adam was overwhelmed by excitement at that. “Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!” He exclaimed, but when moments passed and still no Daddy appeared, his small brow furrowed in confusion. “Daddy?”

The Ganger Doctor tilted his chin down to Jimmy’s Ganger. “You'll do, Jimmy. What does the other Jimmy matter now? You're both the same dad, aren't you?” He said, and the words left a stale taste in his mouth. “Come on, Adam's waiting.”

“Daddy?” Adam repeated, and the monastery shook violently again. “Daddy, what's that rumbly noise? What's going on, Daddy?” Ganger Jimmy’s chest heaved as cold panic ran through him- he ran from the room and towards the original Jimmy as his boy called out for him again. “Daddy?”

Ganger Jennifer was seething. “You've tricked him into an act of weakness, Doctor!” She accused. The Ganger Doctor didn’t blink at the accusation though. “No, I've helped him into an act of humanity.” He corrected her, taking a step forwards and turning to the rest of the Gangers. “Anyone else like the sound of that? Act of humanity.”

Ganger Cleaves didn’t take his eyes off of him. “Dicken, drain the acid well in Crypt One.” She ordered over her shoulder, and Dicken didn’t hesitate- actually he looked quite relieved as he moved to follow the command.

“Don't you dare!” Ganger Jennifer growled, but she went ignored.

Ganger Cleaves rolled her eyes. “I've had it with this. What's the point in this ridiculous war?” She said. “Look at you, Jen. You were a sweet kid. Look at you now… The stuff of nightmares. I don't want my world populated by monsters.”

She glared at her. “You can't stop the factory from melting down, boss.” She bit out. “I'll take revenge on humanity with or without you.”

The Ganger Doctor stepped towards her again. “It doesn't have to be about revenge.” He pleaded. “It can be so much better than that.”

But she didn’t listen. She dashed from the dining hall to God-knows-where, and the Ganger Doctor rocked back on his heels as he sighed.

Jimmy was attempting to keep the lid on the vat, but it kept jumping up, spewing steam and spraying acid he just narrowly avoided. But then a particularly large explosion ricocheted through the monastery, and a boiling hot blast of acid hit Jimmy squarely in the chest- sending him tumbling backwards.

His Ganger came through the door just as he fell to the floor. “Let me through!” He yelled frantically, pushing past the humans.

“There's nothing we can do.” The Doctor said as Jimmy’s Ganger held his head in his hands as he struggled the breathe. “The acid's reached his heart.”

Jimmy managed to smirk. “I'm quite handsome from this angle.” He quipped.

Ganger Jimmy shook his head vehemently, trying a failing to hold back his tears- *what about Adam?* “I'm sorry. I'm the fake.” He said. “Adam deserves his real dad.”

Jimmy let out a shuddering breath. “Shut up.”

“What do you want me to do?” His Ganger asked. “Anything. Just say.”

“The way things are, mate, it's up to you now.” Jimmy told him, pulling his wedding ring from around his neck, and with his last breath he handed it to his Ganger. “Be a dad. You remember how.”

The Doctor’s stomach was in knots at the words. “Jimmy Wicks, you're a dad.” He said, and utterly failed to conceal to absolute tsunami of emotions rolling through him- from either Rose or Amy and Rory.

The Ganger Doctor straightened up as Jimmy’s Ganger and all the humans came running into the dining hall. Adam was still on the call, standing on his toes and looking around confusedly. “Daddy? Where's my daddy?” He complained.

Ganger Jimmy, or just Jimmy now, walked past his two bosses staring at each other and over into the view of his son. He was lost for words, and Adam felt compelled to remind his father who he was. “Daddy, it's me!” He said, smiling up to his father.

Jimmy just barely managed to hold back his tears. “Hey, sunshine.” He breathed. “What are you up to?”

Adam twisted his nightshirt in his small hands as he rocked back and forth. “Opening all my presents!”

Jimmy choked on a laugh. “Good lad. You have fun today. And remember your dad, he loves you very, very much.” He sniffed.

“When are you coming home?” Adam asked, and Jimmy’s face fell. He looked behind him to The Doctor- still unsure if he would be allowed to live.

The Doctor smirked, and looked around him to his son. “Daddy's coming home today, Adam.” He told him, with a small nod towards the father.

Adam jumped up and down excitedly, doing a bit of a dance in excitement. “Yay!” Jimmy laughed in relief and joy and sadness, and he ended the call.

The Doctor took Rose’s hand. “Now we need to move.”

They careened around the corner leading to the courtyard, but skidded to a halt as their way was blocked. Jennifer’s Ganger had transformed herself into a ravening beast- a near-human face with stringy black hair set upon an elongated neck. Her limbs had extended as well as she stood at eight feet tall on her hands and knees, growling at them.

The Doctor spun on his heel and pushed the group in the other direction. “Run. Run. Run!” He ordered, shoving them down some stairs, he looked up as more stone crumbled down around them. “Roof's going to give.” He called, and Dicken and his Ganger slammed shut the door behind them.
marked ‘Danger: No Humans, Gangers Only.’

“We have to stop her. This door doesn’t lock.” Ganger Dicken muttered, jiggling the lock to no avail.

Dicken looked down the corridor. “No, but the far one does.” He said, and took off back towards the Flesh Beast before anyone could argue.

It was jammed though, and they all yelled for him as he struggled, but he was too determined now. Finally, just as the Beast came around the corner, he managed to get it loose- but he was on the wrong side as he closed it.

“No!” His Ganger screamed, as they heard the sickening crunch of a body hitting the door.

The Ganger Doctor pulled him out of the way, and him, Ganger Cleaves, and Amy pressed themselves against the non-locking door.

Rose and The Doctor were looking at the crumbling ceiling. “Here she comes…” Rose muttered, and right on cue the TARDIS came crashing through the ground- door flinging open for them in the process.

“Oh, she does like to make an entrance.” The Doctor commented with a smirk, as him and Rose shoved Rory, Ganger Jimmy, and Ganger Dicken into the time ship. “Go, go, go!”

Cleaves turned to her Ganger. “Get on board!” He Ganger yelled at her.

Cleaves shook her head. “I’m not leaving.” She insisted.

The Flesh Beast crashed against the door and Ganger Cleaves jolted forward before pressing her back more firmly against it. She gave her double- the original- a serious look. “Go.” She said seriously.

Cleaves set her jaw, but she didn’t argue. She got it. It’s what they wanted. She ran into the police box.

Rose pushed Amy off of the door and joined the Ganger Doctor and Ganger Cleaves in holding it closed. “I’m staying.” He said to her, as Rory pulled Amy onto the TARDIS.

Rose huffed. “I know you think you are, but your not.” She insisted.

The Ganger Doctor shook his head at her. “I’m not the real him. Someone needs to stay here and hold this door closed. Give you time to dematerialise.”

“I’m not leaving you.” Rose bit out.

“You won’t be. You’re leaving the copy, Rose. You have to go.”

Rose wiped a traitorous tear from her cheek as she looked at him. “But what about you?” She sobbed.

He smirked. “Oh, I’ve had a good run. A few hours? We’ve seen whole worlds built in a few hours, you and I. More than enough time for a life.” He nodded to The Doctor standing behind her. “You two have got an even bigger adventure coming for you now.”

Rose sniffed. “What does that even mean?”
At that he pulled her into a hug. “Push, Rose.” He whispered, and her blood ran cold. “But only when she tells you to.” And then he kissed her before handing her over to The Doctor, ignoring her wide eyed look.

The Doctor moved her towards the TARDIS before she could ask any questions, but she was too shell-shocked now to say anything at all anyway as she walked near mindlessly into the ship.

The Ganger Doctor looked over to Ganger Cleaves next him- both of their weights the only thing keeping the Flesh Beast from killing them all. “You too, Cleaves, off you pop.” He said, thinking maybe he could hold the door back on his own for a least a few seconds.

“I’m staying.” She insisted, not moving an inch.

“This is not the time for grand gestures!” He protested.

She rolled her eyes. “Says the king of grand gestures. This is my factory. I'm not going anywhere.”

The Ganger Doctor let out a long breath, admittedly thankful that he’d have help keeping the rest of them safe. “Foreman Miranda Cleaves, marvellous. Beware of imitations.” He rambled with a smile.

She smirked, and looked to The Doctor still watching them. “Clear off out of here.” She ordered, and after only a moment’s hesitation he gave a small salute to the both of them before running into the TARDIS just as there was another explosion.

The Ganger Doctor pulled out the sonic as the TARDIS dematerialised. “This will dissolve her.” He said.

Ganger Cleaves raised her brows. “And us.” She finished for him.

“Certainly.” He answered, and they shared a brief determined look before turning around, and opening the door.

Rose was sitting cross legged on the glass floor, staring unseeing at the space in front of her as The Doctor moved around the console. Distantly, she felt Amy’s and Rory’s hands on her shoulders, but they felt too far away to be real. She knew there were conversations happening around her, but she could barely hear them over the ringing in her ears.

They dropped Jimmy off at his son’s birthday party, but she didn’t see.

They stopped to let the others off with orders to put a halt to the use of Flesh for military and constructional use, but Rose felt certain it would do no good, so she didn’t bother standing.

Finally, it was just the four of them in the TARDIS again, and eventually Amy’s words reached her ears. “Rose, he’s right here. I know it’s upsetting, but it’s like you said. Same man. He’s right here.” She said, and Rose could tell by her tone it’s been the same string of sentences for the last twenty or so minutes.

Rose looked up to her husband. “It wasn’t an accident we went there.” She finally spoke.

He shook his head. “I needed to see the Flesh in its early stages.” He whispered. “See it through your eyes.”
Rose nodded slowly as the pieces began falling together. Suddenly, she winced, doubling over in pain and holding her stomach. The connection was loosening. The TARDIS around her was already beginning to fade as she regained consciousness a million light years away. She needed to hear him say it though. “Doctor, what’s happening to me?” She begged him.

“Contractions.” He answered, and his voice broke on the word.

Rose screamed as the confirmation sharpened the pain. “Help me.” She sobbed, and she allowed him to pull her to standing. She heard Rory and Amy asking frantic questions but she ignored them as she reached up to place a hand on her husband’s cheek. “Save us.” She whispered.

He grabbed her hand. “Hold on. I’m coming for you. I swear it. Whatever happens, however hard, however far, I will find you.” Tears were rolling down his cheeks.

Rose took a step back, and when she did, she melted into Flesh.

Chapter End Notes

Surprise! Told you I'd be back to posting more often. This might be a new record, actually. I'm just too dang excited to get started on this A Good Man Goes to War rewrite! BIG changes ahead!

(comments mean Rose gets saved faster ❤️)
Rose’s eyes snapped open as she gasped.

The first thing she felt was the hard metal table on which she was laid across.

The second thing was the lack of The Doctor in her head.

And the third, was another contraction. Her muscles spasmed, and she screamed out for a husband who couldn’t hear her. Her round, pregnant stomach in front of her sent all kinds of alarm bells off. The loudest of which bombarding her with memories of Alina. Her heart raced and she struggled to catch her breath. Tears ran down her face unchecked as she went into labor with no other emotions but pure unadulterated fear.

Above her, a hatch in the wall slid open- and this time it was real. The eyepatched woman stared down at her, seemingly unaffected by her terror. “Well, dear, you're ready to pop, aren't you? Little one's on its way. Here it comes. Push!”

A broken sob escaped Rose as another contraction wracked her body.

Amy and Rory followed The Doctor around the console as he flew it through time and space with reckless abandon. Normally, when him and Rose flew it was like a dance- a show full of happiness and wonder. But now, without her, sparks flew off of the harsh angles of his body- lashing out at the universe, as he flung levers forcefully, punched controls, and yanked dials into place.

“What’s going on, Pond,” The Doctor spit out. “Is my wife is in labor somewhere in the universe- somewhere I don’t know, in all of space of time. They have taken her, and our unborn child from me. And Amelia Pond they have made a very very big mistake.” He grabbed a mallet from beneath the console and slammed into into a part of the console. “They have made me angry.”

The ship landed more forcefully than it had in a long time, but The Doctor didn’t move to open the doors. Only a few seconds passed before they were flung open from the outside, and Captain Jack Harkness walked through.

“Jack…” Rory breathed, wide-eyed as the man he’d only met a few times before stood in the TARDIS doors- a massive gun strapped to his back.

Jack surveyed the scene quickly, and found he was right to have grabbed the weapon when his eyes didn’t land upon Rose Tyler. They never landed without calling first anymore, and he’d run
for his gun the second the systems alerted him to the TARDIS materialisation. He looked to The Doctor, setting his jaw. “What’s happened to her?” He asked, without preamble.

“They’ve taken her.” The Doctor answered, already moving to start flying before Jack had even closed the doors behind him. “Where are Martha and Mickey in your timeline?”

“On holiday with the kids.” Jack answered easily, and The Doctor shook his head, cursing eloquently in Gallifreyan- he wouldn’t risk them then, not if they weren’t still soldiers.

“Donna?” He asked.

“Just married that Lee bloke.” Jack replied, following The Doctor as he cursed some more at the prospect of muddy timelines. “Who’s taken her? What’s going on?”

The Doctor pushed the monitor around towards Jack, Amy, and Rory when the picture of a woman with an eyepatch stared back at them. “Madame Kovarian. Associate of the religious movement known as the Silence- psychopaths who’ve gotten their hands on time travel. She’s the one who blew up the TARDIS and now the one who’s taken Rose and our unborn child.”

“The Silence?” Amy repeated.

“Rose is pregnant?” Jack asked incredulously.

The Doctor groaned and scrubbed his hands down his face. “I need help. There’s an entire army surrounding her- wherever she is. But our friends are too scattered across the timelines, too much potential for paradox. Normally, I’d risk the universe for her, but I can’t risk failing to stupid circumstance. The only reason I could get you, Jack, is your being immortal and already scattered.”

“Yeah I’ve found it comes in handy from time to time.” Jack quipped, even as his mind was racing to catch up with what was going on. He decided he could question it more later. “Okay, so… friends are out of the question. What about enemies?”

The Doctor glanced up to him at that, raising his brows. “I’m not sure the Daleks would be all that willing to lend a helping plunger.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “You have some of the most powerful enemies in the galaxy- spread out across all of space and time. I’d be willing to bet my life at least one of them knows where Rosie is.”

The Doctor was about to mumble something on the value of Jack’s life, when his eyes widened suddenly and he began typing in coordinates rapidly. “The Twelfth Cyber Legion monitors an entire quadrant right at the center of a communication hub used by the time agency.” He muttered as he began flying them through the vortex again. “They hear everything.”

Amy and Rory had only a single, vague, two thousand year old, and long-erased memory of a Cyberman- but they’d gotten the distinct impression that they weren’t exactly forthcoming. “Okay… how are you going to get them to tell you anything?” Rory asked, speaking over the noise of the TARDIS.

They landed with a thud, and The Doctor took long, immediate strides to the doors this time. “Oh, I have my ways.” He grumbled, flinging the doors open with a loud bang, and slamming them shut before they could follow after him.

He stepped out onto the pilot ship of the legion, and right next to him was a control panel. Quicker than he ever had in his more than 900 years of life, he wrote a computer virus, programmed it into
the sonic screwdriver, and walked casually into the war room of the Cybermen.

“Intruder Level Nine!” A Cyberman was announcing.

“Seal Level Nine!” The Cyberleader called back.

The Doctor took a step forward, out of the shadows. “Oh, that won’t do any good. Already here.” He smirked, holding his arms out grandly while in front of him more than a two dozen Cybermen pointed their guns at him. He didn’t bat an eye. “Now, this legion is monitoring this entire quadrant. I know you’ve heard where they’ve taken her. And if you don’t want me to blow up your entire army, you’ll tell me.” He held up the sonic for emphasis.

“Your threat is ineffective.” The Cyberleader said. “Records report The Doctor and Rose Tyler would not destroy a nonlethal ship without provocation.”

The Doctor tilted his head. “The Doctor and Rose Tyler wouldn’t.” He agreed. “However, The Doctor without Rose Tyler…” He slid up the sonic, and behind him half a dozen Cyberships went up in flames.

The Cybermen cocked their guns, but The Doctor was still holding the device that would annihilate the rest of their fleet- including themselves. “Now,” The Doctor growled. “Where is my wife?”

After nearly twenty-four hours of labor, Rose held her daughter close to her chest.

The white, sterile, telepathy-nulling room in which they stood, surrounded by armed guards, was so far from what she wanted her child’s first impression of the world to be. In her chest, she could feel The Wolf howling, struggling to break free of the chains the room had put around her- struggling to protect Rose and the baby. But it couldn’t be helped.

Rose clutched her baby to her, and spoke quietly in Gallifreyan. If not completely for the sake of privacy from the horrible woman and her soldiers stood behind her, than to also give her daughter a sense of her father. “I wish I could tell you that you’ll be loved, that you’ll be safe and cared for and protected.” She whispered in the ancient language. “But now is not the time for lies.”

“Two minutes.” Madame Kovarian said behind her, taking a heeled step forward- as if Rose needed reminding that they were about to take her newborn from her.

Rose ignored her. “What you are going to be, my love, is very very brave.” She moved to the window overlooking the army below her. “But not as brave as they’ll have to be. Because there’s someone coming. I don’t know where he is, or what he’s doing, but trust me, he’s on his way.” Rose took a deep breath and looked up, blinking back tears at the reminder of the empty space inside her head. “There’s a man who's never going to let us down, and not even an army can get in the way.” She told her daughter. “Wherever they take you, however scared you are, I promise you, you will never be alone. Because this man is your father.” Rose took a deep shuddering breath. She hated having to tell their daughter of The Doctor- he should be there. He should be there.

In front of her, a soldier set down a small transport cot in front of her. Rose glanced up and Madame Kovarian gave her a significant look- she either would set her daughter down herself, or have her forcefully taken from her. Rose let out a long breath, and set her baby down, but didn’t let go before pressing her forehead to her smaller one.

Because they could try to trap The Wolf all they wanted, but even in a zero room, the unending need to protect her daughter would prevail. Silently, and without show, a golden light wrapped
around her infant daughter’s mind. A Wolf to stand guard. To protect her when Rose and The Doctor couldn’t.

Rose sighed, and pressed a kiss to the soft hairs on her head. It was all she could do.

She sobbed, and fell to her knees as they took her baby away from her.

Jack had managed to get the rest of the story from Amy and Rory while The Doctor was on the Cybership, and when he came back and they flew away, he didn’t question it when The Doctor destroyed the rest of the fleet.

“You have debtors.” Jack said as they reentered the Time Vortex. “People you spared- who owe you. Vastra, from the Underground in the 1800s. I was there. I remember. You let her go.”

The Doctor shook his head. “I never said there were strings attached to my mercy.”

“That doesn’t mean they don’t feel like they owe you.” Jack shot back, crossing his arms. “It’s the best plan we’ve got.”

The Doctor let out a long breath, and set a course for Victorian London.

When they got there The Doctor didn’t immediately head for the doors, instead he switched on the security camera for outside and sat back in the captain’s seat. “It’ll be a while.” He told them, and Amy glanced to the screen to see a maid staring at the police box before running out of the room.

“Who else?” He asked them.

“What about River?” Rory offered. “Not a debtor, but a friend. Already scattered in your timelines, yeah? She was in the army, was good with a gun- has fought the Silence.”

Jack didn’t know who River was, but he nodded- she sounded like a good option. “Uh, you mentioned once- a Sontaran you saved? He’d be looking to restore his honour.”

“Strax.” The Doctor supplied, giving a short nod of approval.

Amy furrowed her brow. “What about that big blue guy we ran into that one time on Maldovarium? He seemed weary of seeing you. Think he’d help?”


“Well, not me. Rose.” The Doctor answered vaguely, and Jack nearly choked on his own air. Arguably one of the most powerful blackmarket dealers in the universe owed Rosie a debt? He was about to ask for the story behind that before he remembered their present situation and his mouth snapped closed. The Doctor sighed. “There’s also a small clan of Jadoon that could help…”

“What about Captain Avery?” Rory asked. “His son and crew- they’ve got a massive spaceship now, and are well capable of seizing.”

The Doctor nodded appreciatively. “We’ll need to split up after this. Amy and Rory you’ll go and collect River while Jack and I deal with the rest.”

Amy crossed her arms. “Promise you won’t just abandon us?”

The Doctor’s eyes snapped up to meet hers. “Do I really look like someone who’s about to abandon
their family at the moment, Amelia?”

Amy pressed her lips together and looked down to her feet.

If Rose had learned anything in her last hundred years of life, it was to gain allies.

She sat cross legged on the table, in front of her the glass infant’s cot that should have held her daughter sat empty. Her head was empty as well. It was lonely.

There were few guards who would break the rules- who would talk to her. She found what little solace she could in these armed soldiers- paid to keep her locked up, to keep her incapable of fighting back. She had to forgive them, to believe they did not work from a place of hate, but rather ignorance, or perhaps desperation.

Desperation she could understand.

The Fat One and the Thin One were of the first to say anything to her. “Hello. I’m the Thin One.” The Thin one introduced himself. It had been hours since they’d taken her daughter, and they were the third set of soldiers on guard duty. “And this is my husband, the Fat One.” He nodded to his partner stood next to him- looking at him like he was insane.

Rose squinted at them. “Haven’t you got names?”

The Fat One, seeming to take this as her lack of hostility, shrugged as he replied. “We’re the thin fat gay married Anglican marines. Why would we need names as well?”

Rose smirked, and turned back to face the window. “My husband would like you.” She commented mildly, as her eyes focused back on the army below her. She watched a group of robed monks pass. “You lot got the Headless Monks on board…” She mused. “What have they got to do with this…”

The Thin One studied her profile. “Do you know about them then?” He asked her, seeing answers behind the ancient woman’s eyes- the woman children told stories about. “Why are they called the Headless Monks? They can’t really be headless can they?”

Rose didn’t answer. Just continued to stare out the window.

The Doctor dropped Amy and Rory off on a vacant London suburban street, and they spun in small circles as the TARDIS dematerialised- hoping perhaps River Song would just appear in front of them, despite The Doctor describing this landing as ‘his best guess.’

Amy huffed, and they began making their way down a random direction. A few minutes passed before Rory bumped her arm with the back of his hand- pointing to a door across the street. The one painted a bright TARDIS blue amongst all the soft yellows and off-whites that lined the rest of the the street. Their neighbors must hate them.

They knocked on the door and breathed twin sighs of relief when the familiar nineteen-year-old face of River Song answered. She’d been laughing at something said, but her face fell when she took in the two Ponds standing in front of her. “What are you doing here?” She hissed, stepping down from the door frame and shutting it firmly behind her.

“What? You’re not going to invite us in?” Amy asked, squinting.
River bit her lip. “It’s complicated. Timelines.” She answered vaguely, glancing to the curtained windows.

“Right…” Rory started, taking a step back, and leading them to the end of the pavement instead of River’s doorstep. The Doctor had been ranting about timelines earlier- and he wasn’t about to be the one to screw some up, especially not now. “Listen, The Doctor needs your help.”

River’s brow furrowed at that. “Well why didn’t Rose just call me then?”

Amy sighed. “Rose has been taken. Rose and their unborn child to be precise.” River sucked in a breath, but Amy muscled through. “Apparently, The Doctor isn’t as good at keeping people’s telephone numbers on hand.”

River rocked back on her heels and glanced over to her house. Rory squinted at her hesitation. “What’s wrong?” He asked.

River swallowed. “Birthday party going on inside- my mum’s.” She took a deep breath and looked back to them, shaking her head. “I’m sorry. I can’t.”

“I’m sure your mother would understand-” Amy started.

River cut her off. “No, it’s not that. Demons Run you’re heading into… I can’t be there.” She said, eyes full of regret. “Not until the end.”

“I’m sorry?” Rory asked incredulously, unable to conceal the bit of righteous anger behind the words.

“This is the Battle of Demon’s Run.” River explained sadly. “Their darkest hour. The Doctor and Rose will rise higher than ever before and then fall so much further…” She sounded like she was reciting a story- one she’d been told a million times, but that still managed to plague her dreams and raise gooseflesh on her arms. She took a deep breath. “Today’s the day they learn the truth.”

Both of them opened their mouths to protest, but behind them the TARDIS began materialising, and River started backing up, retreating towards her house. “I’m sorry.” She whispered, and her hand reached the door handle, she disappeared inside without another word, not waiting for a response.

Lorna Bucket was the third person to speak to Rose.

Days had passed now, since they took her daughter. She didn’t look up when the doors opened, and she heard small booted footsteps approaching her. “Hello, I’m sorry… I’m not really meant to be here.” She said by way of greeting.

Rose kept her eyes trained ahead of her. “Yeah, me neither.” She sighed. “But I have a feeling your being here was a bit more voluntary than mine.”

Lorna smirked half-heartedly at that. “It was a favor, to a friend of mine. She couldn’t be here. Wanted someone she trusted to…” She drifted off, and Rose’s brow furrowed- it wasn’t what she was expecting. Joining the army as a favor?

“Must be a pretty shitty friend.” Rose replied dryly.

“Oh, you know her actually.” Lorna said, and Rose’s head finally turned around to look at her at
that. “She’s from Earth. Mel-” She cut herself off. “River Song.”

Rose squinted at that. *What did River Song have to do with all this?* “You almost called her Melody then.” Rose observed carefully. “How do you know her real name? I didn’t think many people did.”

Lorna shrugged. “I’m the one who started calling her River. It’s… a long story. We met when we were just kids- in the Gamma Forest.”

Rose turned back to the window. “I’ve been there…” She muttered, remembering that the small human habitation was heaven-neutral, and again wondering what this Gamma Girl was doing as a cleric.

“I know,” Lorna said quietly. “We met.”

Rose turned back around at that, and she really saw the girl for the first time. Something about her face was vaguely familiar, but yet…

“I’m sure you don’t remember.” She said, shaking her head. “I was a lot younger-”

And then it clicked. “The orphanage,” she said. “You were one of the girls we saved right at the end of the war in those forests.” Rose studied her carefully. Lorna had been one of the ones who’d held onto her nearly the entire time they were running. Saving her had almost made her think she could tell The Doctor she was pregnant.

What the hell was she doing here?

Lorna smiled sadly, and held her hand out- in her palm was a small piece of dark green fabric. “It’s a prayer leaf.” She explained. “We believe, if you keep this with you, your child will always come home to you.” Rose took it from her carefully, and Lorna took a step back. “I’m sorry I can’t help more. Not right now, anyway.” She whispered, and then spun on her heel and practically sprinted from the room.

Rose looked down to the prayer leaf. In golden lettering a word was written in the Gamma language, but the TARDIS wasn’t translating it for her. Rose knew though, that it was her child’s name. Which didn’t surprise her really- she didn’t know herself what her daughter’s name was yet, she refused to name her without The Doctor, but if Lorna knew River, then she likely knew a lot more about Rose’s future than Rose did at the moment.

*Why though?*

She sighed and tucked the small bit of fabric into her pocket. Resolving to forget about it.

Dorium spun in a small circle in the center of his now-abandoned bar on Maldovarium. Ever since the news reached them that the Battle of Demon’s Run was approaching, everyone was going into hiding. “Goodbye.” He said sadly, clutching his case in his hands. He opened it quickly, and began shuffling through its contents.

“You appear to be closing down, Dorium.” A woman’s voice said from behind him, and he spun around to meet the face of Madame Kovarian, Colonel Manton, and three armed guards. He let out a long suffering sigh and sat down at the table, gesturing for her to join him, and after a moment she complied.
She studied him for a long while as he counted out (explosive) jewels—while guns were pointed at his head. “What have you heard?” She finally asked.

He glanced up to her. “That you pricked the side of a mighty beast, Madame Kovarian, and entirely failed to run.” He rolled his eyes at the guns in his face. “I admire your courage. I should like to admire it from afar.” He said, casually pushing the barrels away from him.

“We've waited weeks.” She argued. “He's done nothing.”

Dorium tilted his head. “Do you really think so? There are people all over this galaxy that owe those two a debt. By now, a few of them will have found a blue box waiting for them on their doorstep, poor devils.”

Colonel Manton raised his brows. “You think he's raising an army?”

“You think he isn't?” He shot back, and then sighed. “If that man is finally collecting on their debts, God help you, and God help his debtors.”

“Why?” Manton demanded gruffly.

Dorium looked up to the Colonel seriously. “Colonel Manton, all those stories you've heard about them, they're not stories, they're true. Really.” He scoffed at their hard expressions. “You're not telling me you don't know what's coming?”

Manton looked down to Madame Kovarian. “We're wasting our time here.” He grumbled.

She nodded, “agreed,” she said, and moved to stand, but stopped when Dorium spoke again.

“The asteroid, where you've made your base. Do you know why they call it Demon's Run?” He asked them knowingly.

Manton stepped forward, hand on his gun. “How do you know the location of our base?” He demanded.

Dorium rolled his eyes. “You're with the Headless Monks. They're old customers of mine.”

Kovarian wasn’t as surprised to find Dorium had known—Dorium knew most things. She was more bothered by his wanting to bring it up. “It's just some old saying.” She protested.

“A very old saying. The oldest.” He replied, setting her with a hard look as he recited the line from the centuries old poem. “Demons run when a good man goes to war.”

Rose watched from the large window overlooking the base as the clerics gathered around Colonel Manton. They were preparing for an attack. Rose could feel the energy coming off of them in waves, even from ten feet in the hair through bullet-proof glass guarding a zero room.

“He is not the devil. He is not a god. He is not a goblin, or a phantom or a trickster.” Manton said from his place on the stage. “The Doctor is a living, breathing man, and as I look around this room I know one thing… We're sure as hell going to fix that.”

Rose stomach twisted at that, and when she heard the door open and close behind her she didn’t have to look up to know it was Lorna. The girl had been visiting on and off for the past three weeks, and although Rose still knew next to nothing about her—she liked her.
“They’re talking like he’s famous.” Rose mumbled, keeping her eyes trained on the soldiers below her. “The Doctor’s not famous.”

Lorna tilted her head at that, considering. “You two meet a lot of people. Some of them remember. You’re like legends to them… Most of us grew up on stories about The Doctor and The Golden Rose.”

Rose turned to look at her with wide sorrowful eyes. “Then why are they trying to hurt us?”

“You’re powerful.” Lorna answered solemnly. “That amount of power… the amount of faith people have in you, everywhere. It scares people- makes them want to control it. Especially churches.”

The Time Lord shook her head. “That’s so… human.” She mumbled, and then looked back up to the young girl. “The Doctor’s coming.” Rose told her, and it was the first time she’d said it out loud- the words made her heart beat rapidly in her chest. “Just you make sure you're on the right side when he gets here.” Rose implored her.

Lorna sucked in a breath, but eventually, she nodded slowly. She gave a small smile before spinning on her heel and leaving. A moment later Rose saw her join ranks with the rest of the army below her.

Manton continued on in his speech. “On this day, in this place, the Doctor will fall.” He said, and the soldiers cheered. “The man who talks, the man who reasons, the man who lies, will meet the perfect answer.”

It took everything in Rose not scream at the words as the clerics called out their approval.

“Some of you have wondered why have we have allied ourselves with the Headless Monks.” Manton went on, and Rose did straighten up then, curious herself. “Perhaps you should have wondered why we call them Headless. It's time you knew what these guys have sacrificed for faith… As you all know, it is a Level One Heresy, punishable by death, to lower the hood of a Headless Monk. But by the divine grant of the Papal Mainframe herself, on this one and only occasion, I can show you the truth. Because these guys never can be persuaded.”

He stopped, to lower the hood of one of the three monks on the stage behind him. Beneath it there was no head- only raw, dried skin, tied in a crude knot where there should have been a neck. Rose’s stomach churned at the sight while the clerics gasped.

“They never can be afraid.” Manton went on, lowering the hood of the second with the same result. “And they can never, ever be-” He pulls back the third hood, but this time there was a head.

The head of The Doctor to be precise.

“Surprised!” The Doctor finished with a grin, and Rose practically sobbed with relief at seeing her husband. “Ha, ha! Hello, everyone. Guess who!” He took a step forward, holding his hands out. “Please, point a gun at me if it helps you relax.”

Rose sighed as at the words every single soldier raised their weapon- except Lorna. And every monk raised their red electrostatic swords.

The Doctor smirked, unfazed. “You're only human.” He quipped, and Rose was full to bursting at hearing the familiar comment.

Manton held his pistol directly in The Doctor’s face. “Doctor, you will come with me right now.”
He demanded, practically growled.

The Doctor tilted his head. “Three minutes, forty seconds.” He said, before turning and yelling towards the ceiling. “Rose Tyler! Get your coat!”

And then the lights switched off as The Doctor pulled the monk’s hood back up.

Rose leaned against the glass, squinting into the dark. A single light came on over the stage- the space where Colonel Manton was pointing his gun was now empty. He spun around frantically with the rest of the soldiers, as The Doctor’s voice echoed through the room.

“I’m not a phantom.” The Doctor said, and the clerics cocked their weapons, pointing them haphazardly about the room.

“Doctor?” Manton growled.

“I’m not a trick.” The Doctor continued, and more guns were loaded. “I’m a monk.”

“Doctor, show yourself!” Manton demanded, but it was too late. At the words, the soldiers began aiming their weapons at the monks- attempting to see under their hoods.

One of the soldiers was frantically yelling as he pointed his gun at one monk in particular. “It's him! He's here! It's him!” He insisted, and a moment later he fired his weapon- the monk fell to the floor.

“Weapons down!” Manton ordered angrily as the monks lifted their swords. “Do not fire!” He yelled, but a second later a cleric fell as a sword pierced his chest. “No!” He screamed, and more fell at the hands of the monks. “Do not fire. Nobody discharge their weapon in this room. Nobody! Do not fire!”

Rose heard the distant tell-tale sound of a sonic screwdriver. Her skin began to tingle.

“Stop. Wait. Listen to me.” Manton continued. “I am disarming my weapon pack. Monks, I do this in good faith. I am now unarmed.” He said, holding his gun in one hand and the weapon pack in the other. “All of you, discharge your weapon packs. The Doctor is trying to make fools of us. We are soldiers of God.” He looked around the room seriously. “We are not fools.”

Slowly, all of the soldiers disarmed, repeating the sentiment as they did. One by one they claimed “we are not fools” as they made themselves weaker and weaker with every click. The swords of the monks fell to their sides.

Rose’s vision turned gold as she felt the frequency in the room dissipate- The Wolf was returning.

Below her, all along the mezzanine levels, Silurian soldiers appeared, surrounding the now unarmed-army from above. On the ground level, blocking the exits, Jadoon appear. Next to Colonel Manton, Strax, the Sontaran The Doctor had saved ages ago, aimed a gun at his chest. “This base is now under our command.” He said, a bit smugly.

Jack Harkness waltzed up the stairs to the Colonel then, and Rose thought she might explode from the joy the sight brought. “Actually,” he smirked. “It’s under her control.” He said, and all eyes turned to Rose as she stood in the window- golden time energy swirling around her.

She pressed her palm against the glass, and it turned to dust on contact.

The army gasped and took steps back.
“I have a fleet out there.” Colonel Manton insisted, looking between Strax, Jack, and Rose. “If Demon's Run goes down, there's an automatic distress call.”

The Doctor reappeared then, standing on the landing of the steps to the third level. “Not if we knock out your communications array.” He practically sung. “And you’ve got incoming.”

The voice of the World War II airpilot came over the loudspeaker. “Danny Boy to the Doctor. Danny Boy to the Doctor.”

The Doctor smirked and held the comm up to his lips. “Give 'em hell, Danny Boy.” He ordered, and the asteroid rocked as spitfires rained down on the base.

“Target destroyed!” Danny informed them once their satellites had gone out, and The Doctor and Jack pumped their fists as Colonel Manton slumped in defeat.

“Now!” The Doctor called, and he set the entire room with a hard look. “Where is my daughter?”

Amy and Rory were running through the base. They’d seen Madame Kovarian run from the scene between the monks and the clerics, and they’d chased after her.

A small white travel cot was placed in front of her as she stood at an airlock onto a ship. Rory pulled the roman broadsword The Doctor had handed him. Surprised to find how familiar the blade felt, he aimed it at the woman’s neck.

Amy bent down to grab the child, and Kovarian stared down the end of Rory’s sword. “I have a crew of twenty. How do you expect to gain control of my ship?” She challenged.

Right on cue, the airlock opened and Captain Avery and his son stepped out, victorious. “This ship is ours, milady.” Avery said.

Amy smirked as she held the child in her arms. “That answer your question?” She quipped, walking past her. Avery, Rory, and Toby used their swords at Madame Kovarian’s back to force her to walk back into the base—towards The Doctor.

Rose was still glowing as she stood anxiously in the control room, biting her thumb nail as she faced The Doctor, his hands rubbing her arms comfortingly. Jack stood to their sides, offering a reassuring presence as they waited for news on their daughter.

Then finally, finally, the door opened and Amy stepped through, baby in arms.

Rose sobbed with relief as she ran for her child. She turned back to her husband as her daughter was finally back where she belonged. “You wanna meet Daddy?” She whispered to their little girl, and felt The Doctor’s awe as he stepped forward to hold his daughter for the first time.

He ran a reverent thumb across the soft skin of her cheek. “Hey, little one.” He said, tears blurring his vision as he greeted his daughter for the first time. The bond was instantly flooded by Rose’s love for him and their child, and with his for both of them as well. “You are so very loved.” He told her, choking on the words a bit.

He sniffed, and straightened up as the sentence reminded him who they were surrounded by. Madame Kovarian still stood at the end of swords via a pirate and a roman, and as he glared at her Strax entered with Colonel Manton at gunpoint. He handed their daughter back over to Rose, and gave them one more reverent look before joining Jack, Dorium, Vastra, and Jenny at the control
“Sorry, Colonel Manton. I lied. Three minutes forty two seconds.” The Doctor said by way of greeting.

Strax pressed his gun into the Colonel’s back. “Colonel Manton, you will give the order for your men to withdraw.”

“No.” The Doctor interrupted, sitting forward, “I want you to tell your men to run away.” He grinned manically, and only Rose saw the storm behind his eyes.

“You what?” Manton breathed incredulously.

The Doctor tilted his head down. “Those words, Run away. I want you to be famous for those exact words. I want people to call you Colonel Run Away. I want children laughing outside your door, because they've found the house of Colonel Run Away.” He stood up suddenly, coming directly into the Colonel’s face. “And, when people come to you, and ask if trying to get to me through the people I love—” He cut himself off as he was yelling now, but he didn’t bother to take a step back or even a deep breath. He only leveled the Colonel with a hard, hate-filled look. “-is in any way a good idea, I want you to tell them your name.” The Doctor was practically growling as pure unadulterated hate came off of him in waves. He was half-mad with the feeling. “Oh, look, I'm angry. That's new. I'm really not sure what's going to happen now.”

Rose reached out to put a hand on the small of his back, and Madame Kovarian caught the move, she smirked. “The anger of a good man is not a problem.” She said. “Good men have too many rules.”

The Doctor turned on her, his rage shifting. “Good men don't need rules.” He bit out, furious tears in his eyes. “Today is not the day to find out why I have so many.”

Behind him, Rose’s golden hue amplified once more, and Madame Kovarian swallowed. “Give the order.” She whispered, and when Manton looked at her with disbelief she repeated it more harshly. “Give the order, Colonel Run Away.”

Later, as the troops ‘ran away,’ The Doctor and Rose stood outside the TARDIS. Jack had gone off with the debtors to help them keep things in line, but Amy and Rory stood with them, looking down at the baby girl.

Rose let out a small laugh. “She has your eyes.” She told her her husband, as wide green eyes identical to his blinked curiously up at them.

Amy chuckled at the wonder that painted The Doctor’s face. “Does she have a name?”

Rose and The Doctor shared a look at that. “Time Lord names are written in the stars.” The Doctor explained. “Forged in the light of the timelines upon their birth.”

Rose gave a small half-hearted smile. “I haven’t looked yet.” She told them. “Didn’t feel right. Not until we were back home.”

The Doctor placed a kiss to her forehead at that. “We will be soon.” He whispered.

Vastra came around the corner then. “Doctor? Rose?” She called, getting their attention. “Come take a look. They're leaving. Demon's Run is ours without a drop of blood spilled… My friends,
you have never risen higher.”

Amy and Rory froze at the words, but Rose didn’t notice. She attempted to hand her baby off to Amy, but she immediately started crying. “Well, okay, that’s fine.” Rose chuckled, bringing her daughter back to her chest and shushing her. “We’ll just stay right here together next to the TARDIS while Daddy goes off to find out why we’re here, yeah?”

The Doctor smirked and nodded, placing another kiss to Rose’s head, and sparing one for his daughter as well before following Vastra back to the control room.

Dorium was typing quickly when he arrived. “You've hacked into their software, then?”

He nodded. “I believe I sold it to them.”

The Doctor clapped his hands together and squinted at all the monitors. “So what have we learned?”

“They've been scanning her since she was born.” Dorium replied, typing in a series of commands and pointing to the various screens that came up. “Very interested in her biology.”

The Doctor huffed. “Well, of course they would be. Only naturally born Human Time Lord in the universe. One would expect them to be interested. What I want to know is what they wanted with her.”

Dorium shook his head. “They’ve been working very hard…” He mumbled, eyes scanning all the files in front of him. “And yet they gave up so easily… Does that not bother anyone else?”

“Why do it?” The Doctor continued as if he hadn’t heard him.

“A weapon?” Vastra suggested mildly.

The Doctor spun around at that, brand new fatherly instincts kicking into high gear. “What? Why would a Time Lord be a weapon?” He demanded incredulously.

Vastra squinted at him. “Well, they’ve see you and Rose.”

The Doctor pulled his chin back. “Us?” He repeated, mind racing as he sat down heavily.

“This was too easy.” Dorium muttered, not noticing the distressed husband and father next to him. “There’s something wrong here.”

Vastra nodded in agreement. “You’re right, Mr. Maldovar,” she said. “We should get back to the others.”

They left, but The Doctor barely noticed. “Us?”

Soon after The Doctor left, Jack came around the corner- holding Lorna Bucket by the collar. “I found her listening at the door.” He said, holding the young cleric out to Rose.

She hesitated for half a second, but eventually smiled. “It’s alright, Jack,” she said. “I know Lorna.”

“Rose, are you sure?” Rory asked, moving to step between her and the cleric.
Rose smirked. “Yeah, I’m sure. She knows River. Thank you.” She said, resting her free hand on Rory’s arm placatingly while her other continued to support her baby. Rory still looked nervous as he glanced between the soldier and the mother, but he eventually gave a short nod and stepped aside.

Jack didn’t let go of Lorna until Rose approached, and even still he continued to stand behind her with his arms crossed and back straight. “Rose, listen,” she started. “I heard her talking. This is a trap. Why would I lie to you?”

Rory scoffed. “Well, you might want to take a look at your uniform.”

Lorna looked over Rose’s shoulder to glare at him. “The only reason I joined the clerics was so I could meet The Doctor and Rose again.”

Jack raised his brows. “You wanted to meet them, so you joined an army to fight them?” He asked her incredulously. “Isn’t that a bit backwards?”

Lorna squinted at him. “Well, how else do you meet great warriors?”

Rose pulled her chin back at that, taking a small step backwards as she did. “Warriors?” She repeated, voice small.

And then the lights went out.

The Doctor’s mind was racing- running through one memory after another in a desperate attempt to understand what was going on. He focused on America- where it all began. The Silence. The little girl...

“Of course, it’s possible she’s not just any little girl.”

“Well, I’d say she’s human, going by the life support software… But she climbed out of this suit. Like, she forced her way out. Incredibly strong for a four year old…”

“Incredibly strong and running away…. I like her.”

“We should be trying to find her.”

“I have the strangest feeling she’s going to find us.”

The Doctor nearly hit himself as the pieces began falling together. Just as the answer felt like it was on the tip of his tongue though- the screen behind him flickered on, and the wretched face of Madame Kovarian greeted him.

“I see you accessed our files. Do you understand yet?” She smirked as his heart rates accelerated- ears ringing with unchecked hatred. “Oh, don't worry, I'm a long way away. But I like to keep tabs on you. The child, then…”

“What do you want with our daughter?” He growled.

She smiled evilly, shaking her head. “Only to bring you down, Doctor. No one should have more power than God. Taking your daughter- making her a servant of God in Heaven’s wars. It is proof that you are not invisible. That the Bad Wolf is not more powerful. That sacred faith should only be placed in.”
“What?” The Doctor scoffed. “Your capable hands?”

She tilted her head, keeping her expression neutral. “The church’s.” She corrected him mildly.

He made an indignant sound at that. “Well, you failed.” He practically spit back at her. “We have our daughter and you’ve tucked tail and run! And I swear you’re never coming anywhere near my daughter ever again.”

Madame Kovarian smirked- a disquieting angle in her already repugnant features. “Oh, Doctor. Fooling you once was a joy, but fooling you twice- the same way? It’s a privilege.”

She laughed, and it was as if he’d been doused with ice cold water.

“ROSE!” He screamed, sprinting from the room as it all finally made horrifying sense.

Vastra and Dorium arrived just as a ring of energy appeared around the TARDIS.

“What’s that?” Amy asked, voice deep with fear as she stared at the faint glimmering light now surrounding their way out.

Vastra stepped forward, hesitantly tapping the light, she hissed and pulled her hand back as a shock ran through her. “A force field.” She answered, turning to look at Rose for orders.

Rose opened her mouth to try and say something (anything), but they were all distracted as a loud clanging noise rang out along the empty base. Lorna’s jaw twitched, and she crossed her arms. “And those are the doors- locking.” She added.

Vastra spun in a small circle, backing up as she did to stand protectively in front of Rose and her baby. “Apparently we're not leaving.” She said, drawing her weapon.

An odd, humming sort of chant began then, surrounding them in eerie dark tones. “Is that the monks?” Rory asked, holding his sword out in front of him. Behind him, Jack cocked his gun.


Rose clutched her daughter to her chest at the words, closing her eyes. Silently, she called for The Doctor, but whatever it was he was doing- it wasn’t paying attention to her. She whispered something in Gallifreyan- a sort of prayer from the godless species. She begged for favor from the infinite universe and the infinite timelines that surrounded them. Distantly, she felt Amy’s hand land on her shoulder.

“We don't have to fight them.” Dorium said. “I'm friends to the Monks. They know me.”

Rory looked to the blue man sideways. “Yeah, and they know you just sold them out to The Doctor.”

Dorium waved him off. “Oh, they'll understand- it's only me.” He scoffed, and began to walk forward. “Only silly old me!” He called, holding his arms out as he came to them. “You understand, don't you?”

Rose was barely paying attention to him as she continued to whisper in Gallifreyan. Her baby started crying as the chanting got louder.

“Mister Maldovar, get back here!” Vastra hissed.
“Arm yourself, fool!” Strax yelled.

“Dorium!” Rory and Jack said together.

But he wouldn’t listen. He was too pompous for his own good- a trait well needed in the blackmarket, but one more deadly than any weapon on the battlefield. He walked unarmed into the reach of the electrically-charged swords of the monks… And one quick sweep his head was sliced from his body. It rolled while his body continued standing- now walking back towards them.

“Mister Maldovar?” Vastra asked.

“Dorium?” Rory questioned.

But it didn’t matter. Dorium was gone now. And the child was once more at risk.

Vastra pushed Rose and Amy behind her and Jenny. “The child.” She said, raising her gun. “At all costs, protect the child!”

Lorna, Jack, Strax, and Rory all poised their weapons at that.

Rose had tears streaming down her face, and she began to glow golden. The timelines were swirling out around her like a tornado now. Golden streams of time’s sand and water twisted in and out of view. Without her realising it, her feet left the ground. She held her free hand out in front of her and the monks stopped in their tracks- suddenly unable to move their legs.

When she spoke, it was dual toned, ringing with the sounds of time, the echoing voice filled the room.

“Demons run when a good man goes to war.” The Bad Wolf recited. “Night will fall and drown the sun, when a good man goes to war.”

The Doctor careened around the corner, still calling his wife’s name frantically. He screeched to a halt though, when he saw her- hovering above the rest, surrounded by the vortex, clutching their child in her arms.

It was too late.

She turned to him, and he saw the tears staining her cheeks- golden now. “Friendship dies and true love lies.” She whispered, though it rung out loudly through the silence. “Night will fall, and the dark will rise, when a good man goes to war.”

The Doctor choked on a sob. Everyone was staring at her in awe, but he knew what was coming.

Rose’s own voice was more prevalent as she said the last line of the poem, obvious misery mingling with the more obvious power she held. “Demons run, but count the cost.” She sobbed. “The battle’s won, but the child is lost.”

The monks turned to dust.

The baby in her arms turned to Flesh.

And as Rose screamed she crashed back down to the ground. Sobs wracked her body as she sat on her knees, clutching her arms to her chest. Tears fell like rivers and the golden light of time faded as despair overcame her every nerve ending- her entire being. How many times? She begged the universe. How many times would she have to lose her baby?
Distantly, she felt her husband come next to her, and she fell into his chest on impulse. Both of them cried for their daughter despite the audience, and silent tears were shed by their friends as well.

Minutes or hours passed. It was hard to tell when all that was left in the world was misery.

Then a small, unassuming ‘pop’ came from their left. They all looked over at the noise though— it felt out of place. Too normal for a situation full of so much pain.

River Song stood there.

Lorna instantly blew out a long breath, running to fling her arms around her old friend. River caught her round the waist and hugged her quickly, whispering a small thank you into her hair before letting go and pushing her gently to the side. Lorna gave a short nod of understanding before moving out of the way.

The Doctor stood slowly, setting the young girl with a hard look as he brought Rose to her feet as well. “Where the hell have you been?” He bit out, tears still making silent progression down his cheeks. Rose’s eyes were red rimmed, and she shook as sobs continued to threaten her already fragile composure.

“I’m sorry.” She whispered.

Rose shook her head vehemently. “You told me this was coming. You— you knew.”

River closed her eyes and took a deep breath. When she opened her eyes, she spoke quietly— carefully. “Isathero-ke z’ro esvetrellioahtse.” She said the familiar Gallifreyan phrase, tilting her head down to look at them meaningfully.

Rose’s hands curled into fists. “What does that mean?” She demanded.

The Doctor, however, looked down as his mind began turning at a million miles an hour. He reached for Rose’s hand as he answered her. “It is written the the stars.” He translated the ancient saying, turning to look at his wife, and pulling her around to face him. “Our daughter’s name. It’s written in the stars.”

“What does that matter now? She isn’t here—” Rose started to argue.

“It’s an answer.” The Doctor interrupted her. “It’s one single answer in a sea of endless questions. It’s all we have right now.”

She stared at him for a long moment at that, eyes searching his. Eventually though, she sighed, and took his other hand in hers as they closed their eyes. Together, they walked hand and hand along the timelines.

They paused when they came to it, the small secret space, clothed in light, along their daughter’s timeline.

And then there it was. Plain as day. Magnificent as night. Her Gallifreyan birth name.

*Aemeliastell’aponse*  
Amelia Pond.
Chapter End Notes

*coughs*

Believe it or not this has been the plan since the beginning... It's all there.

I'll be answering as many questions as I can in the comments. Though A LOT will be answered in the next chapter.

Thank you so so much for all your lovely comments ♥ I have been so excited for MONTHS to share this change with you guys.

(Please don't hate me).
Count the Cost

Chapter Summary

Of healing and understanding space and time loops.

(Includes the rewrite of Red Nose Day Comic Relief mini-Special: Time)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Rose gasped as The Doctor choked on his own air. They stepped back from each other and turned slowly to stare at Amy incredulously. The Doctor opened and closed his mouth a few times, but ultimately failed in his attempt to find words. Tears hovered on the edges of his vision as she reached for Rose’s hand again- her own tears falling in earnest now, entirely without her permission.

Amy’s eyes flickered between the two of them, brow furrowing in confusion. “What?” She asked. “What is it? What’s her name?” They continued to just stare at her. “Why are you two looking at me like that?”

The Doctor cleared his throat. “Alright, everyone, back in the TARDIS.” He ordered them all quietly, using the sonic to disable the force field. He used his arms to herd them all through the doors while Rose ran ahead of him to start the dematerialisation process- throwing herself into the familiar motions in order to keep her mind from falling too far down the hole it was already teetering on the edge of.

The Doctor shut the doors behind him. “Home then.” He said, jumping up the stairs to start helping Rose fly the ship.

“You’re just giving up?” Vastra asked, eyes wide with disbelief.

Rose pulled the lever sending them into the vortex and rubbed at her temples. “No- we just- we need to-” she cut herself off as her emotions got the better of her again, and she bit back a sob.

The Doctor rested a hand on her shoulder. “We need to regroup.” He said, with an air of finality in his voice. They all nodded (albeit reluctantly), and allowed the Time Lords to drop them off in their respective places.

After Jack gave Rose a firm hug and made her promise to call soon, The Doctor turned to Melody and Lorna. “What about you two? Where to?” He asked.

“Just the same place you sent Amy and Rory to. Lorna can stay with me and I’ll take her back to the Gamma Forest later.” Melody answered, holding her wrist up for emphasis.

“Wait, hold on,” Amy interrupted as The Doctor nodded and turned to the console. “I still don’t understand. What did you have to do with this, River? Why couldn’t you have turned up until the end?”

The Doctor, who thought he probably already knew the answer to that one, looked to Melody...
warningly- Amy didn’t need two bombshells dropped on her today. Melody nodded to her Gramps in understanding. “I’ll tell you later.” She promised Amy, and a second later the TARDIS landed with another soft thud.

She went over to Rose and grabbed her hands before she left. “Everything is going to be okay.” She whispered.

Tears were still flowing from Rose’s eyes with reckless abandon- like a tap that refused to be turned off no matter how hard she tried. She sniffed miserably, but nodded nonetheless, pulling the young girl into a hug. “Thank you, Melody.” She whispered, and Mel’s heart tightened at being called by the right name- and it not sounding wrong. Not now that they know. She hugged her Grandma tightly before grabbing Lorna’s hand and leading her off the TARDIS.

When they were back in the time vortex, Rose sat heavily against the console. Amy sat in front of her on the jumpseat- watching her curiously, waiting for answers with Rory next to her. The Doctor came and wrapped an arm around Rose’s shoulders.

“Alright, what’s with all the bloody staring? What aren’t you telling me?” Amy demanded finally, now that they didn’t have company.

Rose let out a long breath, steeling herself, she pulled out the prayer leaf Lorna had given her. She held it in her palm. The language translated easily now. *Amelia* was written across the dark green fabric in bright gold lettering. “Lorna, she was from the Gamma Forests,” Rose started, keeping her eyes trained on the cloth. “In their culture they believed in prayer leafs- mums would carry them around when their children joined the war. They believed the leaves would bring their children back to them. Lorna made me this one.” She took a deep breath. “I couldn’t read it at first- not without the TARDIS translating. But it has our daughter’s name on it.”

Amy’s eyes flickered down to the fabric in Rose’s hand- the word still just out of her view. “Okay…” She said. “Why are you two acting like her name is the end of the world? It’s just a name, isn’t it?”

Instead of answering that, Rose folded the prayer leaf and handed it to her wordlessly. Amy furrowed her brow at their serious expressions as she took it from her carefully. “You’re scaring me now.” She whispered, she’d meant for it to sound light but it came out heavy and ominous.

Rose wiped at her tears, and The Doctor nodded to the prayer leaf encouragingly. Amy sighed and opened it, figuring it really couldn’t be that bad. When she found her own name staring back at her though, she stared down at it confusedly. She could suddenly feel a headache blooming right behind her eyes.

“So… you named your daughter after Amy?” Rory asked them as he looked over his wife’s shoulder. “What’s the big deal?”

Amy’s head was swimming. She shook it in an attempt to clear it, but the thoughts wouldn’t stop coming. *She never had parents. She used to pretend Rose and The Doctor were her parents. When he told her to remember her parents to bring them back- she brought them back instead. Where had Aunt Sharon gotten custody of her? Where was she before Aunt Sharon? She hadn’t met her aunt until she was five… What happened before-*

Amy winced and grabbed at her head. Rory’s hand fell to her back, and Rose appeared crouching in front of her, grabbing her hands. “Amy, it’s okay.” Rose said, and she was crying again.

“My head hurts, Rose. What’s happening? What does this mean?” She begged her, clutching the
prayer leaf in her hand.

The Doctor tapped Rory on the shoulder and got him to vacate the seat next to Amy, so he went to put his hands on her shoulders while The Doctor sat down beside her. “Shh…” He said quietly, “You’re attempting to access locked memories with a perception filter around them.” He explained, holding his hands out to her. “I can help you. But you have to trust me.”

Amy turned to look at him, eyes full of fear and confusion. She tightened her grip on Rose’s hands and nodded to him, not breaking eye contact with him until his fingers fell to her temples and her eyes snapped shut as the long-buried memories flooded her.

---

“This is The Doctor,” Madame Kovarian told a two year old Amelia Pond as she sat across from her in the cold metal room at the cold metal table in the cold metal chair. “He is a very bad man.”

Amelia furrowed her small brow as she studied the picture of the bow tied man in front of her. He certainly didn’t look bad- not like Madame Kovarian and the army men did. The whole idea just sat wrong in her head. “Why?” She asked.

Madame Kovarian looked down at the little girl whose eyes just barely came over the edge of the table. “Because he believes he is more powerful than God.” She answered.

Amelia looked up to her with wide eyes. “Is he?”

“Of course not, girl.” She snapped. “No one is more powerful than God.”

Amelia frowned. “I’ve told you my name is-”

“I know what you’ve said.” Madame Kovarian cut her off angrily. “And I’ve told you it isn’t. Now stop speaking with that horrible accent.”

Amelia wrinkled her nose at her. She was quite sure that that was her name. And she couldn’t help how she spoke. But it’s an argument that’s been had since she was able to speak. Madame Kovarian claimed she didn’t have a name- that her parents didn’t love her enough to give her one. That idea didn’t sit right in Amelia’s head either.

Madame Kovarian huffed and pulled out another picture. “This is Rose Tyler.” She said, sliding the picture across the table. “She is a very bad woman.”

Amelia pulled the photograph down from the table, gripping it with her small hands, she set it on her lap and ran a finger down the golden hair of the woman. “She’s pretty.” Amelia whispered.

Madame Kovarian’s nostrils flared.

At three years old, Amelia’s constant questioning of their teachings proved it impossible to get anything through her stubborn overdeveloped Time Lord brain. Their mission was proving to be more difficult than they originally thought- weren’t children supposed to be moldable?

Amelia was sat on the floor, back against a wall, reading a random pamphlet she’d found in the bin when she overheard two of the clerics talking.
“I don’t know what Kovarian was expecting honestly. I mean, she saw the results. That little girl is a *Time Lord*. And more than that— the daughter of *The Doctor* and Rose Tyler. I mean, c’mon.”

Amelia clapped her hand over her mouth to keep from gasping. The other cleric snorted. “Yeah man, I’d be willing to bet my next week’s paycheck that Rose managed to protect that child somehow. I mean, she’s the *Bad Wolf*. I don’t care how protected that room was, she wouldn’t have just handed over her daughter like that.”

Amelia sat there wide-eyed as the cleric’s voices faded off as they walked in the other direction.

Madame Kovarian’s heeled footsteps reached her, and she stood up, adjusting her dress.

“Now, child, we will be doing something a bit differently this time.” She said by way of greeting, unlocking the door to the examination room.

Amelia peeked around the door frame, and inside on top of the usual cold metal table, sat a sort of helmet with all kinds of wires coming out of it, hooked up to monitors. “What’s that?” She asked, stepping hesitantly into the room.

Madame Kovarian pushed her towards her usual cold metal seat, and Amelia huffed as she complied, mind still swimming with the conversation she’d overheard. Kovarian set the helmet over Amelia’s head, and she furrowed her brow, looking up at the massive thing through her lashes.

“We are servants of God, child.” Madame Kovarian answered as she worked adjusting the wires and flipping on monitors. “When a servant is not compliant, we must know why.”

Amelia squinted at her. “How does that-”

She cut herself off as a sudden pounding went through her head— like someone was trying to enter it. She squeezed her eyes shut against the horrible sensation. “What’s happening?” She begged, gritting her teeth together, small hands clenching around the table’s edge.

“Don’t fight it, child.” Madame Kovarian demanded.

Tears sprang to her eyes. “Please…” She whispered, but Madame Kovarian only turned a knob up. In Amelia’s head a war was waging. A wolf was growling— guarding her mind against the intrusion. She screamed, and all the power in the entire military base blew out.

After that, they kept trying to get inside her head— to influence her from the inside, but they were having to drag her to the room now kicking and screaming as they strapped her into the chair and forced the helmet over her head.

Three months of this weekly battle passed, and when the eleventh cleric walked out of there with a broken bone, Madame Kovarian ordered Amelia be sent to an American orphanage, watched over by the Silence, until NASA finished its spacesuits.

The clerics weren’t supposed to talk to her, but Amelia watched as one of them packed her bags. Right when she was supposed to be finished, she fished a small piece of fabric from her pocket. Amelia lifted her chin up to try and get a better look as the cleric put it in her bag. “What’s that?” She asked, not expecting an answer.

The dark haired girl turned to her and pressed a finger to her lips. “It’s your father’s.” She
whispered, before turning on her heel and retreating from the room.

Amelia ran to the bag and pulled the fabric out, examining the red bow tie with barely contained wonder.

The orphanage was already old and abandoned when Amelia arrived. And Dr. Renfrew was fidgety and odd. She’d been told her coming here was a punishment. That she wasn’t being a good servant of God. But it was the first time in her life that Madame Kovarian wasn’t breathing over her shoulder. So she saw the drafty old building as more of a vacation home than a prison.

The room already had random stray toys from whatever former children had lived in it, and she worked on straightening it all out. The clerics had also put a random assortment of photographs on the chest of drawers. A few of them were of her, the pictures they’d taken in documenting her development, but most were just of random Earth places she’d never been. She assumed it was so Dr. Renfrew wouldn’t ask any more questions about her.

She pulled the bow tie from her pocket and set it against one of her baby photos.

Only a month passed in that creepy old house before they were shoving her into the spacesuit.

Then she nearly killed her parents.

And she ran.

She ran so fast. They wouldn’t want her now. Madame Kovarian and the Silence had made her wrong. They’d broken her. She wasn’t a Time Lord. She couldn’t save the world like they did. She wasn’t Aemeliastell’laponse. She was just Amelia Pond.

She reached the water’s edge, breathing heavily. Free for the first time in her life. She closed her eyes and she begged the universe that she could just forget it all. That she’d open her eyes and be far away. She’d be normal human girl Amelia Pond and no one could ever find her and hurt her again.

The Wolf inside her glowed. Time energy swirled around her. And when she opened her eyes the last five years of her life faded like a dream.

She was in 1994 Scotland, her Aunt Sharon (with fake memories planted inside her by a young powerful telepath), was downstairs preparing for a move to Leadworth.

---

Amy gasped for air, feeling like she’d just been hit by a train. The Doctor and Rose were stood in front of her, and without a word she flung herself at them, wrapping her arms around their shoulders and sobbing. “I’m so sorry.” She cried.

Rose wrapped an arm around her daughter’s waist. “No, we’re sorry. We failed you Amy.”

Amy shook her head vehemently and pulled back so she could look at them as she wiped her tears. “I knew. I knew you were my parents when I got out of that spacesuit in America but I ran anyway.
I was so scared you wouldn’t want me, and I ran.” She sniffed miserably. “Then I just wished that I could forget it all and just be human and the next thing I knew I was in Scotland with Aunt Sharon and I didn’t even remember. I’d just forgotten all of it.”

The Doctor took her hand in his. “Adolescent telepathy that wasn’t helped along by two telepathic parents is already unpredictable. That mixed with Rose safeguarding your head with Bad Wolf… it isn’t your fault, Amelia.”

“Besides,” Rose said, taking her other hand. “I was already a flesh avatar by the time you escaped the spacesuit. That would have caused a massive paradox.”

“I know where they took me as a baby. Can’t we just go save me before any of it happened? You get your baby back and I’ll have a life on the TARDIS with you two and they don’t get to win—”

“No, Amelia.” Rose whispered, reaching forward to wipe the tears from her daughter’s face. “That would never work. It’s a paradox even I wouldn’t be able to contain. Besides, saving you then means losing you now.”

Amy shook her head. “Isn’t that worth it? You two shouldn’t have to lose another baby.”

“No, you’re right. We shouldn’t.” The Doctor said. “It isn’t fair. For us, or for you. But we wouldn’t risk losing you now, Amy, for your past self. You’re still our daughter, no matter how old you are.”

“But,” Amy protested, “you’re crying! You’re upset! I can fix it!”

Rose wiped her tears away with a pathetic sort of chuckle. “Amy, of course I’m crying. Somewhere in time and space my infant daughter is being held against her will by some truly despicable people. That will always be the case. No matter how long I live.” She sniffed and took Amy’s hands in hers. “But here you are. Alive and well. I won’t risk that, Amelia. I wouldn’t risk you, right now, for anything. And that includes your past. Even if we could hold that paradox together I wouldn’t.”

Rory cleared his throat awkwardly at that, and raised his hand from where he was still stood behind the jump seat. “Sorry. I’m… lost. What’s happened?”

The small family laughed at that, and The Doctor rocked back on his heels. “How about we explain with a cuppa in the library, hm?” He suggested, raising his eyebrows.

The four of them sat on the floor of the library, gathered around the fireplace with blankets and warm mugs of tea.

“So…” Rory said slowly, looking around at all of them as they finished their long-winded explanation. He nodded to his wife. “You’re a Time Lord.”

“Human Time Lord.” The Doctor amended with a tilt of his head.

Rory nodded shortly in thanks. “And you’re her parents. Amy’s the baby you just had… But the one we saved was a Flesh avatar. And they took the real Amy to a military base to raise… until eventually leaving her at the orphanage in Florida, where they forced her into the spacesuit that was trying to kill us nine months ago.”

Amy nodded. “And when I escaped I accidentally made myself forget everything that had
happened since I was born. Woke up in 1994 Scotland with a fake aunt.”

Rory furrowed his brow, pulling his chin back. “Why Sharon though?” He asked, with an air of distaste.

Rose answered that one. “That was probably Bad Wolf- looking out for the timelines. Sharon was likely already in the process of moving when Amy locked her own memories. The timelines needed a reason for Amelia’s Scottish accent, and for her to be in Leadworth in time to close the loop.” She shrugged. “Sharon wouldn’t have been my first choice for guardian, but she was the safest for Amy’s timeline.”

Rory turned to Amy. “So does that mean you’re telepathic then?”

Amy’s eyes flickered over to her parents at that, and The Doctor sat forward as he answered. “Dormant telepathic centres.” He said. “You’re mind switched off your telepathy in order to protect you. It will likely come back on now though- with time.”

Amy nodded slowly, furrowing her brows as she attempted to make her mind to do something, but sighed when the effort just have her a headache.

Rory sat forward suddenly. “Wait, hold on. Amy do you realise what this means?” He grabbed her hands, looking at his wife seriously.

Amy held her breath. She was expecting to hear about her extended timeline and his human one. The beginning to a long conversation about their future that she wasn’t at all ready to hear. She shook her head., not meaning that she didn’t know, but rather that she didn’t want to talk about it- not yet.

Rory went on though. “Amy, this means you aren’t really Scottish.” He told her solemnly.

Amy paled, pulling her hands back from him. “Oh my god.” She muttered, looking like her entire worldview had just completely collapsed around her. Nevermind that she wasn’t human - she wasn’t Scottish.

The three of them laughed good-naturedly at her horrified expression.

Despite that night in the library feeling more like a happy reunion though, the air in the TARDIS was still bittersweet after that.

Rose would still periodically find herself crying over the loss of her child, while The Doctor would beat himself up over it. If not for not seeing Kovarian’s plan sooner, than rather the twelve years he let pass after meeting young Amelia- his daughter, who he abandoned, before coming back.

“We couldn’t have known.” Rose would whisper as they laid awake at night.

“We should have.” He’d throw back.

“We couldn’t.” She’d repeat determinedly.

Amy would wander the TARDIS corridors at night (she never really slept much, but it was far less now), running her hand along the wall, mourning the happy childhood she had taken away from
her.

She’d imagine her three-year-old self, running down the corridors, Rose chasing after her, The Doctor coming around the corner, scooping her up off her feet as she screeched and laughed with delight.

She’d find a tear making silent progression down her cheek.

She found Rose late one night as she was wandering around. She was sitting at the TARDIS doors, feet dangling off the side as she looked out into the stars. It was a sight Amy was familiar with, as it was hardly the first time she’s caught Rose lost in thought this way, and Amy smirked as she moved to join her.

“Hey,” she whispered as she sat down, bumping her mum’s shoulder a bit as she did.

Rose looked up a gave a little half-hearted smile in return. “Hey,” she whispered back.

“What’s got you out here tonight then?” Amy asked, though she already suspected the answer.

Rose shrugged. “Same as you, I’d bet.” She answered, looking to her daughter knowingly as she did. Amy blushed and nodded, and Rose sighed as her eyes fell back to the stars. “We didn’t get to raise you, Amy.”

“I know.” Amy said quietly. “It’s okay.”

Rose shook her head. “No, it isn’t.”

Amy let out a long breath and followed Rose’s gaze, allowing a silence to pass over them before she spoke again. “You were there though.” She said eventually. “I used to-” she cleared her throat, “I used to pretend you two were there all the time. That you were my parents. I guess now I know that was my subconscious seeping through yeah?” She shook her head and laughed a little. “Even though you couldn’t be there, you were still there- sort of.” She shrugged helplessly and looked over to her. “I know it’s not a replacement to you getting to raise me, but it meant a lot to me- my little imaginary versions of you two. I used to tell you everything.”

Rose sniffed and fought back tears. “You didn’t hate us?” She asked.

Amy gave a shuddering laugh at that. “No, not even a little bit. Even when I got older I couldn’t bring myself to. Just didn’t sit right it my head- picturing you as a villain. Even when I was really little. Madame Kovarian would get so mad at me because she’d tell me you were a bad person and I just wouldn’t believe it.”

Rose smiled half-heartedly at that and Amy sighed, leaning her head on her shoulder. “I’m sorry I ran away in America.” She whispered eventually.

Rose shook her head. “Don’t be. I don’t blame you. You were scared. I’m sorry we didn’t go after you. And I’m sorry when we did find you we let twelve years pass.”

“I know you didn’t mean to.” Amy replied, and then sighed when Rose didn’t answer. “Can we just agree to stop blaming ourselves?”

Rose laughed and wiped a treacherous from her cheek. “We can certainly try.” She said.
Amy sat up straight suddenly as she remembered something. “Actually, could we land for a second?” She asked, looking behind her to the console. “I have something I want to show you.”

Rose shrugged and stood up. “I guess so.” She answered, pulling Amy to her feet as well, and leading her up the stairs. “Where to?”

“Just my old bedroom.”

Rose gave her daughter a curious look at that, but otherwise didn’t reply as she began shifting the TARDIS back into the time vortex. The Doctor came around the corner just as they were materialising in Leadworth.

“Late night adventuring?” He asked as he came up the stairs, using a flannel to wipe the grease stains from whatever he’d been working on off his hands.

“Something like that.” Amy breathed, running to the doors as soon as she felt the familiar thud of their arrival, her parents following after her more slowly.

Rose laughed a little when right at their feet a little cardboard version of the TARDIS sat next to the real thing. She picked it up and her chest tightened at the combination of her young daughter’s handiwork and artistry- her parents’ daughter all around. She hugged the small thing to her stomach, and breathed deeply to keep from crying as she looked around the room.

Amy was shuffling madly through some drawers in the corner in pursuit of something, so Rose and The Doctor wandered over to her desk where a number of her other art projects sat. The Doctor chuckled as he picked up a sock-puppet version of his wife and held it up to her face in comparison. “The resemblance is uncanny.” He told her with a cheeky grin, and Rose laughed as she batted away the button-eyed, yarn-haired, golden-glittered monstrosity.

She picked up the googly-eyed sock version of him. “Oh, I think she got your likeness quite well.” She commented, rattling the eyes a bit for emphasis and giggling as he huffed and adjusted his bow tie.

“Aha!” Amy exclaimed, pulling the two of them back to her as she held up a piece of the paper triumphantly. She looked down to it as she spoke them. “In school, they told us to draw our family, but before they did- they told us that family was the people who cared about you.” She sighed and held the paper out to them. “So I drew you two.”

Rose and The Doctor both sucked in a breath as they took it from her. On the paper was a drawing promptly tilted “My Family” in big, uneven letters, and below it little crayon stick-figure versions of them stood, hand-in-hand, each one of them labeled. But instead of ‘Rose’ over the pink-and-yellow one, or ‘the Doctor’ over the bow-tied figure, they were promptly named ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad,’ with a little red head between them- her name spelled like ‘Aemelia.’

Rose laughed as tears blurred her vision. “I’m not glowing.” She noted.

“And I’m not raggedy.” The Doctor added, sounding much the same as Rose did as they both struggled to fight back tears.

Amy nodded. “Yep, even got the bow tie.” She said, letting out the breath she’d been holding. “I drew that before I met you.” She told them, and smiled awkwardly when their heads snapped up to look at her. “I forgot about it for a long time. It was right after I locked my memories so I guess a bit of them came through…” She shrugged. “I think everyone figured they were the parents I said were dead. Actually one therapist did say that my hallucinations of you two was my attempt to
bring back-”

Rose cut her off rambling as she flung her arms around her in a fierce hug. “Thank you for showing us this.” She whispered. “I’m sorry we couldn’t really be there.”

Amy sniffed and tucked her face into her mum’s shoulder. “It’s okay. I’m sorry too.” She said, and held her hand out for her dad to join them.

He did, though he kept the drawing firmly in place in his other hand, like he was afraid that if he let go this small semblance of peace may disappear with it.

When they went back into the TARDIS, the drawing was hung proudly on the fridge.

And there were good times too. Times when they could just step back from it all and pretend it’s normal- maybe even convince themselves for a while that they were going to be able to stop mourning eventually.

The Doctor had clapped his hands together and declared they needed “a family outing” before whisking them off to 68th century terraformed Venus, where the atmospheric pressure meant that all the cities were massive floating spheres in the bright purple sky.

(And they had amazing ice-cream.)

The four of them sat around one of the small café tables outside the creamery, enjoying their exotically flavoured, fluorescent frozen treats. The Doctor pointed up to the moonless sky after taking another bite of the bright purple berry ice cream. “That big bright star there,” he said, gesturing the the part of the sky not illuminated by the perpetually setting sun. “That’s Earth. Little more than a wasteland nowadays.”

“Oh, lovely.” Amy replied sarcastically as she looked up to her planet (well, sort of her planet anyway). The Doctor chuckled at her tone and she looked back down to grin cheekily at him.

A random Venusian stranger stopped at their table then- it was a woman, the one who’d been sitting opposite them earlier. “Can I just say,” she started, with a accent somewhere between British and American, and looking mostly to Rose as she spoke, “you have a beautiful family.”

Rose positively beamed at that. “Oh, thank you!” She exclaimed, blushing slightly.

“You aren’t from here are you?” She asked, looking between them all with a knowing smile.

“Nah,” The Doctor answered, leaning back in his chair as he smirked. “We’re not really from much of anywhere. We’re travellers.” He held his hand out to her politely. “I’m The Doctor, by the way. This is my wife, Rose, our daughter, Amy, and our son-in-law, Rory.”

Amy flushed red. It was the first time either of them had introduced her as their daughter, and the words made a warm feeling spread all the way down to her toes as her heart swelled. Next to her she heard Rory choke on his ice cream at the apparent sudden realisation that Rose and The Doctor were his in-laws, and she patted his arm consolingly as she grinned at her parents.

The Venusian woman didn’t seem to notice any of this though, and she nodded to them all in turn as she shook The Doctor’s hand. “I’m Khalee. Oh! Actually…” She drifted off as she started rummaging through her bag, and she made a small triumphant sound when she pulled out a flyer, placing it on the table for them to see. “If you’re looking to see some of the local culture, the
university is having a fair tonight. Carnival games and all that sort of stuff. You all should totally stop by!”

Rose picked up the flyer interestedly- free and open to the public it stated. “That sounds lovely, we definitely will.” She assured her.

“Thank you,” The Doctor added, looking over his wife’s shoulder to read about the food.

Khalee waved them off. “Oh, no problem! I hope to see y’all there!” She started walking backwards as she spoke and turned once they’d all said goodbye.

“Well, I guess we just found our evening plans.” Amy said, taking the flyer from Rose.

As soon as they entered through the front gates of the fair The Doctor made a beeline for the candy floss, and purchased one twice the size of his head. He was grinning proudly as he held the sweet up for them to see.

Rose shook her head even as she laughed at her husband’s goofiness. “That’s lovely, dear.” She said, patting his arm.

Amy was wide-eyed as she took in the expansive fairgrounds. She gasped and hit her husband in the shoulder when she saw it. “Look, Rory!” She pointed to one of the booth set ups. “Ring toss!”

Rory rolled his eyes. “Oh great, so we can all watch you be brilliant.”

Amy nodded. “Exactly,” she said, and pulled them towards the carnival game.

“You’re so your father.” Rose teased her as Amy paid for the little plastic rings.

Amy grinned at that and tossed one of the rings expertly- landing it perfectly around one of the soda bottles, and she pumped her fist triumphantly.

The Doctor laughed. “Looks like that’s not such a bad thing.” He commented, as Amy threw another ring.

“Oh no, she gets the skill from me.” Rose said, a mischievous twinkle in her eye as she looked up to her husband. “Just the bragging comes from you.”

“Oh!” The Doctor scoffed, but was interrupted from further rebuttal as his daughter threw her last ring perfectly.

“Congratulations, young lady!” The cliched mustachioed carny said. “Pick any prize you’d like.”

Amy smiled brightly as she pointed to the large blue dragon plush, and he handed it to her without question. “Now, what do you think about your parents putting their money where their mouths are?” He asked her conspiratorially.

Rory blew out a long breath at that as The Doctor handed him his candy floss to hold, and the two of them instantly started pulling out their cash. “Oh, you’re quite good at your job aren’t you?” He said to the carny, and the man gave him a wry smirk in return.

As it turned out though, Amy did not get her ring-tossing skills from either of her parents. Both Rose and The Doctor failed abysmally three times in a row, and nearly a fourth time as well had Rory and Amy not dragged them away from the game.
The Doctor wrinkled his nose as Amy hugged her blue dragon to her chest, clearly very pleased with herself. “You know,” he said, eyeing the plush, “I could just take you to a planet with actual dragons. Much more exciting.”

“Oh, you’re just mad you couldn’t win one.” Amy said lightly.

The Doctor pouted. “That game is rigged.” He insisted, not for the first time. “I am 912 years old. I have seen the rise and fall of entire galaxies-”

“Look! Darts!” Amy cut him off, running away with Rory in tow to the balloon game.

Rose patted his shoulder consolingly as he huffed.

Most of the time though, between the mourning and the laughter, it was just questions. What does this mean? How did this happen? What comes next?

Amy looked up to her parents as they went around the console, getting the TARDIS stable in the time vortex once more. They’d spent quite a while on Venus- much longer than they usually spent places anyway. As nice as it had been, they were all quite happy to be back on the timeship they called home.

“Alright I’ve got a question.” She said eventually, starting the conversation off how many conversations did around the TARDIS lately.

The Doctor turned a dial on the monitor and squinted at the readings it brought up. “Yes, yes we’ve all got questions, Amelia.” He answered her distractedly, not looking away from his work.

Rory failed to hold back his snort as Amy glared daggers into her father’s back at his waving her off. She opened her mouth to snap at him, but Rose spoke before she could get the chance.

“What’s your question, Amy?” She asked her calmly, sitting down in the captain’s seat as she did.

Amy looked over to her mother, giving her her attention rather than The Doctor. “I’ve been thinking about it, yeah? And if I’m you two’s daughter- how’ve I got red hair?”

The Doctor’s head finally snapped up at that and he pointed at her. “How, indeed, Amelia!” He exclaimed, and started walking around the console in long strides flipping levers and spinning dials for proper maintenance routines. “Time Lord biology! It’s a genetic lottery!”

Rose rolled her eyes at her husband and looked over to her daughter as she furrowed her brow, mouth open to ask for clarification. “What he means is,” Rose started before Amy could ask. “Any child we have could end up looking like me or him or him a hundred years ago in any of his 11 previous bodies.”

Rory wrinkled his nose at that. “Sounds like you’re outnumbered.”

Rose snorted, nodding. “Yeah, trust me, I’ve realised.”

Amy watched The Doctor type something into one of the terminals. “So were you a ginger once then?”

He looked up at her through the cloister bell. “No.” He said bitterly, and glared a Rose when she failed to hold back her giggles.
Amy huffed and rolled her eyes. “Okay that’s all interesting then- explains where I got my mouth, but I’m still wondering about my hair and pasty complexion over here.”

“Ah!” The Doctor let out, pulling a final lever and finally turning to lean against the console. “That’s the really interesting part! On Gallifrey, they believed children born with red hair were blessed by the twin suns, and were exceptionally gifted in time senses.” His eyes glowed excitedly.

Amy squinted at him though. “Well that can’t be true then. I can’t see the future or anything-”

“Have you tried?” The Doctor interrupted her.

“Well, no, but-”

“Then how do you know?” He challenged.

Amy sputtered for a bit until finally looking over to Rose helplessly. She smiled comfortingly. “Doctor, you’re scaring her.” She reprimanded her husband, and he shrugged, spinning around to share the seat next to Amy.

“Or, your grandad- Rose’s father. He was a ginger.”

Amy huffed at that. “So I’ve either got my granddad’s hair or I’m omniscient?” She said dryly.

“Yep!” He exclaimed, popping the ‘p’ and wrapping his arm around her, making her giggle and shove him away as he ruffled her hair.

“What about regeneration then?” Rory asked this time. Amy’s eyes widened at the question and she looked to her parents.

“No.” The Doctor answered automatically though. “Regeneration is an artificial process given to Gallifreyans upon their completion at the Time Lord Academy. You were born with the time vortex already inside you- sort of like how Rose looked into it, and it looked back. She passed that onto you.”

“So what am I gonna start glowing when there’s trouble now?” Amy deadpanned.

Rose chuckled at that and shook her head. “Nah, that’s something that only happens because the TARDIS and I are connected. Can’t pass that on. What he means is that you have an extended timeline. You can heal yourself, and probably control your aging too…” Rose tilted her head as she considered the implications.

Amy nodded slowly as she begun to sort of understand, and looked back up to The Doctor. “Regeneration for you then- can you control it? What you look like?”

He shook his head, again bitterly. “No, only female Time Lords can do that.”

“But you said once that that you could-” Rory started.

“If I regenerate into a female, I could then, on the next go, have complete control over it- well complete control over everything except hair colour. So then, y’know- what’s the point?”

Rose rolled her eyes and reached over to pat her husband’s leg consolingly. Smirking up to the other couple knowingly.

“So wait then, Doctor, when you were born-“ Amy started.
“Oh, no.” Rose let out, shaking her head. “Amelia, I promise you you do not want to get into—“

“I wasn’t born.” The Doctor interrupted her, folding his hands on his stomach casually and smirking as Rose groaned and shoved her face into her hands.

Amy’s eyes flickered between her parents confusedly. “You weren’t born?” She asked him incredulously.

“Time Lords are loomed. It’s a process in which—“

Rose’s head snapped up at that. “No, no don’t scar her!” She yelled, and then looked over to Amy. “It’s incredibly weird and alien, and an image you’ll never be able to unsee—”

“Yes because human childbirth is such a clean, easy, and efficient process.” The Doctor interrupted again sarcastically, rolling his eyes.

“Alright, fairpoint.” Rose conceded even as she huffed exasperatedly. It was obviously an argument they’d had before.

Amy and Rory bit back their amused smirks as their eyes met.

Sometimes though, their mad life got in the way of questions.

The Doctor was whistling as he worked underneath the TARDIS console. He was laid across a mechanics creeper- as he was still above the glass floor, and it must have been more convenient (and probably more fun) to be on wheels.

Amy squinted around the console room as she noted Rose’s absence, and furrowed her brow at her father’s half-hidden form. She stopped at his feet and watched his arm blindly reach up to adjust a dial on the the control panel. “Hey.” She said shortly, shoving her hands in her pockets.

He rolled out to look at her. “Hey!” He exclaimed quickly, and then rolled back to resume whatever he was doing with all the wires he’d pulled out.

Amy narrowed her eyes at that, and knelt down to pull him back out by his jacket lapels. “Listen. Can we talk?” She asked him seriously.

And okay, normally, he would have dropped everything at that tone of voice- especially given their current circumstances in navigating their new(ish) roles in each other lives, but he really was quite busy. “RORY!” He yelled for his son-in-law to deal with his daughter before rolling away from her again.

Amy grumbled at that and pulled him out again. “Shut up. No. I’ve just got a question, that’s all.”

The Doctor squinted up at her. “Ask your mother.”

Amy opened her mouth to reprimand him for blowing her off, but her husband called out before she could get a word out. “You okay up there?” Rory asked, and she looked over at the sound of his voice to see him looking up through the glass floor- The Doctor’s circular welder’s goggles firmly in place over his eyes as he held weird alien tools in his hands.

She stood up at the sight, putting her hands on her hips. “What are you doing?” She asked him increduously as her father quickly rolled back under the console after being set free.
Rory shrugged. “Helping The Doctor.” He answered. “Um, it’s humming. Is that okay?”

“Yeah, it’s fine!” The Doctor called back. “We’re just entering conceptual space… Imagine a banana, or anything curved- Actually, don’t. It’s not curved or like a banana…” He wrinkled his nose. “Forget the banana!”

Amy ignored her father’s typical nonsensical explanation of absolutely nothing, and rolled her eyes. “Uh, is he helping you fly the TARDIS?” She asked, though it sounded more like an accusation.

The Doctor’s answer to that was to stand up yell instructions down to Rory. “Detach servo-couplings two, seven and eleven- like I showed you!” He held up his fingers for emphasis and pointed down to him.

Amy huffed indignantly, following him around the console. “How come he gets to have a go? You never let me have a go.” She complained.

The Doctor looked up to her guiltily at that, but before he could think of a good enough excuse, Rory called up through the floor again. “Er, Doctor, don’t. Seriously.” He warned him. “I let her drive my car once.”

Amy scoffed. “Yeah, to the end of the road.”

“Yeah, where, according to Amy, there was an unexpected house.” He threw back.

The Doctor bit back a laugh- still pulling at controls, and Amy threw her hair over her shoulder. “He’s just jealous because I passed my test first time.”

“You cheated. You wore a skirt.”

Amy shook her head. “I didn't wear a skirt.” She insisted.

“Well that would have worked too.” He replied flippantly, attaching another coupling.

Amy furrowed her brow though as she began to think about it. “No, no, I did wear a skirt… But it was any old skirt…” The Doctor glanced up to his daughter at that, the automatic thanks that he isn’t human and he didn’t have to go through the stress of raising Amelia Pond around human men flitting through his brain before he could stop it. Though honestly, seeing countless alien species go half-mad around her was arguably just as stressful if not more so.

“Have you seen Amy drive, Doctor?” Rory asked, pulling him out of his thoughts.

“No.” The Doctor answered quickly, shortly- attempting not to get involved in this particular squabble as he ran back around to the other side of the console.

“Neither did her driving examiner.” Rory said matter of factly.

Amy was still trying to recollect the memories of her driving examination. “Actually, it was this one!” The realised suddenly. “It was this skirt!”

(So not covering much of anything then.)

Rory glanced up at that, to see precisely what skirt, and half a second later the TARDIS jerked violently to one side- making them all grab on in order not to fall over as the lights went out all around them.
Amy looked over to her father with wide eyes in the dim light of the console backup lights. “What was that?” She whispered.

“Rory!” The Doctor called. “Did you drop a thermo-coupling?”

A beat.

“S-sorry.”

“Argh!” The Doctor yelled exasperatedly. “How did you do that? I told you, don’t drop them!” He walked around his daughter to yell at him through the floor. “I specifically mentioned not dropping!”

“It was my fault.” Amy said quietly to his back.

The Doctor looked up to her. “Of course it wasn’t your fault.” He said, taking quick strides back around to the monitor.

“It kind of was her fault.” Rory mumbled.

“How could it be her fault?” The Doctor asked incredulously.

Amy sighed, squaring her shoulder a bit as she looked to her father. “Because it was my skirt, and my husband, and your glass floor.” She explained in as few words as possible, failing to conceal her blush.

The Time Lord’s emotions flitted clearly across his face as he processed that. Confusion, realisation, dawning comprehension, and then utter disgust. “Oh-ugh! Rory!” He yelled down to his oh-so-human-male son-in-law.

“Sorry.” Rory shrugged, tossing off the goggles and running up the stairs to join them.

The Doctor huffed. “Well, we've landed. Emergency materialisation. Should be fine. Should have dropped off in the safest spot available.” He rambled, going around the console to flip switches until the power came back online.

Then the lights came back on to reveal- another TARDIS. Parked, right there in the entrance- a police telephone box, inside the police telephone box.

Rose came around the corner then, rubbing at her temples. “Alright, what have you lot done to her? Why do I feel like I’ve got two-” She cut herself off, eyes widening as she came up next to her husband at the railing. They all stared in disbelief at the sight before them.

“Safest spot available.” The Doctor mumbled, as he made slow progression down the stairs. “The TARDIS has materialised inside itself.”

“Is that… supposed to happen?” Rory asked.

“Take a guess.” The Doctor threw over his shoulder.

“No?”

“That's the one.” Rose answered, patting him on the shoulder as her husband stepped forward to place a shaking hand on the TARDIS.

“What are you doing?” Amy asked, folding her arms in front of her.
“Absolutely no idea.” The Doctor breathed, flinging open the door of the new-TARDIS, going through, and coming out from the main doors, slamming them shut behind him as he looked around, feeling slightly-queasy.

“Okay, that is a bit weird.” Amy commented, and Rose made an indignant sound in the back of her throat at the understatement.

The Doctor stuck his arm outside the main doors and it appeared outside of the new-TARDIS.

Rory let out a small laugh at the sight. “That is actually pretty cool.”

The Doctor huffed and stepped outside to reappear from the new-TARDIS. “I'm glad you're entertained, Rory,” He reprimanded him loudly. “Now that we're stuck here for all eternity- at least you won't be bored.”

Amy straightened up at that. “Wait, what, we're stuck?”

The Doctor walked up the stairs as he explained the severity of their situation. “The inside of the TARDIS is now joined to the outside of the TARDIS. Worse than a time loop, a space loop. Nothing can enter or leave this ship ever again.” He told them gravely.

Just as he finished saying that however, before any of them had a chance to really process what he was saying, the main doors opened again, and a second Amy stepped through them, arms crossed almost argumentatively. “Oh Dad, I beg to differ.” She said, smirking.

Amy took a tiny step forward as The Doctor ran back down the stairs to examine her other self. “Who the hell are you?” She asked.

“I'm you,” she answered, eyes widening a bit mischievously, “from your future.”

“Tell me exactly what's happened.” The Doctor ordered.

Amy II looked to the side as she answered slowly, like she was remembering. “Well, the exterior shell of the TARDIS has drifted forwards in time. If you step into the box now, you step into the control room a tiny bit in the past.” She nodded shortly as she finished.

Amy looked to Rose as she processed all that. “Is it weird that I understood that.”

Amy II looked up to her, and answered just before Rose could. “It’s because you’re a Time Lord- better at processing information now that we remember.”

The Doctor squinted at her. “How do you know that?”

Amy shrugged. “Rose said it.”

Rose shook her head. “Um, no I didn’t.”

Amy II sucked in a breath. “Oh, right, you were just about to say it…”

“Amelia!” The Doctor reprimanded her, and then turned to the Amy on the stairs. “Don’t say it when you go. Let Rose answer.”

“When I go where now?” She asked him incredulously, raising her brows.

He turned back to Amy II. “Okay, when does Amy step inside the box?” He asked. “We need to maintain the timeline.”
“Ah,” Amy II grinned. “As soon as she's slapped Rory.”

Amy squared her shoulders and nodded. “Okay,” she agreed easily.

Rory huffed indignantly. “Uh- no,” He said to her, and then turned to the second Amy and The Doctor. “Why do I get slapped?”

“Because we have to stick to the established chain of events.” The Doctor answered. “One mistake and the whole time line could collapse. We could end up with two Amy Ponds forever, and then what would you do?”

Rory tilted his head and turned to Amy, finger raised in consideration. Amy scoffed and slapped him.

The Doctor and Rose both failed to conceal their laughs at that. “Jackie Tyler would be proud.” He commented dryly as he went up the stairs, and pushed her towards the new TARDIS. “Into the police box now.” He ordered.

Amy paused just before she opened the door, however. “And then I become her?” She asked.

“Yes.” The Doctor answered. “Go!”

Amy hesitated still though to look at her other self. “Do I really look like that?”

Amy II smirked, knowing exactly what she was thinking, and leaned against the police box. “Yeah. Yeah, you do.” She said.

Amy raised her brows, looking herself up and down. “I’d give you your driving license.”

“I bet you would.” She practically growled.

The Doctor huffed, falling back on his heels as he rolled his eyes. “Oh, this is how it all ends. Pond flirting with herself. True love at last.” He glanced over to his son-in-law. “Oh, sorry, Rory.”

Rory was drooling slightly as he watched the two Amys. “Absolutely no problem at all.” He breathed, earning dual slaps to his arms from both of his in-laws.

“Now, Amy.” The Doctor ordered again.

Amy rolled her eyes and looked to her other self. “What's the first line?” She asked.

Amy II smirked, “‘Oh Dad, I beg to differ.’” She told her.

“Gotcha.” Amy winked and stepped inside the police box.

Amy II officially became the Amy as she ran up the stairs to join the others. “So, is that it? Are we okay now?” She asked them.

“No,” Rose answered, wrinkling her nose a bit as she still felt two TARDISes in her head. “We're still trapped.”

Another Amy and Rory entered the TARDIS before Amy could question further.

“What are you doing?” The Doctor demanded incredulously.

Rory II shrugged. “You told us to get into the police box. Well, from your point of view you're
about to tell us to get into the police box. From our point of view you just told us to get into the
police box, which is why we got into the police box… which is why we're here.” He trailed off
awkwardly.

Rory had been shaking his head through that entire explanation. “Do I have to remember all of
that?”

Rory II shook his head. “It just sort of happens.”

Amy waved at herself happily. “Hi,” she giggled.

“Hi,” the other Amy grinned.

“Stop that.” The Doctor said, and then took the Amy and Rory next to him by the shoulders. “You
two, into the police box now. Run.” He ordered, shoving them through the doors.

“So, what now?” the new Amy asked, taking a small step forward.

The Doctor spun towards them and held his hand up to keep them in place. “You
two, stay where
you are.” He said, and ran to the console where Rose was already typing in commands and
spinning dials.

“What are you doing?” Rory asked.

“Setting up a controlled temporal implosion.” Rose answered, adjusting another knob carefully.
“It's the only way to reset the TARDIS.”

“But unless we find exactly the right lever to control the implosion,” The Doctor finished for her,
“we're all going to die.”

Amy huffed, crossing her arms. “You don't know which lever?” She asked them incredulously.

“No.” The Doctor answered, but grinned as he spun back around to face them at the door. “But I'm
about to find out.”

Right on cue, his other self and another Rose came through the doors. Amy let out a little yell as
the other couple pushed through the middle of them. “The wibbly lever!” the new Rose grinned,
like it was an inside joke.

“The wibbly lever!” The Doctor repeated, spinning on one foot to flip said ‘wibbly-lever’
accordingly. He pulled his Rose by the hand, dragging her into the police box without another
word, and a second later it dematerialised from the control room.

“Okay, we're back in normal flight.” The Doctor sighed, throwing an his arms around Amy and
Rose. “The TARDIS is no longer inside itself, the localised time field is no longer about to
implode and rip a hole in all causality… But just in case, Pond…” He looked his daughter up and
down disapprovingly. “Put some trousers on.”

Chapter End Notes
Random Note: MBF officially became the longest Eleven/Rose (single, not series) story on ao3 last chapter. And we're barely even half way through. So there's that.

Sorry this one took so long (a whole week I know). My Macbook decided to crap out Monday after I got off a plane, and Apple Stores are always booked out a week in advance. But, nonetheless, I have my computer back now, and we should get back to regular postings.

-If you haven't read the comment section of the last chapter, I highly recommend it. Just for some general insight.

-I believe I have most everything except Melody explained now, so if you still have questions, please let me know!

The Let's Kill Hitler rewrite will be up next. At first I thought I wasn't going to do it, then I thought I'd do it later, and now I've decided upon another rewatch that I can rework it for my purposes and give a more insight into the Silence while answering the remaining question of 'what the hell did they do then when Amy ran away?' So look forward to that!

Comments are my everything ❤️
Chapter Summary

Let's Kill Hitler (s06e08)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Melody Pond sighed as she stepped back into her childhood home, shutting the blue door behind her, she leaned heavily against it and blew out a long breath as she looked to her friend. It had been a day.

“Melody? Is that you?” Her mother called from somewhere else in the house, and she smirked at the familiar Scottish accent balancing somewhere between light-hearted and concerned.

“Yeah Mum, it’s me!” She answered, pulling Lorna Bucket by the hand down the hallway. “Are Grandma and Granddad still here?”

“No, they just left!” Amy shouted back, just as the two girls entered the kitchen. “Your aunt went with them.” She added at a normal volume, leaning against the counter and crossing her arms. She squinted as she looked Lorna up and down. “Hey… I know you…”

Lorna gave her a small smile. “Yes ma’am um Demons Run-”

“Right!” Amy exclaimed. “You were the cleric, yeah? That came to warn us… God, Melody is that where you just ran off to?” She asked, eyes widening as she looked back to her daughter. “You could have warned us.”

Melody shuffled her foot against the tiles of her kitchen awkwardly. “Sorry family, gotta be off to close a time loop on your lives- back in a flash.”

“I know your type, Melody.” Amy sighed. “I realised, looking over to her husband. “Our life is mad.”

Rory squinted at her. “Are you just now realising this?”

Amy rolled her eyes at him and looked over to Lorna. “He’s not normally this sarcastic.” She assured her.
Melody wrinkled her nose. “Yes he is!” She argued at the same time Rory said “yes I am!”

Amy sighed as Lorna giggled. “Actually, Mels, I should probably be getting back home soon.” She told her friend.

Melody had just shoved a massive piece of now-cold roast beef in her mouth, and she tapped her vortex manipulator significantly in answer. “Twime Twavel” she said matter of factly, the words obscured by food. She swallowed thickly. “I’m not as bad a driver as my granddad, I swear. It was only Mum who got that gene.”

“Oi!” Amy protested while Rory cackled behind her. She huffed and turned to Lorna again. “Where’s home for you dear?” She asked lightly, changing the subject.

“The Gamma Forests.” Lorna nodded, and then tilted her head. “Not really the most exciting planet.”

Amy’s brow furrowed. “Wait, no. I’ve heard of there before.” She turned to her husband. “When have I heard of the Gamma Forests?”

Rory looked down as he wracked his memories for the answer, and snapped when it finally came to him. “Your prayer leaf!” He exclaimed, and then turned to Lorna. “You’re the one who’d made that prayer leaf. Sorry, we just completely forgot.”

Lorna laughed at that. “That’s okay, I understand. Quite a lot of other stuff happened today- or y’know however long ago today happened for you two…” She drifted off as she put that together in her head.

“Mad, right?” Amy said, nodding. “I still have that leaf though- I think it’s in a drawer upstairs.”

“Wow…” Lorna breathed. “I figured Rose would just forget about it soon as I gave it to her.”

“That’s how they told me I was their daughter- or how they made me remember.”

Lorna pulled her chin back at that. “Remember?” She repeated. “You knew?” She turned to Melody. “I didn’t even know that for sure until we walked in here.”

Amy waved her hand around dismissively. “Oh, it’s a long story.”

Lorna nodded understandingly at that. “Wait… I do still have one question- cause you still didn’t tell them who you are.” She said, nodding to her friend before looking to her parents. “When do you two find out she’s not actually called River Song? Before she’s born, surely?”

“Oh yeah,” Rory answered. “Not long after Demons Run was it?” He looked to Amy. “Just a couple of months, yeah?”

Amy nodded slowly. “Yeah… yeah, with Hitler.”

Melody choked on another bite of roast beef at that. “Hitler?” She repeated incredulously. “As in, Adolf Hitler?”

Amy tilted her head at her. “Oh, you haven’t done that yet?”

Melody shook her head. “Guess I will do now…” She said, eyes widening as she looked to her feet in consideration of the timelines.

“No, you’ve got a paper due tomorrow.” Rory reprimanded her. “You can take Lorna home, but
after that you need to go back to the moon in 3742.”

Melody rolled her eyes. “Dad, do you even hear yourself? It’s time travel. Tomorrow now is technically more than a thousand years away.”

“Yeah and last time you used the ‘time travel’ excuse to put off doing your work you ended up forgetting what you had and hadn’t turned in for an entire semester.” Rory threw back, raising his brows challengingly. “Unless you want to get another lecture from The Doctor about the responsibility of—”

“No, no, and I don’t need one from you either.” Melody cut him off, letting out a long suffering sigh as she did, and turning to her friend. “Come on then, babe, back to the forest.” She said, taking her by the hand and leading her into the front room.

“Actually I kind of wanted to see your University…” Lorna muttered.

Melody shrugged, typing in the coordinates for Luna University in the year 3742. “Alright, that works too.” She said, placing her friend’s hand on her wrist and zapping them away.

They appeared in her dorm room a moment (or 1700 years) later, and Lorna stumbled a bit as her feet hit the ground. “Ugh do you do that often?” She asked, feeling like she just got off the world’s fastest rollercoaster.

Melody sighed, collapsing on her bed. “Yeah, travelling through the vortex without a vessel- it takes some getting used to.” She picked up the book next to her and groaned. “I really do not want to write this paper.” She complained.

Lorna walked over to scan through her book shelves. “What’s it on?” She asked.

“Eight pages on the fourth Battle of Saint John” She sighed, flipping halfheartedly through her textbook.

Lorna looked over to her at that. “What you mean the one that was fought in the Gamma Forests?” She snorted. “I could write that in my sleep. I was there what like… a couple of months ago?”

Melody raised her brows at that. “I forget how often the churches fight there because it’s heaven neutral… why are you still living there again?”

Lorna shrugged. “Haven’t found anywhere else yet. If you want I could write that paper while you go to um… whatever it was your parents said. Hitler? Was it? Is that a planet?”

Melody stared at her friend incredulously for a few moments before she sucked in a sharp breath as she remembered the timelines. “Right, that would be Ancient Earth History for you, wouldn’t it? Not exactly common knowledge in the Klasian Galaxy.”

Lorna pressed her lips together, squinting as she shook her head. “No, is Hitler important?”

“Hitler is a massive bag of dicks and if I ever get the chance I’d punch him in the face.” Melody answered quickly, and at her friend’s surprised look she stood up and patted her arm. “I’ll give you a book on it. Then you’ll understand.” She said, and then bit her lip. “But for now… if you’re really offering…”

Lorna laughed. “Yeah, no problem. I could finish that in a few hours. And then I’d love to see the rest of your school.”
Melody squealed and threw her arms around her. “Ah! You’re the best!” She exclaimed, and tilted her head towards the wardrobe as she took a step back. “You’re welcome to whatever clothes I have in there if you get tired of the camouflage.” She added, typing in coordinates as she did. “I’ll be back before you finish though.”

“You better be.” Lorna smirked, and Melody grinned and waved cheekily before disappearing.

---

A few months had passed since Demons Run, and while a lot of time the reality of their situation would randomly decide to slap one of them in the face and send them spiraling—such episodes were becoming far more spread out than they were originally. They were, for the most part, settled in their new normal.

Amy still called her Rose though.

And it was eating away at Rose from the inside out. Like a pit in her stomach that festered and expanded every time her daughter called her by her first name. She wouldn’t say anything about it though. Not daring to perhaps make her uncomfortable and put them right back where they started. They’ve come so far, and Rose would be loathe to ruin that progress over something as trivial as a name. It didn’t bother The Doctor nearly as much (though he never much cared for names or titles in the first place), so Rose figured if he could be okay with it, then so could she.

Amy would, at least, refer to them as her parents, and that small victory was enough.

Her daughter was currently studying her from across the kitchen table. She was trying very hard to appear as though she didn’t notice, but after nearly five minutes of this she gave up. “Is there something wrong, dear?” She asked.

Amy was squinting at her and she sucked her teeth a bit in contemplation before she answered. “People haven’t questioned it—when we say you’re my parents.” She said, and it was less of an observation and more of a statement of fact. “I hadn’t noticed before—but you two have made yourselves look older haven’t you? More late thirties than mid twenties now.” She gestured towards Rose’s face vaguely with her yoghurt spoon.

Rose pulled her chin back at that. “Not… intentionally?” She answered after a moment. “Aging in Time Lords is different and I don’t pretend to understand it. You’ll have to ask your father. For the most part though, we don’t age, but certain life events, regular stress, or I think just doing nothing for a few centuries will eventually age us.”

“So having a daughter that looks similar to you in age might make your body choose to age you up a bit?” Amy asked, tilting her head curiously.

Rose shrugged. “Might could.” She answered vaguely, choosing not to comment on the more obvious answer: the stress that’s been caused over it for the last near year of their lives. They certainly didn’t need reminding.

Amy nodded slowly, still squinting at her mother as she took another bite of yoghurt. Rose rolled her eyes at the look and went back to her book.

The Doctor walked in then. “Ah! It’s my two favourite women in one spot!” He exclaimed merrily by way of greeting, ruffling Amy’s hair on the way to the fridge and placing a kiss to Rose’s cheek when he sat down beside her with juice glass in hand—stealing one of her toast slices as he did. He
grinned cheekily at her around a mouthful of it when she glared at him.

Amy wrinkled her nose at their overt adorableness. “Yes, we were just saying that we could do with a bit of adventure.” She said, eyes glowing mischievously as she leaned forward, resting her chin in her hands.

Rose snorted. “Actually, she was just saying that we’re looking a bit old.”

The Doctor waved his hand around in a vague motion. “Ah yeah it’s all a bit wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey…” He trailed off at their dual raised brows and cleared his throat awkwardly. “So! Adventure!” He diverted.

Rory stepped through the door frame just as The Doctor practically yelled that. “Is it a Time Lord thing to just be vehemently against peace and quiet?” He asked them dryly on his way to the kettle.

“Yes!” The small family chorused together, and then laughed while Rory rolled his eyes.

---

Melody looked around as she landed. She hadn’t been incredibly specific with her coordinates, and it took her a second to realise she was in the British cabinet war rooms. “Well, Hitler certainly wouldn’t be here…” She muttered, making her way down the corridor- only to run slam into Winston Churchill. “Oh, hey Winny! How are you doing?”

Winston pulled his chin back at the small girl who’d just run into him, called him a daft nickname, and then asked how he was doing in the middle of an air raid. He blinked at her confusedly, mouth open to begin reprimanding her, before he realised who she was. “Melody?” He sputtered.

“Melody Pond?”

“The one and only!” Melody grinned, flipping her hair over her shoulder.

“Come to give me that portable time travel you have then?” He asked her, raising a brow.

“Oh, of course not, my dear PM.” Melody said, patting him on the shoulder. “I’m looking for my grandparents actually. You haven’t seen them recently have you?”

“You just missed them. Your parents too.” He informed her dryly.

Melody wrinkled her nose at that- she hadn’t actually expected him to answer. “What? Really? What year is it? Why were they here?”

“1941.” He answered, just as another explosion rattled the building.

She sucked in a breath, looking around her. “Right, probably should have guessed that one… Oh!” She exclaimed suddenly hitting the Prime Minister’s arm as she did. “Daleks! Yeah, no I remember this story! Way too early in their time stream though…” She rocked back on her heels. “Alright, thanks, I’m off to Germany then.” She said, bringing her wrist up to begin typing in some more specific coordinates.

“If you see Hitler give him hell for me.” Winston requested, meaning every word and believing that if anyone could it would be her.

Melody laughed. “Oh, I intend to.” She assured him, and gave a short salute before zapping off
“Alright!” The Doctor exclaimed, flipping a lever as he danced around the console. “Adventure! Rory!” He spun around to point at his son-in-law. “Past, present, or future?”

Rory blinked rapidly and shook his head a few times as he tried to think quickly. “Uh, future?”

The Doctor nodded and typed something into the monitor. “Amelia!” He snapped and pointed to his daughter, without looking over to her. “Earth or otherwise?”

“Otherwise- always.” Amy smirked, not missing a beat.

He nodded again and looked up to his wife, pulling her from the seat by the hand. “Alright then Rose, pick a galaxy, any galaxy.” He said.

Rose laughed and twirled away from him to start flying the ship herself. “Oh, not the Milky Way, we spend far too much time there.” She said, hm-ing and ah-ing over the controls as she did.

“Andromeda, perhaps?” He suggested, choosing to watch her over helping out himself.

Rose tilted her head as she pretended to consider that. “Well, Doctor. You’ve got a new coat on.” She said, nodding to the longer army green coat he’d dawned in place of his usual brown tweed one. “Perhaps a newer galaxy for a newer coat?”

The Doctor smirked and pulled the monitor around back to himself. “Well, what year are we going to? Five thousand?” He observed.

“Oh, I hear the Klasian Galaxy is very in this century.” Rose mused, pulling another lever as she did. “Your turn then. Pick a planet.”

“A planet?” The Doctor scoffed. “Don’t you know, there is an asteroid belt in this galaxy that has some of the best shopping, food, and entertainment this side of the Medusa Cascade.”

Rose grinned. “Sounds perfect.”

---

Melody landed in a crowd of people gathered to see the recently-abdicated Edward VIII proudly standing next to Adolf Hitler.

“Oof, that’s…” She muttered, making a disgusted face before quickly disappearing again.

---

There was a loud popping noise just before The Doctor could throw the dematerialisation lever, and they all looked around to see River Song standing in the entryway. She looked around confusedly for a moment before her eyes fell on them. “Oh! Hello!” She exclaimed.
“Melody?” Rose asked incredulously. “What are you doing here?”

“We’re in flight!” The Doctor sputtered, looking at the monitor to be sure. “How did you manage to lock onto the TARDIS while we were in flight?”


Melody looked to The Doctor and Rose. “I honestly had no idea I could. Lucky shot, I guess? I’ve been trying to find you.” She answered them before turning to Rory. “Hi, before I answer- can I ask, when did you all last see me?”

Rory shook his head. “Uh a few months ago now, I think? Demons Run.”

Her eyes glowed. “Oh, that’s perfect!” She exclaimed, running up the stairs to join them. “I honestly thought I was going to have to pop around Berlin for a while until I ran into you. I really was not looking forward to that.”

“Berlin?” The Doctor repeated incredulously, pulling his chin back.

Melody nodded. “My mother has informed me that’s where I would be. Figured I’d go ahead and knock this one out while I was at it.” She said casually- far more flippant about what she said now that most of it was out anyway, and the last of it was coming soon. She was really ready for all the secrets to be over with, for all the time loops to be completed, and to just get back to her relatively-normal life with the version of her family that knew who she was.

If that apparently meant facing the devil reincarnated- so be it.

“No, hold on, I’m sorry.” Amy said, holding her hand up. “Melody? Your mother? While you were at what?” She asked shortly.

Melody glanced over to her grandparents who were shaking their heads minutely, and she sighed, rolling her eyes. “Sorry… I don’t think we’ve gotten to later, just yet. But you can call me Melody- that’s my real name. River is the fake one Lorna gave me a while back.”

“Why would you need a fake name?” Rory asked.

She shrugged noncommittally. “Spoilers,” she answered boredly, already tired of the word. “Actually if we’re being fair ‘Melody’ isn’t even my real name, like Amy-”

She was cut off as the TARDIS jerked violently to the side, and they were suddenly tumbling through the time vortex uncontrollably.

“Oh what did you do?” The Doctor shouted as alarms started blaring.

“Nothing!” Melody yelled back, just as the TARDIS did another somersault and rumbled like they were breaking through a barrier- rolling through space now rather than the vortex. “At least I don’t think I did!” She added.

They all groaned, and the unmistakable sound of shattering glass sounded from outside the TARDIS as they crash landed.

Melody blew her hair out of her face as she picked herself up off the floor. “Well…” she breathed. “That was something.”

Rose rubbed at her forehead. “TARDIS knocked us off course, but we must have been pretty far
from her destination for that much turbulence.”

Melody wrinkled her nose at that. “Jesus where were you going? Narnia?” She asked incredulously. “It’s just Earth.”

The Doctor rolled his eyes as he pulled Rose up to standing and checked on Amy and Rory. “We were going on an adventure.” He said shortly.

“Well, I bet you ten quid there’s one out there.” She answered mildly, walking past them to throw open the TARDIS doors.

The room they stepped into was in shambles- a TARDIS shaped hole in the drywall surrounding the window they’d crashed through. Rubble and the broken pieces of the table they’d knocked into scattered the floor, and in the middle of it a man lay unmoving.

Rory instantly went to kneel at the man’s side, Amy and Melody following suit. “Um, guys, I think this guy is hurt.” He said, moving to check for a pulse and his eyes dilation. He pulled his chin back though when it was all normal. “No, um. He’s fine?” Rory reported incredulously, looking up to the Time Lord couple for explanation.

Rose and The Doctor weren’t paying much attention though as they noticed a second man cowering behind the desk they’d just barely avoided hitting. “Oh, hello.” The Doctor started politely. “Sorry, is this your office? Had a sort of collision with my vehicle- faults on both sides, let’s say no more about-”

He cut off his attempt at alleviating the situation when the man he was speaking to turned around- and Adolf Hitler stared back at them.

Suddenly the massive red flags with swastikas emblazoned upon them hanging all around the room came into focus. Both him and Rose stiffened, and they felt their family come up behind them, “- it.” The Doctor finished quietly, swallowing.

“Is that…?” Amy muttered. “No, no it can’t be.”

Rose reached behind her for her daughter’s hand on impulse more than anything, and was surprised when Amy squeezed it tightly.

Hitler straightened his shoulders. “Thank you, whoever you are.” He said, German accent thick despite the TARDIS translating. “I think you have just saved my life.”

“Believe me,” The Doctor said, still speaking quietly as his voice was lost somewhere in the shock. “It was an accident.”

Hitler didn’t seem to hear it, as his attention shifted to the TARDIS. “What is this thing?” He asked, taking steps towards it.

Everything about Rose’s and The Doctor’s stances as the Fuhrer moved towards their ship was on fierce guard as their shoulders stiffened and their fists clenched. Amy moved to stand in front of them. “What did he mean, we saved his life?” She asked quietly, eyes wide. “We could not have just saved Hitler.”

They barely heard her over the ringing in their ears as Hitler’s hand extended towards the TARDIS. “This box.” He said. “What is it?”

Rose was suddenly grateful Amy wasn’t telepathic yet, because the pure unadulterated rage
running through their bond at the moment was so strong she was sure they would be projecting. The Doctor’s jaw clenched as he stepped forward, his rage rolling off of him in waves. “It’s a police telephone box, from London, England.” He bit out, punctuating the words and finding victory in the horrified surprise it brought to the man’s face. “That's right, Adolf. The British are coming.” He practically spit out.

But as Hitler’s gaze widened further, it wasn’t on The Doctor, it was on a point just over his shoulder. “No, stop him!” The Fuhrer shouted, and The Doctor spun around to see the previously unconscious man rising from the floor.

Out of the corner of his eye The Doctor saw Hitler pulling his gun, and he had just enough time to duck and see Rose haul Amy to the floor.

Rory, however, stepped towards him as he fired off six rounds towards the other man. Rory punched Hitler in the jaw- knocking him to the ground, and sending his revolver out of his hand. Rory grabbed for the weapon just before the Fuhrer could retrieve it, and he aimed it at his face. “Sit still,” Rory ordered, pulling back the gun’s safety, “and shut up.”

Hitler put two shaking hands in the air.

Amy ran to the other man, who was, surprisingly, still standing. “Are you okay?” She asked.

“Yes, yes, I think he missed.” He answered, eyes wide and voice quaking.

“He was going to kill me!” Hitler argued, looking up to Rory.

Rory didn’t move the gun from his face. “Shut up, Hitler!”

The Doctor was pacing now, and Rose watched him warily. “Rory, take Hitler and put him in that cupboard over there.” He ordered, and at Rory’s hesitation he paused to level his son-in-law with a serious look. “Now, do it.”

Rory tilted his head, bringing the gun down to his side and grabbing Hitler by the collar- hauling him to his feet. “Right. Putting Hitler in the cupboard.” He muttered, as he walked him to the door The Doctor had indicated. “Cupboard, Hitler. Hitler, cupboard.” He flung open the door. “Come on.”

“But I am the Fuhrer!” He protested.

Rory just shoved him forcefully into the the small shelf-lined room. “Right, in you go!”

“Who are you?” Hitler demanded, but Rory just slammed the door in his face.

The Doctor stopped in his pacing to join Rose and Amy with the mystery man. “Are you okay?” He asked him, studying his face closely. There was something about this man that didn’t make sense. Unmoving after getting hit with a crashing TARDIS- but displaying normal vital signs… and he could have sworn he’d heard metal clashing when Hitler had shot at him.

Rory came beside him just as the man whispered “Oh, I-” and cut himself off as his eyes rolled to the back of his head and he fainted.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels. “A perfect faint.” He mused, meeting Rose’s eyes as she read his thoughts.

Her head snapped around suddenly though as she realised one of them was missing. “Melody?”
She said, brow furrowing as she spotted the young girl stood on the other side of the room.

Melody was holding her side, feeling her blood spill out between her finger tips. “Hitler…” she said, moving her hand aside for her family to see the bullet wound. “Lousy shot.” Her knees gave out from under her and she fell against the broken table.

“Melody!” Rose yelled as they all ran to her, and The Doctor shouted for Rory on impulse with the need for a nurse.

“No, no, no, no.” Rory let out, running to her side and putting his hands on the wound. “Right, we’ve gotta stop the bleeding.” He said, as Amy fell to her other side and The Doctor and Rose kneeled in front of her. “Just keep her conscious.” He ordered them.

Rose had tears in her eyes as her hand covered her mouth, and Melody looked up to her. “Aw, Ro, don’t cry. It’s not-” she winced. “It’s not so bad.” She choked out.

Rose took one of her blood covered hands in her own. “No, no you can’t die now. You have to know you don’t die now. Please say you don’t die now Melody, please.”

Melody smirked, struggling to keep her eyes open. “Time can be rewritten.” She whispered.

“No, not this. Not you.” The Doctor insisted, taking her other hand.

“Y’know,” Melody said, looking between them. “You two were always my favourite people growing up. Everytime you came round felt like Christmas morning. All the stories-” she coughed. “All my bedtime stories were about my time travelling grandparents.” She gave a half-hearted smile, as both Amy and Rory’s heads snapped around to look at The Doctor and Rose.

“Grandparents?” Rory repeated.

“What does she mean, grandparents?” Amy asked, voice small.

Tears were streaming down Rose’s face, and she could feel Melody’s pulse weakening in her hand. “Melody,” Rose whispered, not looking to either of them as she answered. “She’s your daughter.”

Amy and Rory’s eyes met, but their shock was nothing compared to new kind of fear the words filled them as their daughter was bleeding out between them. They were both lost for words as they looked down to her.

Melody laughed brokenly. “Wow, first time in my life you two didn’t have something to say.” She winced painfully. “Shame it wasn’t until the end.”

“No, no.” Rose insisted, squeezing her hand. “You’re a Time Lord. You can heal yourself.”

Melody snorted. “I’m barely even empathic, much less regenerative. We can’t all be Wolves, Grandma.” Her eyes fluttered closed, and she took a deep, rattling breath.

At that, Rose snapped her eyes shut. She’d never attempted to call on Bad Wolf before- it was always just something that happened. But she’d be damned if she wasn’t going to at least try and save her granddaughter’s life. She couldn’t fail all of them. She couldn’t keep letting down every single person she cared about. She couldn’t-

Rose sucked in a breath as time energy started swirling around her, and The Doctor didn’t miss a beat, grabbing Amy and Rory by the arms. “Back! Back! Back!” He ordered frantically, hauling them out of the way.
“Doctor, what’s happening?” Amy demanded, stood behind him, voice broken as she held onto Rory.

“I am the Bad Wolf.” Rose answered, voice echoing, golden tendrils of light coming off of her and wrapping around a now unconscious Melody. “I bring life.” She said, and Melody gasped as her lungs filled with air, her wound healing, the blood stains clearing, and her heart beating properly once again.

“Careful, Rose.” The Doctor warned her quietly, and his voice seemed to ground her. Rose blinked a few times, and slowly her vision cleared as the light faded.

Melody was panting slightly as she brought herself to standing. She smiled at Rose as she looked to her nervously. “Wow,” Melody breathed. “Sometimes I forget you’re actually a literal goddess.” And with that she flung herself into her grandmother’s arms, burying her face in her shoulder. “Thank you,” she whispered, and Rose let out the breath she hadn’t realised she’d been holding as she hugged her tightly.

“Anytime.” Rose said, and then chuckled as she pulled back, brushing the hair and tears from her granddaughter’s face. “But let’s try not to make a habit of it, yeah?”

Melody laughed and nodded, and with that they both turned back to the rest of their family. Melody raised her hand and waved awkwardly to her parents. “Hi Mum, hi Dad.”

Amy opened her mouth to answer, but no words came out. She and Rory sat back heavily against the desk. “Is anybody else finding this day just a bit difficult?” Rory mumbled, rubbing at his temple. “I’m getting this sort of banging in my head.”

“Yeah, I think that’s Hitler in the cupboard.” Amy finally managed, as The Doctor patted her on the back comfortingy. She looked up to him and over to Rose. “How long have you two known?”

“We didn’t- not for certain.” The Doctor answered quickly. “But we began to suspect it at Demons Run.”

“It seemed like it would be a lot to drop on you at one time.” Rose added, and both Amy and Rory (much to The Doctor’s and Rose’s relief) nodded slowly in understanding.

They didn’t really have time though, to discuss it, as the other man stood up again.

His movements were more robotic now, and his eyes stared unseeingly forward, as though he needn’t look around to see the whole room at once. When he spoke, it was monotonous and rehearsed. “This is Teselecta Vehicle 6-0-1-8, of the Justice Department for the order of the Silence, Division 12.” He- it, proclaimed, and then turned sharply towards Rose. “You have been found guilty.”

Rose couldn’t even blink before the Teselecta was raising its arm, and surrounding her in a bright artificial light. The Doctor moved to step between them, but the Justice Vehicle didn’t even have to look to him as it raised its other arm a sprayed him with a thick purple gas. The Doctor fell to his knees, choking on the noxious air as Rose disappeared.

“NO!” Melody screamed, reaching out to where Rose had just been standing.

The Doctor grabbed at his head as walls instantly went up around Rose’s telepathic presence. Wherever they’d taken her- they knew what they were doing. Distantly, he heard Amy calling his name, but he couldn’t process it with the ringing in his ears, as his lungs filled with the poison. She came beside him and started pulling up to standing. “What’s happened?” She begged him.
“Where’s Mum? What’s wrong? What’ve they done to you?”

He leant against her heavily and looked over to see the Teselecta had disappeared as well. “Took her.” He coughed. “Poisoned me. But I’m fine-” he buckled over as his knees threatened to give out, Amy just barely managing to keep him up. “Well, no. I’m dying- but I’ve got a plan.” He told her matter of factly.

Amy winced as she struggled with his weight, and Rory and Melody came over to help her. “What plan?”

The Doctor groaned. “Er, not dying.” He managed to get out, voice deep and scratchy. He took a step towards the TARDIS. “See? Fine.” He said, and Amy huffed.

Rory held one arm as Amy held the other. “Okay, what can we do? How do we help you?” He asked frantically.

The Doctor pulled the sonic out of his breast pocket and shoved it at his daughter. “Here, take this. You’re a Time Lord. You’re telepathic. It’ll work.” He managed to get out, voice deep and scratchy. He took a step towards the TARDIS. “That was a short range ground transport beam. They’re somewhere in the city.” He crashed into the police box doors.

“What are you going to do?” Amy demanded.

“Figure out what the hell is going on,” The Doctor panted. “And why these people keep taking my bloody wife!” He shouted, flinging open the TARDIS door.

“And heal yourself, right?” Melody asked, voice small from behind them. “You’re going to be okay?”

The Doctor smirked as he turned back to his family. “Always okay, me.” He said, and then reached out to cup Amy’s face as she was looking at him worriedly. “Find your mother, I’ll be right behind you.” He promised, placing a kiss on her head before turning on his heel and nearly falling into the TARDIS, clicking the door shut behind him.

He pulled out a handkerchief and coughed into it, wincing when he saw blood. He stumbled up the stairs inelegantly, and just laid on the floor, unable to keep himself standing. “I’m shutting down. I need an interface.” He called out to the TARDIS. “Voice interface. Come on, emergency.”

A hologram flickered to life in front of him, apparently at some point the default had switched from his face to Rose’s, and the sight made his already failing hearts tighten considerably. “Oh, Rose, love, where are you.” He muttered, clutching at his chest.

“Voice interface enabled.” She replied monotonously, staring straight ahead.

“Oh yes that’s exactly what I need right now.” He said sarcastically. “A fake robotic version of my wife right after she was taken from me again. Perfect.” He winched and grabbed his back.

The hologram-Rose flickered, and was replaced by a young Amelia Pond, exactly as they’d found her in her nightie and red wellies. The Doctor’s hearts stuttered again for more reasons than just the poison as he looked up to her. “Oh. Oh, Amelia Pond, before I got it all wrong…” He breathed, taking in the sight of his young daughter. “My sweet little Amelia…”

“I am not Amelia Pond.” She told him, voice expressionless. “I am a voice interface.”

“Hey, let’s run away and have adventures.” He smirked, breathing heavy. “Come along, Pond.”
“I am not Amelia Pond. I am a voice interface.”

The Doctor rolled his eyes. “You are so Scottish.” He said, despite it technically being a false statement. “How am I doing?” He asked.

“Your system has been contaminated by the poison of the Judas tree.” She answered. “You will be dead in thirty two minutes.”

“Okay. So, basically better regenerate then- that's what you're saying.” He tilted his head, feeling his spleen protest.

“Regeneration disabled. You will be dead in thirty two minutes.”

The Doctor, ever the optimist, didn’t back down. “Unless I'm cured! Yeah?” He tried.

“There is no cure. You will be dead in thirty two minutes.”

He huffed. “Why do you keep saying that?” He groaned as more pain radiated through his body.

The hologram Amelia remained emotionless. “Because you will be dead in thirty two minutes.”

“You see? There you go again. Basically skipping thirty one whole minutes when I'm absolutely fine.” He panted slightly and waved his hands around. “Scottish, that's all I'm saying.”

“You will be fine for thirty one minutes. You will be dead in thirty two minutes.” She replied matter of factly.

“Scotland's never conquered anywhere, you know. Not even a Shetland.” He continued antagonising her on the nationality thing despite its untruth- he was dying, it probably made sense it his head. “Rose needs me. My family, needs me. I can’t die now.” He said determinedly.

“You will not die now. You will die in thirty two minutes.”

He chuckled self-deprecating. “I'm going out in the first round. Ringing any bells- Argh!” He cut himself off with a yell, sitting forward as all his organs stuttered with the poison making its way through his systems. “Okay, need something for the pain now. Come on, Amelia. It's me. Please.” He laid his face against the glass floor.

“I am not Amelia Pond. I am a voice interface.”

“Amelia, listen to me. I can be brave for you, but you have got to tell me how.” He pleaded.

“I am not Amelia Pond. I am a voice interface.”

“Amelia. Amelia, please.” His eyes fluttered shut as he let out a shuddering breath.

A few silent moments passed, seconds or decades, there was no telling, but probably less than thirty two minutes… And then-

“Fish fingers and custard.”

The Doctor’s eyes snapped open. Memories of that night flooding him, fueling him. “What did you say?” He asked, hauling himself up to his knees. “Fish fingers and custard?” He laughed incredulously, as the voice interface remained silent. “Oh, Amelia Pond. Fish fingers and custard!” He managed to stand, leaning heavily against the console. He pulled the lever that would send him into the time vortex, shouting absurdly as he did. “Fish fingers and custard!”
Melody yanked on her mother’s arm as the TARDIS doors remained firmly closed. “Come on, Mum. We have to go.” She said, looking over her shoulder to the door from where she could now hear footsteps fast approaching. She pulled both of them towards the broken window, and leaped up onto the frame.

“What are you doing?” Rory asked incredulously, as she leaned out and began scaling down the side of the building. “We’re three stories up!”

“Well we’ve got to get out somehow- unless you want to be taken by Nazis for locking the Fuhrer in the cupboard.” She called back, using a stone ledge as a foothold, she glanced up to her parents hanging out the window watching her. “Something tells me you won’t get off.”

They both let out long breaths at that, sharing a look before following her lead. A few moments later they landed next to her on the ground, and Melody ran over to where two motorbikes were parked. “Alright, come on, we’ve got a whole city to search.” She said, flinging her leg over one of them and starting the engine.

Rory tilted his head in resignation, and got on the other one, looking over to Amy. “Come on!” He said, and Amy huffed as she sat behind him.

“Can you ride a motorbike?” She asked.

Rory revved the engine. “I expect so.” He answered, kicking the stand up. “It’s that sort of day.” And with that they sped off after their daughter into the war-ready city of Berlin.

They came to a stop at the fifth intersection. “Okay,” Rory breathed, looking over to Melody beside them. “All of Berlin, how do we find her?”

Melody shook her head helplessly as Amy sighed. “I don’t know.” His wife said. “Look for clues.”

“Oh, clues!” Rory repeated sarcastically, imitating her Scottish pronunciation of the word. “What kind of clues?”

Amy slapped his arm as Melody snorted. “Shut up.” She grumbled.

Melody inhaled sharply though, and her parents followed her line of vision to see people come screaming out of the Hotel Adlon. They only had to share a look before they were abandoning their respective motorbikes and running into the hotel’s lobby.

They careened up the steps and turned the corner into what appeared to be a sort of dining hall for what had been a dinner party. In the center of the room Rose was suspended by a blue cloud of energy, clearly unconscious, and in front of her on the ground an exact robot replica of Amy stood. It turned to them, tilting its head slightly.

“Whoa.” Rory breathed.

“Freaky.” Melody commented.

Before Amy could say anything on the matter though, the robot opened its mouth and everything turned white as they were hit with some sort of ray.

A second later they hit grating, and they groaned as they pulled themselves to standing.
“Okay. Okay…” Rory mumbled, looking around to the glass walls and multi-level catwalks surrounding them. “I am trapped inside a giant robot replica of my wife… I'm really trying not to see this as a metaphor.”

Melody bit back a snort while Amy hit his arm- more on impulse more than anything. “How can we be in here?” She asked, spinning in a small circle. “How do we fit?”

“Miniaturisation ray.” Rory answered easily, earning surprised looks from both his wife and newly-discovered daughter.

“How would you know that?” Amy asked incredulously.

“Well… there was a ray… and we were miniaturised.” He explained, distantly wondering how Rose and The Doctor always seemed to sound so impressive when they explained things. Like… how would they have said that?

Melody nodded appreciatively and Amy tilted her head. “Alright.”

Suddenly, a robotic squid rose from the grating beneath their feet. “Welcome. You are unauthorised. Your death will now be implemented.” It informed them without preamble.

They all started backing up down the catwalk, away from the antibody. “Er, what's that?” Amy asked.

“Oh, I don't know! It's in your head!” Rory threw back, and Amy grumbled over her reply.

“Please remain calm while your life is terminated.” The robot squid continued advancing on them.

All three of them had their hands up. “We come in peace!” Amy tried.

Rory scoffed. “When has that ever worked?”

“Oh, shut up!” Amy shouted, just as they backed into the wall. They tried turning left, but we blocked by three more approaching antibodies- electric probes sticking out menacingly. They turned right to the same fate, and in front of them, four more had joined the original.

“Please cooperate in your officially sanctioned termination.” The antibody said. “It is normal to experience fear during your incineration.”

Amy fumbled with the screwdriver for a second and then held it out in front of her. “Stop, or I sonic.” She threatened, though admittedly with a lot less gusto than she intended.

“What are you doing?” Rory asked her breathlessly.

“I don't know!” She admitted, not looking away from the antibodies or loosening her grip on the sonic.

Rory took a quick deep breath. “Okay… uh psychic interface.” He repeated The Doctor’s words from earlier. “Just point and think.”

Her hand was shaking. “I know, but what do I think?”

“Mum!” Melody called desperately, her back firmly against the wall, and Amy froze.

Thankfully though, the wall behind them turned out to be a lift door, and a man in a black jumpsuit
with a headset on appeared behind them. “It’s okay.” He said, taking their arms. “Just stay still and
don’t move.” He slid matching bracelets on all three of their wrists, and hit a few buttons until the
light on top turned green. “Privileges activated. See?” He held their wrists up to the antibodies.
“Activated.”

The electric probes switched off. “You are authorised. Your existence will continue.” It said, and
they all glided away as if nothing had ever happened at all.

The small family turned to the man who’s name tag identified him as Jim. “This is Justice
Department Vehicle 6-0-1-8.” He said. “And my boss would like to see you.”

Jim stayed unnervingly silent as he led them through the human-shaped vehicle up to the top floor.
Melody latched on to Rory’s forearm as she walked behind the couple, and while Amy did her best
to memorise every detail of their journey (in case they needed to escape later), Rory had a mild
panic attack- not about being trapped in the robot replica of his wife currently torturing his alien
mother-in-law, nope. About the young girl currently trailing behind them, the one who is
supposedly his daughter, the one holding onto him for dear life.

Every fibre of his being was telling him to protect her at all costs, but still his brain kept reminding
him that he didn’t know her- much less how to help her.

He wondered if his life would ever reach a relative state of normal, or if it was just going to be a
continuous string of non-sequiturs one after another.

They entered a control room to the sounds of the TARDIS materialising, and looked up to see a
screen in front of them- showing The Doctor stepping out of the Police Box. He looked better-
standing up straight, a slight smile on his lips, but all three of them could see the barely-concealed
pain and anguish behind his eyes- right underneath the furrow in his brow that spoke towards the
anger at seeing Rose unconscious and suspended in the middle of the room. His eyes zeroed in on
the Teselecta.

“Doctor…” Amy breathed.

“Antia, I thought you said he was dead.” The captain-Carter- shot angrily towards the woman next
to the place that Jim was now sitting.

Anita pulled up what appeared to be vital signs on her screen. “He is.” She insisted. “Or he will
be.”

Captain Carter pulled a glass communication device towards him. “You’re too late, Doctor.”

The Doctor smirked, but it didn’t quite reach his eyes. “Yes, that’s the title of my biography.” He
quipped. “Time is not the boss of me,’ I used to say. Starting to think that was a bit to cocksure of
me. Time’s been screwing me over since Gallifrey.” He pulled out a sonic- smaller, more compact
than they one he’d handed Amy- and scanned the Justice Vehicle. Inside the control room they
glowed purple for a second as the familiar sonic sound surrounded them.

“What was that?” Carter insisted, turning in his chair to glare at the Ponds. Amy opened and closed
her mouth but didn’t answer.

“Not many people know that Rose has a sonic too. Gave it to her as a birthday gift what- oh, a
hundred years ago? Give or take? She never uses it.” He wrinkled his nose a bit, and Amy would
have laughed if it wasn’t for their current situation. The Doctor was reading the scan results as he
spoke. “Oh, it’s a robot!” He exclaimed. “With four hundred and twenty three life signs inside. A robot worked by tiny people. Love it. But how do you all get in there, though? Bigger on the inside? …No, basic miniaturisation sustained by a compression field… Ooo. Watch what you eat, it'll get you every time.” He looked at them seriously. “Amy, if you all are alright, signal me.” He requested.

Amy looked around wildly for a second before she remembered the screwdriver in her hand. She held it up and pressed the button, and watched as the light on his turned on as well. He smirked, “thanking you.”

Carter turned back to them. “How did you do that?” He demanded, and Amy pointedly ignored him this time.

On screen, The Doctor suddenly groaned, spinning around and collapsing against the marble steps behind him. “Argh! I'm so sorry. Leg went to sleep. Just had a quick left leg power nap. I forgot I had one scheduled.” He stretched his leg a bit and attempted to stand up, groaning in pain again before sitting back down. “Actually, better sit down. I think I heard the right one yawning.” He sounded miserable even as he joked.

Carter smirked slightly. “Punish her.” He ordered, and Amy, Rory, Melody, and The Doctor all shouted “NO!” at the same time when in front of them Rose’s body started shaking violently as electricity ran threw her.

“Don’t you touch her!” The Doctor screamed, voice powerful and demanded despite his desperation. “DO not harm her in any way!” He ordered.

Carter held his hand up, and Rose’s body fell limp again, but her chest still moved up and down. He tilted his head at The Doctor. “Why?” He asked, a malicious glint in his eye.

The Doctor heaved himself to standing again. “Because I am The Doctor. And that is Rose Tyler- my wife, the Bad Wolf. And if you hurt her I will spend every day of the rest of my very long life making sure you pay.” He bit out, raising goosebumps on his family’s arms.

Carter seemed unfazed by the threat though. “You’re dying.” He threw back simply.

The Doctor grimaced. “Well, at least I'm not a time travelling shape shifting robot operated by miniaturised cross people- which, I have got to admit, I didn't see coming.” He studied them again for a second before going on. “Just tell me why.” He said, voice somewhere between demanding and begging.

Captain Carter apparently saw no harm in explaining to the practically dead. “You said it yourself, Doctor. She’s rose Tyler- the Bad Wolf, the Golden Rose. Entire religions have started in her name- even more than you.”

“She gives people hope. What has that got to do with you? Why should you care?” The Doctor asked, shaking his head.

“ They see her as a god. ” Carter practically spit. “Some see her as the only God. Do you know what the people of entire Amethystium Galaxy call her? The Creator. The one and only true queen- the beginning of everything and the polestar of the universe itself.”

It was clear that this was news to The Doctor, but he didn’t back down. “What does that make her guilty of though?” He insisted.

“The rules of the Order of the Silence.” He answered. “There is only one God, and He is the only
one that shall be worshipped. None shall be more powerful, nor more revered than He. You have always been on our radar, Doctor, but your wife- she’s Transgressor No. 1.”

Rory shook his head at that. “How can she be guilty of the rules of the a religion she doesn’t follow?”

Carter’s head whipped around to glare at him, and he continued to speak into the microphone. “The rules of the Order must be followed by all- whether they be members or not.”

Melody looked around her parents at that, brow furrowed. “Is that why you were trying to kill Hitler?” She asked him. “Because you didn’t know we were gonna show up- we didn’t even know we were gonna show up.”

The Doctor could apparently hear them. “You got your hands on time travel and decided to go around punishing dead people?” He asked incredulously, pulling his chin back. “What?”

Carter kept his eyes on Melody as he answered. “We don't kill them. We extract them near the end of their established timelines.”

The Doctor sobered slightly. “And then what?”

“We give them hell.” He said, voice devoid of any and all emotion.

At that, they watched as The Doctor’s features hardened. “I’d ask you who you think you are,” he bit out, “but I think the answer is pretty obvious.”

Melody watched as Carted shirked back slightly, so she stepped forward, hands on her hips. “What division did you say you were? Twelve? What’s that out of? Thirteen? The Order normally works in groups of thirteen, no?” She tilted her head and Carter swallowed thickly. “You weren’t even put on this mission. They wouldn’t have given it to such low-ranking officers. Is that your plan then? Show up back at Headquarters with a Wolf and be rewarded?”

Carter remained silent, and the four other crew members eyed her warily, so she went on. “Do you even know the plans Madame Kovarian has for Rose and The Doctor? Why they took Amy?”

He spun away from her. “That is classified.” He answered.

Melody snorted. “Even from you?”

A vein popped in Captain Carter’s forehead as he stood up, and Melody hid her triumphant smirk by stepping behind her father- feigning fear. “Amelia Pond was a tool.” He growled. “Kovarian wanted a pawn- a spokesperson to speak out against Rose and The Doctor. If anyone can bring down a religion it’s the daughter of the leaders. Why do you think you’re still alive?” He looked to Amy now as he spoke. “Because as soon as your mother is dead, and Bad Wolf is no longer protecting your head- you’ll be vulnerable, finally susceptible to all those methods we tried when you were a little girl.”

Amy’s jaw clenched, and she stepped forward, swinging her fist around, and punching Captain Carter in the face with a rather sickening crack.

Carter screamed angrily and held his bloody nose, but before he could retaliate, on screen The Doctor shouted as well, grasping at his back as he fell against the steps. “Argh! Kidneys are always the first to quit!” He complained. “I've had better, you know.”

A few moments passed as they all watched him- his suffering now easily apparent. Eventually, his
cries of pain stopped as fell back fully, eyes closing and not opening again.

“That’s it.” Anita announced quietly. “He’s finished.”

Melody choked on a sob while Amy gasped, turning into her husband’s shoulder as she whispered “Oh, my god.” Rory pulled both of the girls into him, hiding their faces in his jacket while on the screen the view switched from The Doctor’s unmoving body to Rose’s unconscious one.

Carter sat back down in his chair. “Well then, let’s do what we do.” He said casually. “Give her hell.”

The electric field around Rose turned red, and her eyes popped open as she screamed and convulsed, fire now consuming her. Amy and Melody both whimpered and fell further into Rory as he ducked his head- just barely seeing Rose glow golden to no avail, before shielding his eyes in Amy’s hair.

“Amy. Rory. Melody.” The Doctor’s quiet voice broke through Rose’s screaming. He had tears running down his face as he watched Rose be tortured in front of him. “Please.”

Amy pulled away from Rory only slightly. “What do we do?” She pleaded.

“Just stop them.” He choked out. “She’s your mother. Just stop them.”

Amy’s fists tightened at the words, and she looked down as she felt the sonic still firmly grasped in her hand. She held it up, eyes widening as she looked to her husband. She pulled her other hand up- the one with the green wristband still on it. She pointed the screwdriver at it.

“What are you doing?” Rory asked.

Her brow furrowed. “Pointing and thinking.” She answered determinedly, and a second later it turned red. Antibodies began rising from the floor.

“You are unauthorised. Your death will now be implemented.”

Amy spun Carter around to look at her. “Okay, Captain. Release her now, or I take down the whole Teselecta.” She threatened, holding up the sonic for emphasis.

“Amy.” Rory warned her, as the antibody approached closer, but she ignored him.

Carter smirked. “You can’t.” He said cockily.

Amy tilted her head towards the antibodies. “They can.” She said, and turned on the sonic again, all of the wrist bands turned red.

“All privileges withdrawn.” The antibody announced.

Melody grabbed Rory’s hand and slammed her hand against the lift button behind her while the squid-like robots lassoed the necks of the Justice Department with their metal tentacles.

“What have you done?” Carter yelled angrily, mashing his wrist band desperately, but Amy didn’t answer as she ran after Rory and Melody- the doors closing behind them.

“Now what?” Rory asked, and the lift doors opened again without them asking. An antibody was in front of them.

“Remain calm while your life is extracted.”
Amy pushed them both in front of her “Run! Keep running!” She ordered, and they skirted around the robots.

“Where?” Rory asked, even as his legs kept leading them down the grated catwalk.

“I don't know. Just run!” She called back, sounding very much like her parents.

Rose collapsed back down to the floor, gasping for air, still glowing slightly, unbridled tears staining her cheeks. She looked over to her husband, his telepathic presence fading exponentially with every passing second. She crawled over to him, ears still ringing.

She grabbed his face, and his eyes opened, he said something, but she couldn’t hear him through the buzzing in her head. She watched his lips move, but she couldn’t understand. She shook her head.

‘Save Amy. They’re in the Teselecta.’ He said, and her eyes widened, her head whirling around to look at the robot version of her daughter. It’s mouth was moving too, and she squinted.

“Help us! Doctor, help us! Please! Rose! Help us!” Rose’s vision swam at the words. “Mum! Dad! Please help us!” Her daughter was screaming.

She ran into the TARDIS before she could even process what she was doing, and a second later she landed it inside the Teselecta, surrounding her family as it materialised, making them appear on the floor in front of the doors- huddled together.

They let go of each other to look up to her, and Amy was the first one to break away. “Mum! Oh my God!” She exclaimed, running up the stairs at full force and pulling her into a desperate hug. “You’re okay!” She sobbed.

Rose smiled slightly, only barely registering Amy’s use of the word Mum as brought her arms up to hug her back, looking over her shoulder to give Rory and Melody a meaningful look. “Thanks to you.” She said, voice still hoarse from screaming.

Amy sniffed, pulling back to wipe at her cheeks. “Where’s Dad?” She asked.

Rose’s eyes widened as she was reminded they’re still not in the clear- his presence in her head barely a whisper now as she spun around to fly them back to the Hotel Adlon.

The Doctor was still lying against the stairs, and they all surrounded him in an instant. “You’re too late.” He whispered, as he opened his eyes slightly to look up to Rose.

Rose shook her head. “No, I’m never late. That’s you, love.” She shot back, and The Doctor finally noticed she was still glowing- the time energy getting brighter now as she spoke. She looked up to their family. “Stand back.” She warned them, and they all complied as the light surrounded The Doctor now as well.

His vision went white, and a second later he gasped- sitting up straight and catching Rose just as she fell into him. “You really shouldn’t do that twice in one day.” He reprimanded her slightly.

Her chest was heaving, but she smiled. “Then you lot should quit trying to die on me.” He shot back, giving both him and Melody a pointed look and earning breathless laughs from all of them.
Less than an hour later The Doctor was dusting off his hands as he came up the stairs, towards the console. “Alright, the Teselecta is officially offline and in my workshop.” He announced.

Amy wrinkled her nose from where she sat with Rory on the jump seat. “Does it still look like me?”

“No, no. It went back to it’s default form.” He assured her, leaning against the console next to Rose.

Amy nodded slowly, and turned to look at Melody who was being unusually quiet, sitting cross legged in the captain’s chair. “Are you alright?” She asked her.

Melody smirked. “Yeah, yeah I’m fine.” She answered. “Just ready to get back home now.”

Rory sat forward at that. “Wait, I have a question. Why didn’t you tell us before? That you were our daughter.”

Melody shrugged. “Timelines. Didn’t want to risk saying too much and y’know… not get born or anything. The only reason I showed up at all is because you all tell me I did-will-do.”

“But it’s okay that we know now?” Amy asked.

“So you said.” Melody answered. “Or will say anyway…” She sighed. “This is the last you’ll be seeing me for a while.”

“Is Melody your real name then?” Amy asked quickly, a bit worried that she was going to disappear before she got all her questions in. Melody nodded so she went on. “If we’re allowed to know that, then why did you go by River Song for so long?”

She shrugged noncommittally. “It seemed safer- picking a full fake name rather than just a surname. Plus, I thought it was quite clever: Melody Pond- River Song.” She grinned cheekily, and they all chuckled. “Besides, Melody is technically just a nickname- like Amelia is.”

“You have a Gallifreyan name?” Rory asked, raising his eyebrows. “What is it?”

Melody smirked. “You’ll find out.” She said knowingly, earning eyerolls. She laughed at their annoyance and stood up. “Anyway, I really should be off.”

“Where to?” Rose said, turning to the console.

Melody shook her head. “Nah, don’t worry about it.” She held her wrist up. “I’m getting quite good with this thing.”

“Poor excuse for time travel.” The Doctor grumbled, and Melody laughed.

“Yeah, Gramps, I know. I never hear the end of it.” She replied dryly, already typing in coordinates. She looked up to them with a wide smile and a light in her eyes. “I’ll see you all later-or you’ll see me.” She said brightly, and disappeared before any of them could answer.

“But–” Rory started, but she was already gone. He sighed and looked up to his in-laws. “Is anything ever going to happen in the right order?”

Both The Doctor and Rose opened their mouths to answer, but Amy beat them to it, grinning. “Oh, what would be the fun in that?”
Chapter End Notes

I am so sorry this took so long you guys. The last month of my life has just been one fire after another. It was finals and then graduation mayhem and health drama and family drama, and I just couldn't clear my head enough to get through such a long and heavy chapter. Anyway, it's finally here, I'm graduating tomorrow morning, and I finally feel like I can write this again. Thank you so much for bearing with me ❤️
Bedtime Stories

Chapter Summary

Night Terrors

Chapter Notes

I know this took entirely too long. Explanation in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“I’m worried about him.” Alex muttered, looking up to his wife as she stood in front of him, already dressed for the graveyard shift at the hospital. “Why’s he terrified all the time?”

Claire sighed. “He needs help.” She answered, not for the first time.

Alex shook his head. “He’s got us.”

“He needs a doctor.”

George sucked in a breath. He was laid in bed, torch light pointed out- illuminating the dark corners of his bedroom, and he watched his parents hushed conversation through the crack in his door. Something about the word triggered something in the back of his mind. He closed his eyes. Fear running through his veins. “Please save me from the monsters.” He whispered. “Please save me from the monsters. Please save me from the monsters.”

It was a prayer, though the young boy wasn’t quite sure to whom.

Amy and Rory stood to one side of the console, still sipping their morning tea. They both looked up when The Doctor suddenly jumped back, yelping with surprise as his hand flew to his breast pocket.

He pulled out the psychic paper. “Please save me from the monsters.” He read out loud, pulling his chin back a bit. “Well, haven’t done this in a while.” He muttered, looking over to Rose.

Amy went up on her tiptoes to try and see them and the paper around the cloister bell. “Haven’t done what? What are you doing?”

The Doctor smirked, rocking back on his heels. “Making a house call.” He answered with a flourish, spinning around to start typing in coordinates and fly them through the vortex.

They landed a second later with a thud that sent Rory’s tea out of his mug and onto the console, causing the TARDIS to ding angrily at him as she steamed. Amy laughed and patted his arm while he huffed, and Rose and The Doctor glared at him before retreating to the doors.
They stepped out onto a night darkened street, a single lamp flickered ominously next to them, its glass murky from years of ware, it’s age only proving to lessen its usefulness.

Rory wrinkled his nose at the massive polluted puddle in the warped pavement, and carefully sidestepped around it. In front of them an overflowing garbage bin smelled greatly of gone off food and cat urine. “Uh, no offense, Doctor.” Rory started.

“Meaning the opposite.” The Doctor cut in dryly.

“-But we could get a bus somewhere like this.” Rory went on as if he hadn’t spoken.

“The exact opposite.” The Doctor amended with a significant look to his daughter.

Rose was spinning in a small circle next to him. “I think this is right down the road from the Powell Estate.” She observed distractedly, earning a curious head tilt from Amy that she ignored. “What year is it?” She asked, looking to her husband.

“Oh… 2011.” He answered breathing in deeply as if he could smell the year through the garbage and urine- which, Amy thought, he probably could.

She flipped her hair over her shoulder. “Suppose it can’t all be planets and history and stuff.” She said mildly.

The Doctor’s head snapped around to look over to her at that. “Yes, it can. Course it can. Planets and history and stuff. That's what we do. But not today. No. Today, we're answering a cry for help from the scariest place in the universe… A child's bedroom.”

The Time Lord couple walked off towards the estates at that, and Amy and Rory jogged to catch up with them after sharing a look. “History repeats itself then.” Amy commented, once they caught up just outside the doors.

The Doctor chuckled and tossed the psychic paper to her, while Rose hit the lift button. “Pretty close to, yeah.”

Rory read the words over her shoulder “‘Please save me from the monsters’?” He squinted up to them. “Who sent that?”

The lift doors opened and they piled in while Rose answered. “That’s what we’re here to find out.” She told them. “When we crash landed in Amy’s back garden it was because she was psychically linked to the TARDIS and she heard your distress.”

“So is it another psychic kid?” Amy asked, furrowing her brow.

Rose shrugged. “Could be. A lot of human kids are psychic on some level, but this one must be real scared if his plea was able to reach us. We were on the other side of the Universe at the time.”

Amy pulled her chin back at that. “I was praying to Santa Claus to send a policeman when you guys turned up.”

The Doctor and Rose both snorted, and the lift doors dinged open to the second floor. “The TARDIS can pick up on prayers- especially from telepaths. It’s how she so easily finds trouble... I’d imagine Bad Wolf made yours twice as strong.” The Doctor explained, ruffling Amy’s hair and placing a kiss to her temple for emphasis.

“Also not the first time he’s been called Father Christmas.” Rose added with a mischievous smirk.
“Actually the Glossian people’s depiction of Father Christmas does look exactly like my last regeneration” The Doctor said, distractedly turning a corner.

Rory and Amy both balked at that and turned to Rose for confirmation. Rose laughed and nodded. “These are the same people who also believe that ‘the Golden Rose’ is their creator, and ‘Father Christmas’ is a lower tier god acting as her pet, so.”

The Doctor smirked even as Amy and Rory laughed at him. “Alright,” He said, clapping his hands together and spinning around on his heel to face his family. “Eight floors, one scared child, I say we split up- two floors each.”

Rose squinted at him. “Never, in near two hundred years of travelling with you Doctor, has us splitting up ever been a good idea.” She said dryly. “You and me, we’ll take the top four, Amy and Rory you take the bottom- we’ll meet in the middle.”

Amy and Rory both nodded dutifully and turned to start knocking on doors before The Doctor could finish his indignant scoff. He turned to his wife, raising his brows as she grinned cheekily up at him. “You-” he started, wrapping an arm around her shoulders and leading her back into the lift. “You are the absolute worst.”

Rose giggled and hit the button for the eighth floor. “But you love me.” She tossed back easily, eyes glowing as she looked up to him again with that tongue touched smile.

“Oh, definitely.” He breathed, leaning down to kiss her.

Door duty was as atrocious as its always been- especially when the doors in question are just the average ones on the east end of London. On the seventh floor they paused to watch Amy and Rory walk across the adjacent concrete mezzanine corridor a few floors down. Both The Doctor and Rose furrowed their brows as they watched them walk right past a terrified looking boy in the window.

Rose let out a long breath. “Well, hopefully Melody is far off in their future.” She quipped.

The Doctor hummed, smirking a bit. “They don’t appear to be very observant, do they?”

They took the lift down to the fourth floor (another testament to the fact that Amy and Rory definitely were not checking every door), and ran into them just as they were coming off.

“Hey!” Amy grinned. “Any luck?”

“Three old ladies, a traffic warden from Croatia and a man with ten cats!” The Doctor answered easily, somehow finding excitement in even the dullest part of humanity.

Rory sighed. “What are we actually looking for?”

“Ten cats!” The Doctor exclaimed, earning indulgent smirks from the girls and an eye roll from Rory. “Scared kid, remember?”

“I found scary kids.” Amy informed him. “Does that count?”

“Er, try the next floor down.” Rose said, giving them a knowing look that they both reddened at. She snorted, patting them both on the shoulders as her and The Doctor walked past them without further explanation as to why they were on the floor not allocated to them.
“Catch you later!” The Doctor sung over his shoulder.

“Okay.” Amy agreed quietly, following Rory into the lift.

“I told you they’d know.” Rory said dryly as the doors closed. Amy hit his arm.

The Doctor rapped jauntily on the door to flat 407, holding the psychic paper out in front of him. The door swung inwards a second later to reveal a man in his mid-30’s.

“Oh, that was fast.” He said, looking between the two Time Lords.

The Doctor squinted, looking down to the psychic paper to see who he was supposed to be. “Was it?”

The man nodded, “Claire said she’d phone someone- social services.”

Psychotherapists, then. Lovely. “Yes!” The Doctor agreed, reading the credentials. “Ye...s!” Rose elbowed him in the ribs and he remembered not to look so pleased with his own identification.

He didn’t seem to notice though. “It’s not easy, you know.” He told them. “Admitting your kid’s got a problem.”

The Doctor shrugged- not really. “You’ve got a problem. I’ve got a problem. Bet they’re connected.” He said quickly. “I’m The Doctor- well,” he cut himself, looking to Rose. “We’re the doctors.... Apparently.” He added the last word under his breath in mild amusement before looking back up to the man. “Doctors and partners. Partnered-therapists! Like detectives but with less murder. Usually.” He grinned brightly as he rambled. “Doctor and Doctor Tyler- that’s us. Call me Doctor, and she’ll be Rose- keeps it less confusing.”

Rose rolled her eyes and stepped forward to shake the man’s hand. “What can we call you?” She asked, gently reminding her husband that that bit was important too.

“Um, Alex.” He answered, shaking both their hands, and jumping back a bit as The Doctor stepped over the threshold and walked past him.

“Hello, Alex!” The Doctor exclaimed merrily, and Rose shot Alex an apologetic look that The Doctor didn’t catch, as he was looking at the clearly labeled child’s bedroom in front of him. “So, tell me about George.”

Alex led them through to the sitting room, and The Doctor picked up the family album on the coffee table as him and Rose took the sofa while Alex took the chair. His hearts tightened at the photos of baby George, and he felt Rose’s hand land on his forearm gently.

“Ever since he was born he's been a funny kid.” Alex started.

“Funny's good. We like funny.” The Doctor smirked, looking to Rose with a knowing smirk. “Don’t we?”

Alex was shaking his head though. “He never cries. Bottles it all up, I suppose.” He told them with a long-suffering sigh. “Tell him off, he just looks at you.”

“How old is he?” Rose asked, glancing through the album.

“He was eight in January.” Alex answered. “I mean, he should be growing out of stuff like this,
shouldn't he?"

“Maybe.” The Doctor answered noncommittally, brow furrowing a bit as he put the album back on the table. “It's got worse though lately?” He asked.

Alex nodded. “Yeah. We talked about getting help. You know, maybe sending him somewhere. He started getting these nervous tics. You know, funny little cough, blinking all the time. But now it's got completely out of hand. I mean, he's scared to death of everything.”

“Pantophobia.” The Doctor said, more offhandedly than anything.

“What?” Alex squinted at him.

The Doctor glanced up, seeming only then to realise that he had spoken out loud. “That's what it's called. Pantophobia. Not a fear of pants though, if that's what you're thinking. It's a fear of everything…” He drifted off. “Including pants, I suppose, in that case.” Rose elbowed him again. “Sorry. Go on.”

Alex blinked. “He hates clowns.”

The Doctor tilted his head. “Understandable.”

He went on though. “Old toys too. He thinks the old lady across the way is a witch. He hates having a bath in case there's something under the water. The lift sounds like someone breathing.” He cut himself off, taking a deep breath. “Look, I don't know. I'm not an expert. Maybe you two can get through to him.”

Rose gave Alex that look that she was really good at- that one that just made everyone implicitly trust her, and the universe in general, that everything was going to be alright. “We’ll do our best.” She assured him.

The lift doors closed, and a second later they were falling.

Like the wire had snapped, suddenly there was nothing holding them up, wind rushed past them as they screamed- gravity taking hold.

They blacked out before impact.

They both woke up with loud groans. Rory rolled over on his side and squinted into the darkness. “Amy?” He whispered. “Amy? Are you here?”

Amy blinked in a valiant attempt to get her head to stop spinning. “Yeah. Here.” She answered crawling towards his voice. “No, here. It's me.” She grabbed his arms.

Rory pulled out his small pencil torch, clicking it on between them and near blinding Amy who groaned as the bright light hit her directly in the eyes. “You okay?” He asked, and looked around finally once she’d nodded. “What happened to the lift? We were in a lift, weren't we?”

The floor underneath their knees was wooden, and though she couldn’t see the edges, Amy could tell the room they were in was much bigger than a lift. “Yeah, yeah. We- I remember getting in and then-” She cut herself off at the look he was giving her. “What?”

“We're dead, aren't we?” He said miserably.
“Eh?”
Rory sighed, looking around him again. “The lift fell and we're dead.” It was a statement of fact now.

“Shut up.”
Rory shook his head. “We’re dead!” He exclaimed. “Again!”

“Oh, shut up.” Amy grumbled, pulling him up to standing. “Let's just find out where we are.”

They walked forward, towards a archway leading to a corridor, walking slowly in the unfamiliar and poorly lit environment. “You know, it's obvious what's happened.” Rory whispered.

Amy raised her brows, wondering if he was still convinced they were in some creepy form of an afterlife. “Yeah? Really? Because it's not obvious to me.”

“The TARDIS has gone funny again. Some... time... slippy... thing.” He always sucked at trying to explain things. “You know, your parents are back there in Eastenders-Land, and we're stuck here in the past. This is probably 1700 and something.”

Amy rolled her eyes. “Yay. My favourite year.” She commented dryly, not feeling the need to point out the fact that they hadn’t actually been in the TARDIS when they had fallen.

George’s breath stuttered as he pulled the quilt up to his chin, eyes wildly scanning the room. From outside the lift doors dinged and the wires whirred like the rasping of a beast. He gasped as the room shook, and sat bolt upright in bed, accidentally knocking the lamp off his bedside in the process with a loud crash.

His bedroom door flung open a second later to reveal his frantic father. “George! Are you okay?” Alex scanned his son quickly, taking in the fallen lamp, and realising what had happened. “Oh.” He breathed, visibly calming as he bent down to pick it up and kneel at George’s bedside. “Did you have a nightmare?” He asked, almost sounding hopeful.

“It wasn’t a nightmare. I wasn’t asleep.” George answered, eyes flicking up to the doorway as Rose and The Doctor entered. “Who are you?”

“I’m The Doctor, and this is Rose.” They both gave him soft eyes and small comforting smiles, but George immediately panicked again.

“A doctor? Have you come to take me away?” He asked fearfully.

“No, George.” Rose shook her head quickly, stepping forward a bit. “We’d just like to talk to you if that’s all right.”

The child’s shoulders dropped with his defenses at Rose’s voice. “What about?”

The Doctor pushed himself off the door jam at that to come to Rose’s side, the light from the sitting room giving them a sort of powerful glow. “About the monsters.” He answered seriously, and George blinked rapidly as he stared up at the Time Lords in wonder.

Amy and Rory followed the corridor until they came to a massive set of wooden doors. With a bit
of force and quite a lot of creaking they managed to push them open and find themselves in yet another poorly lit room. Amy walked forwards a bit, but immediately crashed into something, sending assorted utensils into the floor as she let out a small yelp. She spun back around to where Rory was shining the torch at her. “A bit neglected, wherever it is.” She huffed.

Rory nodded. “Let’s find the front door, at least. Then we can work out where we are… When we are.”

There was a large work table in front of them, and Amy picked up the pan that sat on it, tapping it curiously when it came up lighter than expected. “Rory?” She got her husband’s attention.

He hardly looked over though. “Hmm?” He asked distractedly.

“Look at this.”

Rory shook his head at her. “It’s a copper pan.” He said, before turning back around.

“No, it's not.” Amy sang. “It's wood.” She tapped the pan again for emphasis, the hollow airy sound proving her point for her. “It's made of wood and just painted to look like copper.”

Rory leaned towards the wooden pan, wrinkling his nose. “That is stupid.”

“Wait. Hang on.” Amy spotted something over his shoulder, a lamp modeled to look like it held a candle, but was clearly just a bulb, was on the wooden-kitchen counter. She flipped it over a few times. “There's a switch.” She said as she flipped it, and the flame-shaped bulb flickered to life.

“Well, not seventeen hundred and something, then.” Rory breathed, and they began opening the drawers in the sideboard using the newly found light source.

They both jumped back with small screams when the third one opened to reveal a massive eye staring back at them.

Amy reached her hand out hesitantly when it didn’t move, and her nails scraped against a hard surface. “It’s glass.” She breathed. “It’s a huge glass eye.”

Hers and Rory’s eyes met, and between them his torch light flickered once, twice, three times-

“Stop doing that.” Amy warned him.

Rory shook his head though. “It’s not me.”

Four, five times, and finally it stopped. Rory took a deep breath, stealing himself. “Come on.” He said determinedly, starting towards the doors on the opposite side.

“Yeah.” Amy nodded, starting to follow him with lamp in hand, but pivoting around in the last second. “Hang on.” She said, and went to grab the wooden pan- holding it out in front of her as a weapon as she took the lead.

The Doctor sat at the end of George’s bed, fiddling with a Rubik’s Cube and hardly listening to Alex as he paced the room, while Rose leaned against the footboard and did a much better job at looking attentive.

“Maybe it was things on the telly, you know?” Alex offered.
“Right.” The Doctor spoke up distractedly before Rose could.

“Scary stuff, getting under his skin, frightening him.” Alex went on.

“Mmm-hmm,” The Doctor mumbled, and Rose held back the impulse to smack him round the head.

“So we stopped letting him watch.”

The Doctor finally looked up at that, looking fully offended on George’s behalf. “Oh you don’t want to do that.” He scoffed, giving George a surreptitious wink and earning a fraction of a smile from the boy.

Alex looked between the two Time Lords. “Then Claire thought it might have been something he was reading…”

The Doctor clapped his hands together at that. “Great! Reading’s great! You like stories, George?” He leaned forward, until his elbow supported his weight on the bed, and George nodded. “Yeah? Me, too. When I was your age, about, ooo, a thousand years ago, I loved a good bedtime story. The Three Little Sontarans, The Emperor Dalek’s New Clothes, Snow White And The Seven Keys To Doomsday… eh? All the classics!” He grinned brightly, looking for all the world like a little kid with his floppy hair falling in his eyes. He looked down to the nowhere-near-solved Rubik’s Cube in his hand and wrinkled his nose before tossing it over his shoulder and into the floor. “Rubbish. Must be broken. I hate those things.”

Rose cleared her throat pointedly, and The Doctor glanced up to see Alex staring between him and the carelessly discarded toy incredulously. “Better tidy it away though, eh?” The Doctor amended quickly, standing up and going to pick up the puzzle.

Him and Rose had both noticed how George’s eyes would occasionally flicker over to the cupboard- specifically when his father listed off anything he found scary, and so The Doctor took a small step towards it, studying George carefully as he did. “How about in here?” He said casually, but George immediately stiffened, eyes widening as he sucked in a sharp breath. The Doctor’s hand fell from where it was moving to turn the lock. “No? Not in the cupboard? Why not in there George?”

Rose moved to sit beside the scared child, and his hand jutted out to grab hers on sheer impulse. Alex sighed heavily. “It’s a thing. A thing we got him doing ages back. Anything that frightens him, we put it in the cupboard. Creepy toys, scary pictures- that sort of thing.”

“And is that where the monsters go?” The Doctor asked, looking to George and getting his answer from the wide eyes and white-knuckled grip on Rose’s arm. “Yeah…” The Doctor turned slowly towards the cupboard. “There’s nothing to be scared of, George…” He said quietly, taking careful steps forward and stretching his arm out towards the lock. “It’s just a cupboard…” His fingertips just barely graced the key…

BANG! BANG! BANG!

They all four jumped at the unexpected knock, then breathed a simultaneous breath a relief when they realised it was only the front door.

Alex sighed, giving Rose and The Doctor small nods before exiting the room as another knock sounded.
From around the corner they could see a large, sweaty, and unpleasant looking man push past Alex into the flat. He had a bulldog on a chain, growling and slobbering as it sniffed the air. Alex said something about rent money, and George stiffened even further, and The Doctor took that as his cue.

He stepped between the boy’s line of sight to the door, holding the sonic screwdriver out in front of him and clicking it on and off—effectively gaining the child’s attention and curiosity. “Is that a torch?” George asked, looking up to the Time Lord, finally letting go of Rose’s hand—allowing her to move to shut the door and mostly cover the noise of the landlord’s berating of his father.

“Screwdriver. A sonic one.” The Doctor corrected easily, plopping down in the space Rose had vacated. “And other stuff.”

George sat forward as Rose came to sit on The Doctor’s other side. “Please may I see the other stuff?” He asked politely.

“You may.” The Doctor nodded, smirking as he pointed the sonic towards the plethora of battery-powered robots and trucks that littered the floor, making them all light up and move about (more fully covering the noise of the argument just outside). “Pretty cool, eh?” He yelled over the noise, laughing.

A small smile finally graced George’s features as he watched his toys zoom about the room. “That’s better.” The Doctor smirked, tweaking the child’s cheek. “No tears from George, that’s what I’ve heard. Go on, give us a smile.” George looked up to him, seeming to be genuinely happy now, and The Doctor smiled down at him. “There’s a brave little soldier.”

George looked back to his toys and The Doctor let out a long breath. “Bit rusty at this.” He mumbled to Rose, and she gave a small smile, happy to just sit back and watch him be his usually amazing self with kids. Her heart ached, but mostly it sang.

He clapped his hands on his thighs and jumped up. “Anyway, let’s open this cupboard, eh?” He pointed the screwdriver at it. “There’s nothing to be…” His voice trailed off as the sonic shook in his hand with the scan. “Off the scale.” He whispered, eyes widening as he took shaky steps back. “Off the scale... How?” He stuttered, and behind him Rose pulled George closer to her as she felt her husband’s fear.

The door burst open again and Alex came through, putting on a brave face for his son. “Right. Sorry about that. So, have we got this thing open yet?” He took long quick steps towards the cupboard.

“No!” The Doctor shouted, jumping forward to stop him from opening it. “No, no, no, no, no! You don’t want to do that!”

Alex stared at him incredulously. “Why?”

The Doctor set the father with a serious look. “Because George's monsters are real.”

They come to another room, similar to all the others in that it was dark and mostly empty save for a few random objects. An overturned birdcage and a fake candelabra with paper flames sat on the floor. Against the wall, a grandfather clock that made Amy feel once again like something was off.

Rory turned to the set of french doors that appeared to be an exit. “Oh, at last!” He exclaimed, but then a second later a loud thud as he banged his head against the door with a groan.
Amy spun around. “What is it?”

“No doorknob.” Rory complained. “Wooden pans, a massive glass eye, and now no doorknob!”

Amy shook her head. “And this clock.” She whispered, reaching her hand out. There wasn’t any ticking filling the room like there should have been, and now she knew why.

“What?”

She ran her fingers across the wooden clock face. “Look… the hands- they're painted on.”

Child’s laughter rang out creepily from the next room over, followed by running footsteps. Amy’s and Rory’s eyes met as their breath faltered. Rory held up a silent finger, and they carefully made their way towards the noise.

The Doctor started shuffling through all the kitchen cabinets while Rose leaned against the counter, biting her thumb nail in silent contemplation.

Alex stormed in after them. “You're supposed to be professionals!” He yelled at them. “I'll never get him to sleep now! You’re so… irresponsible.”

“No, Alex. Responsible. Very. Cupboard bad. Cupboard not good. Stay away from cupboard.” The Doctor rambled only half-way sensibly as he found the mugs. “And there's something else. Something I've missed. Something staring me in the face.” He glanced over just as Rose looked up to him.

‘There’s something about George.’ She whispered telepathically. ‘Or... his parents. Something is wrong.’

‘Yes, but what is it?’ He asked, but she only shrugged in response.

Alex, unaware of their silent conversation, pushed forward. “Look, I'd like you to leave, please. You're just making things worse.” The Doctor ignored him as he continued speaking to Rose and adding tea bags, and Alex huffed in annoyance, pulling the mugs away from him. “Will you stop making tea! I want you to leave!”

The Doctor looked up to him, just now processing that he’d been speaking at all, and furrowed his brow. “No.”

Alex looked between him in Rose. “What? What do you mean no?”

The Doctor walked past him to the fridge as Rose gave an apologetic look and silently chastised her husband for his rudeness. Alex huffed and followed The Doctor, slamming the fridge shut in his face. “Leave. Get out.”

The Doctor squinted at him and pulled the fridge open again, and Alex caught it. “Now, please!” The Doctor just raised his brows and leaned against the appliance in a sort of silent challenge, and Alex let out a long suffering sigh. “Look, maybe this was a bad idea. We should sort out George ourselves.”

The Doctor raised his brows again at that and successfully opened the fridge and extracted the milk. “You can't.” He replied simply, going back to the mugs.
“No one's going to tell us how to run our lives!” Alex insisted. “I don't care who you are or what wheels have been set in motion. We'll sort it.”

The Doctor turned slowly to look at him now. “I'm not just a professional. I'm The Doctor.” He said.

Alex shook his head. “What's that supposed to mean?”

The Doctor set him with a hard look, and Rose took a deep breath as she felt the speech oncoming. “It means I've come a long way to get here, Alex. A very long way. George sent a message. A distress call, if you like. Whatever's inside that cupboard is so terrible, so powerful, that it amplified the fears of an ordinary little boy across all the barriers of time and space.”

“Eh?”

“Through crimson stars and silent stars and tumbling nebulas like oceans set on fire. Through empires of glass, and civilizations of pure thought. A whole, terrible, wonderful universe of impossibilities. You see these eyes? They're old eyes. And one thing I can tell you, Alex. Monsters are real.”

Alex’s mouth had fell open at some point, and he struggled to close it as he stared between The Doctor and Rose- who was looking up him sheepishly through her lashes, thumb nail still firmly between her teeth, though he could now see a sort of eerie golden glow around her. “You're not from Social Services, are you?”

The Doctor smirked. “First things first… You got any Jammie Dodgers?”

The next door creaked open to a foyer with some more doors and set of stairs. More child’s laughter bounced around the walls. “You hear that?” Amy whispered.

“Yeah.” Rory nodded, and then held his hand out as Amy made to step forward. “Wait.”

More footsteps ran around them, and the laughter got louder. “They're getting closer.” Amy sounded worried now.

Rory looked over to her. “‘They?’” He repeated, and Amy swallowed thickly.

They came to the door from where the giggling was coming, and flung it open.

On the other side, a five foot tall wooden doll stood with black holes for eyes and patchy string hair that fell over worn clothes.

Amy chuckled breathlessly as her fear ebbed. “Oh, it's just a- it's a dummy.” She smiled over to Rory. “It's just a dummy.”

Rory shook his head though, staring at the creepy overly large doll. “This is weird.”

Amy huffed, rolling her eyes. “Yeah, says the time travelling nurse married to an alien.” She earned a small laugh from him at that and she counted it as a victory, though she sobered when she looked back to the dummy. “Yeah, er, let's just leave that for now. Come on.”

They turned on their heels to try the other doors, and didn’t see the doll turn to watch them go.
They gathered in the living room to formulate a plan, and The Doctor picked up the photo album again, pausing on the pictures from Christmas Eve. “What is it with these photos?” He mumbled distractedly before shrugging and tossing it towards Rose as he clapped his hands together and began pacing. “Anyway. Good. Nice tea. Nothing like a cuppa. But! Decision! Should we open the cupboard?”

Alex choked on his tea, rather ungracefully spitting it back into the mug. “What?” He sputtered. He raised his brows. “Should we?”

“Well…” Alex started.

“Got to open the cupboard, haven't we. Course we have. Come on, Alex. Alex, come on. How else will we ever find out what's going on here?” The Doctor was developing that manic energy he got when they entered unknown territory, but Rose was too busy squinting at the album to really notice.

“All right, but you said-”

“Monsters. Yeah, well, that's what I do. Breakfast, dinner and tea. Fight the monsters. So this, this is just an average day at the office for me.” He shrugged, tilting his head and nodding like he was just now hearing his own words after the fact, and finding them well enough.

Alex nodded, feeding off The Doctor’s energy. “Okay, yeah. You're right.”

The Doctor, however, was unused to not having Rose in his head, calming him down. She was too distracted. “Or maybe we shouldn't open the cupboard.” He second guessed himself and telepathically prodded at Rose to no avail.

“Eh?”

“We have no idea what might be in there! How powerful, how evil that thing might be!” He rambled.

“We don't?”

“Come on, Alex! Alex, come on! Are you crazy? We can't open the cupboard!”

Alex shook his head vehemently, eyes filled with fear, and swallowing thickly. “God, no, no, we mustn't.”

“Right.” The Doctor clapped Alex’s cheeks. “That settles it.”

“Yes.” He nodded, but then squinted confusedly. “Settles what?”

The Doctor spun on his heel towards George’s room, fixing his jacket smartly on his shoulders. “Going to open the cupboard.”

George hid behind his father’s legs, breathing heavily as The Doctor once more approached the cupboard.

He reached out slowly.

His fingers closed around the key.
He turned it.

Once.

Twice.

The lock clicked.

The door creaked.

He flung it open.

Nothing happened.

Shirts and coats, assorted broken toys, and an old dolls’ house littered the cupboard, but no monsters. All their shoulders fell as their muscles relaxed and their breathing evened out, but The Doctor shook his head, shuffling through the clothes and toys confusedly. “I don't understand it. It has to be the cupboard. The readings from the sonic screwdriver, they were-”

He cut himself off as Rose finally figured it out, and she ran into the room a second later, photo album in hand. “Alex…” She started. “How old did you say George was?”


“So you remember when he was born, then?” The Doctor jumped in.

“Of course.”


Rose looked down to George and saw his chest heaving. ‘Doctor.’ She warned her husband silently, but he didn’t listen.

“.Couple of weeks before George was born. Tell me about the day he arrived. Must have been wonderful.”

“Well, it was the best day of my-” Alex cut himself off suddenly, looking down to the floor with a long pause, “-life.” He finished eventually, determindely, and Rose pulled George into her side as he began breathing heavily again.

The Doctor raised his brows at the hesitance. “Sure?”

“Yes.”

“You don't sound sure.”

“What are you trying to say? Look, I don't like this. I've told you before, I want you to go.” Alex was yelling again, acting human in trying to ignore his problems and kick them out the door.

In Rose’s arms, George was shaking. ‘Doctor.’ She warned him again to no avail.

“What's the matter, Alex?” The Doctor challenged.

“I can't- I don't-” Alex sputtered, eyes widening as he began pacing. “Oh, this is scary.”
“No, Alex, this is scary.” The Doctor flipped the photo album back open to the 11th of January, 2003. “Claire with baby George. Newborn, yes?”

“Yes?”

“Doctor.” Rose tried speaking out loud as George wrapped his arms around her waist. He ignored her, flipping back to the Christmas Eve party. “Less than a month after Christmas.”

Alex shook his head. “So?”

“So look! Look! Claire's not pregnant!” The Doctor finally got to the point.

“What?”

“Doctor!”

“Not pregnant!”

“Well, of course not!” Alex shouted back. “Claire can't have kids!”

There was a long pause.

“Say that again.” The Doctor whispered.

Alex looked terrified. “We tried everything. She was desperate. As much IVF as we could afford, but… Claire can't have kids… How? How can I have forgotten that?”

They turned slowly towards George, who was looking up at them with wide eyes, grip tightening in Rose’s top. “Who are you, George?” The Doctor asked, and Rose glared at him.

“It's not possible-” Alex sputtered. “This isn't…”

“George?” The Doctor raised his brows at him.

The lift started whirring, making his toys shake more erratically than it should. The noise filled the room and deafened their ears. Beside them the table lamp glowed brightly, and behind them the cupboard door flung itself open again, filling the room with a sickening white light.

George gasped and started hyperventilating, burying his face into Rose’s arm as the light started pulling Alex and The Doctor into the cupboard.

“GEORGE! GEORGE, WHAT’S GOING ON? ARE YOU DOING THIS?” The Doctor yelled over the noise, fighting against the invisible force that pulled at him.

“What’s happening?” Alex shouted.

Tears filled George’s eyes as he hid himself in Rose’s arms. “Please save me from the monsters.” He begged her. “Please save me from the monsters. Please save me from the monsters.”

Rose looked up into the light as Alex and The Doctor continued to be dragged back kicking and screaming. The only thing she could do was promise she’d fix this. And a second later the men were gone, the cupboard was shut, and the room was dark once more. The only noise remaining was George’s desperate pleas.
They found themselves in yet another corridor. “Why aren’t there any lights?” Rory complained. “I miss lights. You don’t really miss things till they’re gone, do you? It’s like what my nan used to say. You’ll never miss the water till the well runs dry.”

“Rory.” Amy huffed.

“Except light, I mean, not water. Lights are great, aren’t they? I mean if this place was all lit up, we wouldn’t even be worried at all.” He continued rambling.

“Rory.” Amy cut him off, finally getting him to look at her. “Panicking, a bit.”

“Yeah, yeah. Sorry.”

She was about to tell him it was okay, but was cut off as a large sweaty man- the landlord that they’d met earlier- came running into the room.

“Help me, please! Keep them away from me! Keep them away!” He begged them desperately.

From the side, the life sized doll appeared seemingly from nowhere, grabbing him round the neck with a stiff wooden arm. He screamed and struggled, but only seconds later his fear was silenced as stringy hair sprouted from his swelling head. He was turned into a doll.

They turned to face Amy and Rory. A third one joined from behind.

“I take it all back.” Amy whispered, pulling Rory backwards. “Panic now.”

They ran back the way they’d come, the dolls chasing after them with creepy child’s laughter.

“Don’t run away! We want to play!” A little girl’s voice called.

They find another door and slam it shut behind them, putting all their weight against it as their chests heaved.

Amy shouted suddenly, grabbing at her temples.

“What, what is it?” Rory sputtered.

“I don’t know!” Amy yelled over the ringing in her ears, pressing her palms as firmly as she could against her temples. “It’s- I don’t know. It’s like-” She looked up suddenly as her vision cleared. “The Doctor’s here.” She whispered.

“What?”

“The Doctor. My father. He’s here. He’s in the doll’s house.” Amy grabbed her husband’s shoulders, eyes widening seriously as she swallowed. “I can feel him.”

The Doctor sat up on the floor and ran to the nearest door to bang on it loudly. “George! George, don’t do this. We want to help you, George!” He shouted.

Alex was slower to catch on. “We went, we went into the cupboard… We went into the cupboard… How can it be bigger in here?”

“More common than you’d think, actually.” The Doctor circled the dining table in the center of the room, and sniffed the wooden chicken. “You’re okay.”
“Where are we?”

“Obvious, isn't it?”

“No.”

“Dolls' house. We're inside the dolls' house.” The Doctor made a sort of grand gesture about the room.

“The dolls' house?”

“Yeah, in the cupboard, in your flat. The dolls' house.”

“No, no, just slow down, would you?”

The Doctor huffed. Slowing down wasn’t an option. “Look.” He said, picking up the things on the table and tossing them at Alex in turn. “Wooden chicken. Cups, saucers, plates, knives, forks, fruit, chickens. Wood.” He listed off quickly. “So, we're either inside the dolls' house or this a refuge for dirty posh people who eat wooden food. Or termites. Giant termites trying to get on the property ladder. No. That's possible. Is that possible?” He picked up the wooden melon and tossed that at Alex as well. “Wait no. What’s that?”

The Doctor spun on his heel. Suddenly feeling the other telepathic presence in his mind. It felt familiar somehow. But an old sort of familiar. Something he hasn’t felt in a long time. “Is that...” He started. “No... it can’t be.” He turned in a wide circle. “AMELIA!” He shouted suddenly.

“What? Who’s Amelia?”

“My daughter.”

“Your what?”

“Hush.” The Doctor marched purposely from the room, following the telepathic connection. Familial connections weren’t like marriage bonds. He couldn’t speak to her; he could only project certain emotions and use it to find her. Distantly, he could feel Alex chasing after him, but his mind was racing at a mile a second with a thousand and one different thoughts.

“Look, will you stop?” Alex shouted desperately to no result. “What is he? What is George? And how could I forget that Claire can't have kids? How?”

“Perception filter.” The Doctor answered distractedly. “Some kind of hugely powerful perception filter convinced you and Claire- everyone. Made you change your memories. Now, what could do that?” He spun in a small circle and continued down the corridor and into the entrance hall.

The dolls started pushing against the door again. “So you’re telepathic now? It started working or whatever?” Rory asked over the banging and creepy giggling.

“Yes- no- I don’t know!” Amy shouted back.

“Can you talk to him?”

“No. It’s just like- I know he’s here. He’s confused. And getting closer.”

“And what do we do with that?”
“I don’t know— Ah!” Amy cut herself off with a scream as the door pushed open and the doll’s head came around the corner.

“Come play with us!” It sang.

Rory ran to the massive spool towards the middle of the room, using all of his strength to push it towards the door. Amy helped him as it came into her reach, and together they blockaded the entry to the library.

They backed up as the dolls continued to bang against the door, but it remained closed. “What now?” Rory breathed. “They can’t get in.”

Amy looked around to the bookcase lined walls surrounding them. “Yeah, and we can’t get out.”

In the next room there’s a birdcage, a candelabra, and an old-fashioned lantern. The Doctor kneeled down to examine the later, sensing Amy’s recent presence.

“They’ve been here.” He mumbled to himself. “So, Claire can’t have kids and something responded to that- responded to that need. What could do that?” He looked up to Alex.

“I thought you were the expert- fighting monsters all day long! You tell me!”

The Doctor spun in a circle at that to get in his face. “Oi! Listen, mush! Old eyes, remember? I’ve been around the block a few times. More than a few. They’ve knocked down the blocks I’ve been round and re-built them as bigger blocks. Super blocks! And I’ve been round them as well. I can’t remember everything.”

Suddenly, the noise of the lift filled the house, and Alex looked around wildly. “Doctor-”

The Doctor wasn’t listening anymore. “It’s like trying to remember the name of someone you met at a party when you were two."

“Doctor, the lift.”

“-And I can't just plump for Brian like I normally do”

“He cut himself off suddenly. “Shush. What's that?”

Alex huffed exasperatedly. “It's the lift. It's the sound that the lift makes. George is scared stiff of it.”

Next to them, the five candelabra lights go out one by one.

Amy and Rory were pacing the library frantically. “He’s two rooms away at most.” Amy mumbled. “We can't stay in here. We've got to get out.” She took Rory by the shoulders.

“Er, how?”

Her eyes widened with the manic energy she got from her father. “Take control, Rory. Take control of the only thing we can: Letting them in.”
“Letting them in?” Her husband repeated incredulously.

“It'll surprise them.” Amy spread her fingers out wide in front of her, looking slightly insane. “We open the door and we push past them. Kick them, punch them, anything, okay?”

The incessant knocking increased along with the giggling. “Time to play!” One of them sang.

Rory nodded, knowing already that he was going to regret this, but seeing no other alternative. “Okay.” He agreed, grabbing the mop from next to the bookshelves and steeling himself as Amy dragged the cotton spool away.

“GO!” Amy shouted as the first doll fell flat on its face, and Rory pushed past the next. But then it grabbed Amy.

“RORY!” She shouted desperately, but it was too late. She’s turned to wood.

Rory watched in horror as the Amy-Doll turned toward him, and he backed away on shaking knees, finding the stairs behind him and running up them as the dolls sing eerily after him.

“Tick tock goes the clock, and all the years they fly. Tick tock goes the clock, and you and I must die.”

Alex watched as the candelabra continued to flicker. The five bulbs going out one by one before coming back on. “Five times.” He mumbled.

The Doctor was rubbing at his temples. Amy had been in danger, and then she was suddenly gone-just static. “What?” He asked distractedly.

“The lights.” Alex answered as he continued to watch the electric candle. “It's happening five times. It's like one of George's habits… We have to switch the lights on and off five times.”

The Doctor kneeled down next to him, and clapped him on the back. “Now you're getting it.”

“What do you mean?”

“What do you tell George to do, Alex, with everything that scares him?”

“Well, put... put it in the cupboard.” Dawning realisation finally graced the father’s features.

“Exactly. And George isn't just an ordinary little boy, we know that now, so anything scary he puts in here. Scary toys, like the dolls' house. Scary noises, like the lift. Even his little rituals have become part of it. A psychic repository for all his fears- one powerful enough to kick Amy’s long dormant abilities back to life.” He looked down, whispering to himself again. “But what is he?”

Behind them, the door creaked open, and a five foot wooden dolly entered, staring at them menacingly with empty black eyes.

“Oh, my God.” Alex grabbed The Doctor's arm as they stood up, backing away as the doll advanced on them, movements disjointed and unsettling.

The Doctor pulled out the sonic screwdriver and pointed it at the monster.

“A gun?” Alex asked incredulously. “You've got a gun?”
“It's not a gun!” The Doctor shot back, scoffing, and then making an exasperated noise as the sonic did nothing to hinder the doll’s progress. “Wood! I've got to invent a setting for wood! It's embarrassing!”

He pulled Alex play the sleeve around the corner, and found a giant pair of pinking shears leaning against the wall. He used it to prod the doll back, and they make their escape.

“Don't run away! We just want to play!” A creepy little girl’s voice called after them.

The Doctor shoved the shears at Alex as he ranted to himself while hey ran. “Massive psychic field, perfect perception filter, and that need- that need of Claire's to... to-” He cut himself off suddenly and hit his forehead. “Stupid Doctor. Ow.”

“What?” George shouts over the incessant giggling and singing.

“What's he doing?”

Wooden dollies were approaching on all sides, and The Doctor spun in wild unarmed circles about the room while Alex used the scissors to protect his back. “A cuckoo. A cuckoo in the nest. A Tenza. He's a Tenza. Millions of them hatch in space and then woof, off they drift, looking for a nest. The Tenza young can sense exactly what their foster parents want and then they assimilate perfectly.” He explained as they started up the stairs.

“George is an alien?” Alec had gone pale during The Doctor’s explanation.

“Yes!”

“But he's- he's our child!”

“Of course he is. The child you always wanted. He sensed that instinctively and sought you out, but something scared him. Started this cycle of fear. It's all completely instinctive- subconscious. George isn't even aware that he's controlling it. So we have to make him aware…”

Rose held the crying child to her as she listened to her husband’s racing thoughts.

“Please save me from the monsters. Please save me from the monsters. Please save me from the monsters.” George pleaded desperately over and over again.

“Shhh, shhh, hey it’s okay.” Rose ran her fingers through the boys hair, trying to calm him down.

‘Rose! He’s a Tenza! He’s a Tenza!’ The Doctor shouted suddenly in her head even though it was completely unnecessary- she’d been listening to everything he’d been saying to Alex.

“George,” she started, pulling back so that she could look down to him and wipe the tears from his eyes. “George, listen to me. I’m gonna help you, okay? But you’re the only one who can stop this. I’m-”

George shook his head vehemently, but she placed her hand over his and continued. “I’m gonna be right here the entire time. I’m not going to leave you. But you have to face your fears. You have to believe in me, and know you’re safe.”
“Doctor!”

He spun around to see Rory coming down the stairs above him, fighting off yet more dolls with a mop. “Rory! Where’s Amy?”

Rory pointed to the red-headed doll he was fending off.

The Doctor swallowed. “Oh no… George! George!”

They could hear The Doctor’s shouts coming from the cupboard now as they stood in front of it.

“George you have to end this now! You have to end it!”

He looked up to Rose, and she nodded reassuringly. He took slow, careful steps towards the cupboard, and finally, he turned the lock.

The dolls stopped moving suddenly, falling limply at the waist. George was standing at the bottom of the staircase. “George. George, you did it. You did it. Hey, it's okay. It's all okay now. Everything's going to be fine.” The Doctor spoke breathlessly, leaning over the bannister.

As soon as the words were out of his mouth though, the dolls started moving again, making their way now towards George.

“No! No! No, no, no, no, no! George, you created this whole world! This whole thing! You can smash it. You can destroy it!”

George shook his head though, fear coursing through him in the doll house of his worst nightmares.

The Doctor squeezed his eyes shut as he ranted. “Something's holding him back. Something’s holding him back. Something-”

‘He asked if we had come to take him away.’ Rose reminded him, showing him the memory, and his eyes snapped open as it all fell together.

“That's what did it! That's what the trigger was!” He turned to Alex who was watching in horror as the dolls moved in on his son. “He thought you were rejecting him. He thought he wasn't wanted, that someone was going to come and take him away.”

“Well, we- we talked about it.” Alex stuttered.

“Yeah, and he heard you, Alex. A Tenza's sole function is to fit in, to be wanted, and you were rejecting him.”

“We just couldn't cope! We needed help!” He argued.

“Yes, but George didn't know that. He thought you were rejecting him. He still thinks it!”

“But how can we keep him? How can we? He's not-” Alex cut himself off suddenly.

The Doctor raised his brows challengingly. “Not what?”
His answer was barely a whisper. “He's not human.”

The Doctor shook his head. “No.” He agreed simply.

The dolls had completely surrounded George now. “Dad!” He cried out desperately.

The call triggered something deep in Alex though, because less than a second later he was springing into action, barreling down the stairs and pushing the dolls to the ground, freeing George and sweeping him into his arms.

“Whatever you are, whatever you do, you're my son, and I will never, ever send you away.” Alex cried. “Oh, George. Oh, my little boy.”

George tucked his face into his father’s shoulder, smiling fully for the first time in ages. “Dad.” He laughed happily.

The lift doors dinged open, and Amy and Rory walked out slowly.

“Was I…?” Amy started.

“Yeah.” Rory answered, sounding distant. Amy nodded, looking much the same.

Rose came running around the corner a second later though. “Amy!”

Amy’s eyes lit up. “Mum!” She shouted back, running to meet her and throw her arms around her in a fierce hug.

“Oh thank God you’re okay.” Rose whispered, pulling her daughter closer and willing her heartbeat to slow down. Her veins had been filled with nothing but ice cold fear since she saw through The Doctor’s eyes Rory point to the Amy-Doll.

Amy laughed and pulled back, smiling from ear to ear. “But I’m psychic now!” She informed her, positively beaming at the news. “I can feel you and Dad in my head and everything!”

Rose chuckled and tucked a stray hair back behind Amy’s ear. “Cool, isn’t it?”

Rose returned back to the flat in order to see George again, and somehow got roped into helping Alex make breakfast while The Doctor ran about with George and a plastic aeroplane. Alex caught George by the waist though as they came through the kitchen again, and lifted him up onto the counter, and The Doctor took that as his cue to finally take a breather.

George’s mother came through the door just as The Doctor was taking the kippers from the fridge.

“Oh, hello!” He exclaimed when he shut the refrigerator door to see a new face. “You're Claire, I expect.” He did that thing he does with the air kisses, and Rose rolled her eyes from behind him. “How’d you feel about kippers?” He asked, holding the food in question up before tossing it to Rose.

“Er who-” Claire started.

“They sent someone about George.” Alex answered before she could ask. “It's all sorted.”
From his perch on the counter, George was smiling and laughing as Rose spoke quietly to him, and The Doctor smirked at Claire’s surprised but pleased expression. “Yeah, we had a great time, didn’t we?” He asked George, ruffling his hair.

“Yeah!” George nodded, grinning up at him.

“See?” He looked back to Claire. She was clearly unused to seeing her son so care-free, and was understandably suspicious. “He's fine.” He assured her.

“What, just like that?” She asked incredulously.

“Yes. Trust me.” He answered seriously, and Rose came to his side as an additional reassuring presence.

Rose placed her hand on his arm. “Actually, we really should be off.” She reminded him gently, with a polite apologetic look to Alex and Claire before pulling him towards the door.

Alex caught them just as they were starting towards the lift. “Doctor, Rose, wait!” He called.

“Sorry, yes.” The Doctor shook his hand, “bye!” He said then tried to turn to leave again. One would really think with the amount of time he spent with humans (and not to mention being married to one) that he’d understand the social cues at least a bit better than he did.

“No, no, you can't just- I mean-” Alex stumbled over his words, trying himself to figure out what he meant.

The Doctor clapped him on the shoulder reassuringly. “It's sorted. You sorted it. Good man, Alex. Proud of you.” He tried to go again.

Alex stopped him again though. “What, that's it?”

“Well, apart from making sure he eats his greens and getting him into a good school, yes.” The Doctor chuckled.

“But is he going to, I don't know, sprout another head or three eyes or something?”

Rose bit back a snort as The Doctor smirked and shook his head. “He's one of the Tenza, remember. He'll adapt perfectly now.” George appeared behind his Dad at that, and The Doctor pointed to him. “Hey!” He looked back to Alex. “He’ll be whatever you want him to be.” They turned to go again, and made it about halfway towards the lift before turning around again. “We might pop back around puberty, mind you!” He called as an afterthought. “Always a funny time!”

Amy and Rory were sitting on the short cement wall in the garage block where’d they’d parked the TARDIS. “Come on, you two!” The Doctor exclaimed, coming to sit between them, Rose taking the side next to Amy. “Things to do, people to see, whole civilisations to save!” He patted Amy’s leg. “You feeling okay?”

She still looked a bit dazed, it had been quite a day afterall. “Er, I think so.”

The Doctor flung his arms around the two of them, and Rose bumped Amy’s shoulder comfortingly. “Well, it’s good to be all back together again- in the flesh.” The Doctor sighed, and then jumped up suddenly. “Come on!”
He led them into the TARDIS, and spun in a small circle as he hopped up the stairs towards the console. “Now, did someone mention something about planets and history and stuff?”

Chapter End Notes

Hello! Yes, I am aware that it was been two months!

Fun Facts about me: I have reverse seasonal depression! I'm not exactly sad, I'm just completely unmotivated in the Summer! I also have Lupus! And I'm preparing for a move half way across the country for college! So my life is a little bit hectic at the moment! I'm so so sorry that it took me so long to find both the inspiration and the motivation to write this chapter. I literally got up at 3am the other night when I realized I was writing in my head and that I could actually do this. I'm hoping this sudden kick sticks around!

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed!

Please leave comments as they are like half of my motivation!! 💖
Fear and Faith

Chapter Summary

The God Complex

Chapter Notes

I made the executive decision to skip episode 10 'The Girl Who Waited'. There was really no way for me to rewrite it without still causing them all more pain and trauma... and I think I've already done enough of that. So we're just gonna say Rose is a much better driver and she wouldn't have landed them there at that time in the first place.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rose was adding the fourth shade of purple to the Venusian sky on her canvas as she waited for Rory to say something.

It wasn’t the first time he’d done this, and he wasn’t the first one to do it either. From time to them all of them, whether it be her husband, her daughter, or her son-in-law, or any of their other friends who found themselves in the TARDIS now and again, eventually one of them would come into her study, plop themselves down on the oversized armchair she’d taken from her old London flat and put in the corner, stare up at the virtual skylights, and open their mouths every few minutes in an attempt to vocalize what was on their minds- until finally it would all come spilling out.

Rory opened his mouth for what had to have been the eighteenth time at this point, and Rose glanced up. Finally, finally, he spoke. “It’s... weird.” He said.

Rose raised her brows at the anticlimactic beginning, but he went on.

He let out a long breath, steeling himself, and then started. “Nearly every kid, when they’re little, thinks their parents are like some sort of all-knowing, infallible beings.” He said. “And then, as they grow up, they slowly begin to realise that they are actually, in fact, humans. Just normal, imperfect, often wrong, humans.”

Rose bit her lip and set her paintbrush down as Rory paused, sitting down in her chair and moving out from around her easel to give him her full attention as she saw where this was going.

“But Amy didn’t get that.” He said, predictably, without looking up to her. “She can’t get that.” He sighed. “Because when she was little she heard clerics telling stories about you two. Saving the world and fighting monsters. Saying you must have protected her. And she believed that.”

Rose’s chest tightened at the reminder of her daughter’s childhood, but she didn’t interrupt Rory as he continued.

“And then afterwards, you came, with your magic box and glowing and what not. And she was
seven years old. What was she supposed to think?” He paused, trying to find the right words. “To her, you were hope.” He glanced over to her for half a second. “Because after that, she really never did stop talking about you. Even without being there you two were her entire world... her entire belief system.”

He finally met her eyes and Rose held her breath on accident.

“And Amy will never tell you this,” Rory said, “and she’ll kill me if she ever finds out I told you, but she did not have a happy childhood. Sharon was... horrible. Constantly telling her she was wrong, that she was crazy...” He shook his head. “I mean... to her, you and The Doctor were hope that things would get better... Even in twelve years she never stopped believing in you. And not just in your existence, but in your... godliness.”

Rose opened her mouth to dispute the adjective, but Rory went on still.

“And then you came back. And you showed her the Universe and saved it just as often.” He sighed, scrubbing at his face tiredly. “It was her fairytale come to life. All the stories she used to tell were now her daily routine.”

Rory ran his hand through his hair as he paused. “And that thing that the rest of us get- that realisation that our parents are imperfect and human... It’s grounding, if a little startling... But she doesn’t get that. Because you aren’t. You aren’t human. And as far as she can tell you’re as close to perfect as it gets. And I’m pretty sure if she ever saw otherwise it would destroy her. Because like I said... you’re her entire belief system. Every thing she holds to be true comes back to you two.” Rory leveled Rose with a serious look. “She believes in love because of you. She believes in miracles because of you. She believes in happy endings, and finding a way out, that things will always work out in the end, and that no matter what you’ll find each other, and you’ll find her.”

Rose let out the breath she’d been holding and pulled her knees to her chest. “I know,” she replied quietly.

Rory shook his head. “Don’t get me wrong, I’m glad you found her. I’m glad she has you now, but... she’s refusing to grow up. She’s so desperate to get back the childhood that she never had- that was taken from her. And she’s completely lost sight of reality. And... I’m worried.”

They stared at each other for a few moments, but Rose was saved from having to find the words to answer something like that- something she knew was true, but hated to hear, as Amy herself came running into the room, eyes glowing brightly with the promise of adventure. “Come on!” She said, head peeking around the corner of the doorframe. “Dad says we’re going to Ravan-Skala!”

Minutes later they were leaning over an old wooden bannister, looking down a stairwell of an old, outdated hotel.

“Oh, this is weird...” Rose mumbled to herself as The Doctor grinned excitedly and ran down the stairs.

Amy let out a long-suffering sigh. “‘Let’s go to Ravan-Skala’ he says, ‘The people are six hundred feet tall. You have to talk to them in hot air balloons and the Tourist Information Centre is made of one of their hats,’ he says.” The Doctor ran back up the stairs, and she set him with a bored look. “I’m sorry, but I don’t see any huge hats.”

“Amy, Rory,” The Doctor started, throwing his arms around them while Rose wandered over to
look at the photos lining the walls of the reception area a few floors below where they’d landed, “this could be the most exciting thing I have ever seen.” His eyes were wide with wonder.

“You’re kidding.” Rory replied dryly.

“How can you be excited about a rubbish hotel on a rubbish bit of Earth?” Amy asked incredulously.

The Doctor ran back down the stairs as he felt Rose’s confusion, but paused to look back up to them. “Because, assembled Ponds, this is not Earth! It’s just been made to look like Earth! The craftsmanship involved! Can you imagine?” He sprinted back to reception, Amy and Rory following close behind.

“What? Then where are we?” Amy called after him.

“I don’t know! Something must have yanked us off course! Look at the detail on that cheese plant!” He sniffed the house plant set in the corner next to a bowl of apples.

“Right… but who would mock up an Earth hotel?” Rory asked fairly, going to stand beside Rose.

“Colonists maybe, recreating a bit of home, like when ex-pats open English pubs in Majorca. No, whoever did this, I am shaking his/her hand/tentacle.” The Doctor was bouncing excitedly on his toes now, and Amy couldn’t help but laugh at him.

“Love, look at this.” Rose spoke up finally, pointing to the labeled photos of people on the wall. She pointed to a photo of a Sontaran and read it outloud. “Commander Halke, defeat.” And then over to a human, “Tim Heath, having his photo taken.” Her eyes widened at the next one. “Lady Silver Tear, Daleks.” Her head snapped up at that one to look at her husband as that had finally gotten his attention. Lady Silver Tear was a Gallifreyan pseudonyme, and that coupled with ‘Daleks’- it didn’t bode well.


The Doctor sucked in a breath. “I don’t know.” He answered. “Let’s find out.” And he spun around to ring the bell on the reception desk.

Four seconds later three terrified looking people came charging around the corner, two of them brandishing makeshift weapons.

“Whoa!” Rose let out, spinning around quickly.

“Blimey, that was a bit quick!” The Doctor exclaimed, even as he took Rose and Amy by the hands and pulled them backwards.

The non-human-looking one waved a white handkerchief as if it were a flag. “We surrender!” He yelled over the noise of them all shouting exclamations at once.

Rory, hearing him and watching the man and woman threaten them, held up his hands placatingly. “No, it's okay, we're not-“

“We surrender!”

“We're nice.” He finished awkwardly.
The southern-Asian woman wearing scrubs waved her chair leg in the Doctor’s face, and he sputtered incredulously. “She's threatening me with a chair leg!”

She didn’t back down though. “Who are you?” She demanded.

The teenaged boy looked around for the first time apparently. “Oh god, we're back in reception.” He had an American accent.

“We surrender!” The rodent-looking alien tried again.

The Doctor was still in disbelief at the woman. “I've never been threatened with a chair leg before!” He grinned over at Amy, but held his finger up as a centuries old memory resurfaced. “No, hang on, I tell a lie.” He spun back around on his heel.

Amy barely heard her father. “Did you just say, ‘it's okay, we're nice’?” She raised a brow at Rory, who shrugged in response.

The rodent-man continued to surrender while the teenager continued to panic quite loudly and Rory tried to defend himself and Rose was trying to figure out when the last time The Doctor was threatened with a chair leg was.

“Okay, I need everyone to shut up, now!” The woman shouted over all of them, finally getting them to settle down- including The Doctor, which was an impressive feat in and of itself. She took careful steps towards the Time Lord family in front of her, examining them.

“Rita, be careful.” The teenager warned her.

She merely rocked back on her heels though, seemingly satisfied as her chair leg fell to her side. “Their pupils are dilated.” She informed her companions. “They're as surprised as we are. Besides which, if it's a trick, it'll tell us something.”

The Doctor grinned. “Oh, you're good. Oh, she's good.” He looked over to Rose. “Does it count as replacing if the last one turned out to be our daughter?”

Amy’s eyes widened at that as she looked between her parents “What?”

“I'm kidding!” He laughed, but then raised his brows at Rose and tilted his head towards Rita.

Rose sighed, patting her daughter comfortingly before turning towards the other alien in the room. “And going by the pathological compulsion to surrender, I’d hazard you’re from Tivoli.” She observed mildly.

He nodded. “Yes. The most invaded planet in the galaxy. Our anthem is called *Glory To ‘Insert Name Here.’* ” He snuffled in a sort of almost-laugh. “The name’s Gibbis.”

The Doctor nodded. “And you with the face,” he started.

“Howie.” Rita informed him pointedly.

“Howie,” The Doctor amended, starting again. “You said you were surprised to be back in reception.”


The Doctor squinted, processing that vague explanation. “You, clever one.” The Doctor spoke to Rita without looking over to her. “What's he talking about?”
Rita shook her head. “The corridors twist and stretch. Rooms vanish and pop up somewhere else... It's like the hotel's alive.” She answered ominously.

Howie’s eyes were blown wide, and the effect was further exacerbated by the thick lenses he wore. “Yeah, and it's huge, with, like, no way out.”

Rory pointed to the double doors behind him that looked like an exit. “Have you tried the front door?”

“No.” Rita replied dryly, giving him a dead sort of look. “In two days it never occurred to us to try the front door. Thank God you're here.”

Amy laughed smally at that while Rose patted his shoulder comfortingly, and The Doctor moved towards the doors in question, flinging them open only to be faced with a blank white wall. “They're not doors, they're walls.” He announced. “Walls that look like doors. Door-walls, if you like, or dwalls. Woors even. Though you'd probably got it when you said they're not doors. And, the windows are-” He drew back the curtains to his right to reveal more bricks. He huffed out a breath and spun back around. “Right, big day if you're a fan of walls.”

“It's not just that.” Rita spoke up again, looking mostly between The Doctor and Rose now. “The rooms have… things in them.”


Rita paused for a second before answering. “Bad dreams.” She said finally, slowly.

Rose bit her lip, stepping forward again. Suddenly the odd labeled photos lining the walls made sense. “How did you get here?” She asked them.

“I don't know. I'd just started my shift.” Rita told them, making a vague motion towards her scrubs. “I must have passed out, because suddenly I was here.”

Howie shrugged. “I was blogging. Next thing, this.”

They all turned to Gibbis next, and he appeared to be surprised that he was being considered at all. “Oh, I was at work. I'm in Town Planning. We're lining all the highways with trees so invading forces can march in the shade.” He replied pleasantly, but he looked down to the floor at the end, his own words seeming to catch up with him. “Which is nice for them...” He finished awkwardly.

They all made various sort of half-comital noises of agreement, and The Doctor clapped his hands together, moving to rest his arm over his wife’s shoulders. “So, what have we got? People snatched from their lives and dropped into an endless, shifting maze that looks like a 1980’s hotel with bad dreams in the bedrooms.” He summed up, looking down to her mischievously.

Rose snorted. “Well, apart from anything else, that's just rude.”

By silent agreement the two of them started back up the stairs, prompting the rest of them to follow. “We’ll pop back to the TARDIS, I'll do a planet-wide diagnostic sweep, and then we'll have a sing song.” The Doctor said as they hopped up to the third landing.

“...Or not.” Rose sighed as they turned the corner and the TARDIS was not anywhere to be seen.

“Where's the TARDIS?” Amy asked, looking around wildly as The Doctor stuck his hands out and made sure the police box hadn’t just gone into stealth mode. She raised her brows at her mum.
“You parked it there, didn't you?”

Before Rose could answer, Howie leaned around the bannister. “What's a tardis?” He asked, the pronunciation a bit stilted and hesitant.

Rory let out a long resigned breath, resting his elbows on the stair rail and rubbing his hands down his face tiredly. “Our way out. And it's gone.”

“Okay, this is bad…” The Doctor mumbled quietly. “At the moment, I don't know how bad, but certainly we're three buses, a long walk, and eight quid in a taxi away from good.” He looked over to Rose for answers she didn't have.

Rose still felt like there was plenty about the strange not-hotel that they didn’t understand to be leaving so quickly anyway. She turned back to the group. “Are there any more of you?” She asked, following a hunch.

Rita nodded, biting the inside of her cheek and looking to the side as she answered. “Joe… But he's tied up right now.”

The Doctor raised his brows at that. “Doing what?”

“No, I mean... he's tied up right now.”

Rose linked her arm through Amy’s as they made their way towards the banquet hall. They’d been experimenting with her telepathy since the doll house debacle, and found that she was much the same as other Gallifreyan/Time Lord children. If their walls weren’t up against her, she could sense her parents emotions, and relative location in respect to her. And, just like Rose had been when she'd first looked into the heart of the TARDIS, she could communicate with them when they were touching. A typical touch telepath- nothing lost in the fire.

‘You seem more worried than usual.’ Rose commented lightly, glancing at her daughter sideways.

‘Something about this place... it's just. Wrong.’ Amy shivered a bit, and Rose nodded in understanding.

They were going in circles, Rose was sure, but it’s not like she could expect anything less in a maze. Rita turned around to look at their small family as they followed her and the other two dutifully- The Doctor, for once, not attempting to take the lead (for now at least). “So, you lot have yet to introduce yourselves.” She said, raising her brows a bit.

The Doctor cleared his throat. “Right! Yes! I’m The Doctor, and this is my wife, Rose, and our daughter Amy, and our son-in-law Rory.” They all smiled awkwardly in turn while The Doctor grinned proudly.

Rita furrowed her brow, she opened her mouth to say something, but seemed to change her mind last second, only nodding slightly and turning back around.

‘Well, remember how you were saying no one was questioning the apparent lack of exceptional age difference between us?’ Rose smirked at her daughter. ‘Looks like we can’t say that anymore.’

Amy bit back a laugh. ‘Humans,’ she scoffed, glancing at her mother sideways and sharing a secret little smile with her.
“Ros’ze,” The Doctor started quietly, using her makeshift Gallifreyan name (the word for ‘purpose’), and making her head snap up to look at him as he spoke in his native tongue. “Veka trakulesu te kaharafequ’arazal czyfiro tempzesus.”

Rose failed to hold back her giggle as he informed her that they have passed their destination on four separate occasions now. “Ja pensane se ola’kala ke tu lasiaue-su nun, amvela.” (I think it’s okay if you speak up now, love), she told him through her amused chuckles.

The Doctor cleared his throat again, even though the rest of the group was already listening intently to him and Rose speak in the unfamiliar language. “Let’s try this way, shall we?” He suggested mildly, as though it was just as much a guess to him as it was to them. Though the large french doors inlaid at the end of the corridor he pointed down with the large sign indicating it was a Banquet Hall, very much gave away his game. He smiled, rocking back on his heels before taking the lead once more.

Loud, raucous laughter was coming from the hall, and The Doctor peeked his head in this time rather than flinging the doors open. There were a dozen white linen covered tables with plate settings without any dinner, and at every single seat, save for one, sat a wooden ventriloquist dummy, their heads bobbing up and down as they laughed loudly and raucously- filling the room with a sort of drone.

The Doctor took a few hesitant steps forward, his family following close behind, and then eerie silence filled the room as all the laughter stopped all at once- the dummy heads all turning to look at him, some of them turning their neck 360º to achieve the effect.

“One day,” Rory mumbled to Amy, “a dummy is just going to be a dummy.”

The dolls heads turned to follow The Doctor as he walked towards the centre table, where a man sat on his own, tied to a chair- sweat drenching his brow as he looked around wildly, a disjointed crazed smile disrupting what were likely, under normal circumstances, quite handsome features. He’d clearly already lost his mind. The Doctor grabbed a nearby chair and set it across from Joe, sitting down and folding his hands neatly in front of him. “Hello, I’m The Doctor.” He started.

Joe’s eyes were wide. “We’re all going to die here.” He informed him, smile still firmly in place.

“Well, they certainly didn't mention that in the brochure.” The Doctor quipped, sitting forward. “Is Joe there? Can I have a quick word?”

Joe smirked. “Oh, it's still me, Doctor, but I've seen the light. I lived a blasphemous life, but he has forgiven my inconstancy, and soon he shall feast.”

“Well, you've been here two days. What's he waiting for?”

Joe shook his head and laughed at him. Like he knew a joke- a secret. “We weren't ready.” He whispered. “We were still raw.”

“But now you're what…” The Doctor tilted his head, zeroing in on the horseshoe tie pin and dice cufflinks. “Cooked?”

Joe shrugged. “If you like.” He nodded, his pupils blown wide. “Soon you will be, too. Be patient. First, find your room.”

“My room.” The Doctor repeated, like a question.

“There's a room here for everyone, Doctor.” He turned towards Rose suddenly, grinning madly. It
was the first time he’d indicated seeing anyone else. “Even you.”

Rose took a step back, shoving Amy and Rory behind her, and The Doctor moved back into Joe’s line of vision to get the unsettling attention back on him rather than his family. “You said you’d seen the light now.” He prompted.

Joe chuckled. “Nothing else matters anymore. Only him.” He looked around the room to all the dummies. “It’s like these things. I used to hate them. They make me laugh now.” He laughed loudly and hysterically, making the dummies erupt again as well. “Gottle o’ geer! Gottle o’ geer!” He sang over the noise.

The Doctor stood up at that, going to the other side of the room to grab the luggage trolley.

“You should go!” Joe yelled to all of them. “He’ll be here soon!” He sounded excited.

The Doctor shoved the trolley under Joe’s chair, lifting him up. “I think you should come with me.”

Back at reception, The Doctor was pacing back and forth as he spoke in rapid Gallifreyan, Rose replying now and again as she leaned more casually against the desk.

“What’s that language?” Rita asked Rory quietly, seeming to sense that he at least appeared to be the most relatively normal of the family.

“Oh it’s- The Doctor- and Rose, sort of, they’re aliens.” Rory rubbed the back of his neck. “Gallifreyan. The language- that is. Gallifreyan.” He huffed out a breath.

“So your wife…? She’s also an alien then?” Rita continued.

Rory looked strained. “Yeah? I mean. She wasn’t born on Earth. Actually she was born on a military spaceship a few thousand years after I met her but-” He cut himself off at the look Rita was giving him and cleared his throat awkwardly before walking away without another word.

“Why you four- that’s what I don’t understand.” The Doctor finally spoke in English again.

“What does it matter?” Gibbis was leant against the door jam leading behind the reception desk- where they had set Joe, still strapped to his luggage trolley. “Sooner or later, someone will come along and rescue us…” He looked down. “Or enslave us.” Weirdly, his second suggestion seemed to fill him with more hope.

The Doctor, Rose, Amy, and Rory all stared at him- liking him less and less with every word he spoke. Finally, The Doctor let out a breath, choosing to ignore that. “First, we find the TARDIS.” He said, moving to start them down the corridor, but spinning on his heel and holding up a finger last second. “Quick thing before we go,” he added, “if you feel drawn to a particular room, do not go in- and make sure someone else can see you at all times.

Rita hadn’t yet moved. “Joe said, ‘he will feast.’ Is there something here with us?” She asked, arms folded protectively in front of her.

Joe laughed hysterically at the question, and they all turned to look at him, The Doctor raising his brows. “Something to add, Joe?”

Joe sang a sort of verse in response. “Here comes a candle to light you to bed. Here comes a
chopper to chop off your head. Chop, chop, chop, chop.” He looked to Amy, Rita, Howie, and Gibbis in turn with each call of the word.

Howie looked frazzled. “Can we do something about him?” He demanded angrily.

They started down the corridors, Gibbis somehow ending up in front, wheeling Joe along, followed by Amy and The Doctor, Rose and Rita, and Rory and Howie, all walking in pairs behind him.

“At times like this I think of my old school motto,” Gibbis muttered. “Resistance is exhausting.”

Amy scoffed at that and shared a disgusted look with her father. In any other circumstance he’d tell her to respect the culture, and she was good about it, but in this case they were both in agreement: deliberate weakness was despicable.

Behind them, Rita finally managed to speak up. “I know I’m not supposed to ask this but… how old are you?” She then immediately felt the need to backtrack. “It’s just- your daughter… and Rory- and you look thirty-five but you seem-”

“Ancient?” Rose cut her off with a good-natured laugh. “No, don’t worry about it. I don’t mind. I get that a lot actually. I just recently turned 133.”

Rita choked on her own air, having expected an answer more along the lines of ‘I’m 50, but I’ve had a lot of work done. The medicine is super advanced on my planet.’ “Well,” she managed, “you look great.”

Rose laughed again and patted Rita reassuringly.

Taking up the rear, Howie was muttering to himself, and Rory was doing his best to ignore him. “I’ve worked out where we are.” He finally said at a normal volume in Rory’s direction.

“Hm?” Rory replied uninterestedly.

“Norway.” Howie stated, matter of factly.

Rory did look over to him at that. “Norway?” He repeated.

Howie looked happy he’d asked. “Yeah, you see, the U.S. government has entire cities hidden in the Norwegian mountains. You see, Earth is on a collision course with this other planet, and this is where they’re going to send all the rich people when it kicks off.” He sounded so sure of himself.

Rory shook his head. “Amazing.”

Howie shrugged, misunderstanding the interjection. “It’s all on the internet.”

“No, it’s amazing that you’ve managed to come up with a theory even more insane than what’s actually happening.” Rory replied dryly, crossing his arms and quickening his pace to catch up with the others.

A gym teacher suddenly stepped out of Room 158, a school bell ringing behind him. Gibbis peddled backwards, putting The Doctor back in front, who looked the strange man up and down. “Um, hello.”

“Have you forgotten your PE kit again?” He yelled, and The Doctor looked around, unsure of how
to answer that. The gym coach sighed. “Right, that’s it, you’re doing it in your pants!” And he went back into the room, slamming it shut behind him.

“Bad dreams…” Rose whispered.

In the scene though, no one had been paying attention to each other, and Howie was drawn to a nearby door. He was already opening Room 155 before The Doctor turned. “Hey don’t-!” He ran to step in front of him. Inside, a group of five teenage girls were gathered in a makeshift circle, giggling and chatting. They all zeroed in on Howie.

“Oh look girls!” One of them called. “It’s H-H-H-Howie!” She mocked a stutter, making all of them laugh loudly at him.


Howie screwed his eyes shut. ‘Praise him.’ Was running through his head like a mantra, mad laughter bubbling up inside him. “Shut th-th-th-the door!” He managed to shout over his own intrusive thoughts and the girls mocking.

The Doctor slammed it shut as Howie backed against the far wall. “This is just some messed up CIA stuff.” He insisted, shaking his head. “I'm, I'm, I'm telling you.”

The Doctor stepped forward, wrapping his arm around the teenager. “You’re right. Keep telling yourself that. It’s a CIA thing.” The Doctor reassured him, patting his chest and walking him forward. “Nothing more.”

They found the stairs again, and at Gibbis’s insistence, Rita and Rose took Joe, using their combined goddess-strength and medical training to easily lift him up the winding stairs to the second floor.

The Doctor ran his hand along the wallpapered corridor as they made their way further into the maze. After a few turns there was a brace set for about 30 centimeters, making the ceilings just a bit shorter. Something had left long marks in the drywall above their heads, like something with horns couldn’t have been bothered to have bent down for that small bit.

Amy knelt down as she spotted two slips of paper in the floor. “Dad…” she started, but when she looked over her shoulder to get his attention, a sudden low roar reverberated through the corridor, followed by loud stomping footsteps. She stood up quickly, shoving the papers into her jacket pocket, and coming to her father’s side. “Okay… whatever that is it’s not real, yeah?” She asked for reassurance.

“No, no, I’m sure it isn’t.” He rubbed her back, muttering something calming in Gallifreyan as well. Another roar came, closer this time as the stomping got louder. “But just in case, let’s run away and hide anyway. In here.” He grabbed, Amy, Rory, Howie, and Gibbis, and shoved them into the closest room, watching Rose and Rita drag Joe into one just a few doors down.

Rose sank to her knees as soon as she stepped inside. She should have known. What was Room 13 doing on the second floor?

In front of her, her two little girls stared up at her.

“Why did you abandon me, Mummy?” The little Amy asked her, clutching a toy TARDIS in her hands.
“I didn’t mean to, baby, I’m so sorry, I-” She sobbed.

The blonde little girl with dark brown eyes in a white dress- the one that Rose had been dreaming about every night for fifty two years- she looked up to Rose with wide accusing eyes. “Why did you kill me, Mummy?”

“Alina-” Rose felt like she was suffocating.

“Why couldn’t you keep us safe?” They asked together, holding each other’s hands.

The door slammed shut behind The Doctor, and he spun around quickly, only to shout and take a step back again as two Weeping Angels reached out at them in the dark room.

“Don’t blink.” Amy ordered Howie, her voice tight and steady but her posture giving away her fear.

“What?” Howie asked incredulously, and the few lights that they had flickered, and the Angels moved forward.

“Amy, get back.” The Doctor grabbed Amy by the back of her jacket while Rory grabbed Howie and they shoved them beside them against the wall. The lights flickered again, but the Angels didn’t move this time. There was a long pause.

“Why haven’t they got us yet?” The Doctor muttered, taking a step forward. He reached out tentatively, poking the Angel in the chest, and not getting a response. “Amy, they’re not real.” He breathed out, turning back to his terrified daughter who was still shaking her head vehemently, refusing to take her eyes off the statues as she clutched Rory’s arm for dear life. “Amy, look at me,” The Doctor placed his hands either side of her face. “Focus on me. It’s a bad dream. That’s all.”

Finally she nodded, breathing settling slightly.

Rory finally noticed that Gibbis had climbed into the wardrobe, cowering in fear. “I don’t even think they’re for us.” He noted, and Amy nodded again as Gibbis shouted and slammed his hiding place door shut.

The roaring and footsteps were right outside now, and The Doctor stepped towards the door.

“Dad, what are you doing?” Amy questioned him wearily.

“I’m sorry, I just have to see what it is.” He leaned toward the peephole. “I just have to see.”

Outside, a massive eight foot tall Beast made its way down the corridor, horns scraping against the ceiling. “Oh, look at you.” The Doctor whispered. “Oh, you are beautiful.”

Down the hall a door clicked open, and Joe came charging out. “Oh, dear.”

Rita had tried to restrain Joe when the ropes had untied themselves, but without Rose’s help she was useless against the man twice her size.

Rose continued to sob as the four-year-old versions of her daughters continued to hurl accusations at her.
Rita stared in horror as Joe, standing in the middle of the corridor, held his arms out in a welcoming gesture to the Beast. “Come on, come to me!” He shouted. “Come to me!” And a second later in a flash of black he was gone with a loud scream and another call of “Praise him!”

In the impending silence, The Doctor finally recognised Rose’s distress for something more than just ordinary fear and adrenaline. “Rose!” He shouted, running for her, Amy close on his heels as she suddenly felt it as well.

As The Doctor fell down at Rose’s side, Amy skidded to a halt in the doorway at the sight of her younger self clutching the hand of a girl she’d never seen before, but was somehow still vaguely familiar. Rory crashed into her back, and in the corridor she could hear Howie and Gibbis muttering with Rita.

“Rose, Rose, look at me.” The Doctor begged. “Rose, they aren’t real.” It was taking everything in him not to look at the bad-dream versions of their little girls, but tears were already threatening to fall as the girls started hurling their words at him as well.

“Daddy, why couldn’t you save us, Daddy? Why don’t you love us?”

Amy couldn’t feel her feet anymore. Distantly she felt Rory’s hand on her arm, but it seemed to be a million miles away. “That’s my sister.” She whispered.

“No, Amy,” Rory was shaking her arm now. “That’s your mother. She needs your help.”

The words seemed to finally get through to Amy, and she moved forwards to come to Rose’s other side. “Mum, it’s Amy, I’m right here.” Rose finally managed to tear her eyes away from the children at the sound of her actual daughter’s voice. Tears were running down Amy’s face, but she managed a genuine smile. “It’s okay. It’s not your fault. I’m right here.” She assured her and The Doctor.

They were able to pull Rose out of the room after that, all three of them crying as they did.

They find Joe’s body in the maze of corridors, kneeling against the wall, almost as if in prayer. Rory carries him into the banquet hall, and they use one of the table cloths to cover him. The Doctor scans Joe with the screwdriver, Rita standing next to him, while Rory and Howie use chairs and tables to wedge the door closed, and Rose and Amy sit silently with Gibbis.

Amy was sitting on the bartop itself, while Rose took one of the stools and stared unseeingly out in front of her. Amy was doing her best to soothe her telepathically. Until eventually Rose patted her daughter’s leg and stood to go join The Doctor- needing to throw herself into the situation.

Amy let out a long breath and looked down to Gibbis, sat at the now dummy-free table in front of her, looking terrified. “If it’s any consolation, I’ve met the Weeping Angels, so I know how…” She took a deep breath. “In fact, I thought that room was for me.”

“Joe was right.” Gibbis muttered. “Whatever it is in here, it actually wants to kill us. Not oppress us or enslave us, kill us!”

Amy jumped down from the bar to grab the seat next to the Tivolian. “Listen, my parents, they’ve never let me down. Even when I thought they had, when I was a kid and they left me, they came back. They saved me. And now they’re going to save you.” She watched Gibbis’s profile for a few
moments, when he didn’t answer though, she sighed and stood to leave.

“Of course,” he started, making her turn back around. “If the Weeping Angels were meant for me, then your room is still out there somewhere.” It was an ominous and wholly unnecessary thing to say. Amy didn’t like the way he looked her up and down with an unsettling sort of smile.

She nodded, blinking a few times, and turned to watch her parents speaking quietly to each other. She couldn’t hear them, but she could tell just by the way their mouths moved that they were speaking in Gallifreyan. They did that a lot when surrounded by people they didn’t know. Especially if one of them was upset- there must be something comforting about the language. Or at least about speaking out loud and knowing no one else can understand you.

Amy startled as Rory came up beside her suddenly. The Doctor was talking animatedly to Rita now as she handed him a cup of tea. “Every time The Doctor gets pally with someone, I have this overwhelming urge to notify their next of kin.” Rory stated dryly, earning a laugh from Amy. He flinched though, and Amy furrowed her brows at him questioningly. “Sorry, The last time I said something like that about your father, you hit me with your shoe… And you literally had to sit down and unlace it first.”

Amy chuckled again and shook her head. “You’re living with your in-laws just to make your wife happy. You must be the most saint-like husband in the universe.”

Rory huffed out a laugh and nodded in agreement. “Well, to be fair, it’s a big phone box.”

The Doctor sat on the amplifier on the stage, looking down at Joe’s body, and absentmindedly holding the mug Rita had handed him. “What exactly happened to him?” Rita spoke up again.

“He died.” The Doctor answered distractedly, most of his mind still concentrated on the telepathic conversation he was having with Rose sat on the edge of the stage.

Rita gave him an incredulous look. “You are a medical doctor, aren’t you? You haven’t just got a degree in cheese-making or something…”

That finally got his attention. “No! Well, yes, both, actually. I mean, there is no cause…” He waved his hand around. “All his vital organs simply stopped, as if the simple spark of life, his loves and hates, his faiths and fears were just taken, and-” He sniffed the drink in his hand and finally realised what he was holding. “And this is a cup of tea!” He exclaimed, looking up to her with bright eyes as he lapped at it like a dog.

“Of course. I'm British, it's how we cope with trauma.” Rita answered easily, looking up to the corner of her eye. “That and tutting.” She added.

“But how did you make it?”

“All hotels should have a well stocked kitchen, even alien fake ones.” Rita replied, and The Doctor raised his brows at her at that. She shrugged. “I heard you talking when you arrived.” She explained. “Look, it's no more ridiculous than Howie's CIA theory, or mine…”

“Which is?”

“This is Jahannam.”

The Doctor smiled up at her at that. “You're a Muslim!”

“Don't be frightened.” She joked.
The Doctor chuckled and shook his head. “You think this is Hell.”

Rita shrugged again, turning to look out at the banquet hall as he stood to stand beside her. “The whole ’80s hotel thing took me by surprise, though.” She admitted.

“And all these fears and phobias wandering about, the hotel can build specific rooms tailored to our worst fear, but most are completely unconnected to us… so why are they still here?” The Doctor thought out loud.

“Maybe the cleaners have gone on strike.” Rita suggested mildly, even earning a small chuckle from Rose that time.

The Doctor grinned at her, instantly liking anyone who could get Rose to lighten up even minimally after being reminded of their past trauma. “I like you. You're a right clever clogs.” He told her. “But this isn't Hell, Rita.”

Rita shook her head. “You don't understand. I say that without fear. Jahannam will play its tricks, and there'll be times when I want to run and scream, but I've tried to live a good life, and that knowledge keeps me sane, despite the monsters and the bonkers rooms.” She said bravely.

The Doctor hadn’t been trying to reassure her, he’d just been stating a fact, but he didn’t feel the need to argue the point. If it was her faith that kept her sane, then he would have her hold onto it.

“Dad,” Amy called suddenly and he looked up to see her holding up some paper, “look at this. I found it in a corridor, I completely forgot I had it.”

The Doctor stepped forward to take the small papers from her, playfully hitting her over the head with them and getting a small laugh from her. He leaned back against the table and read the words out loud as Rose came beside him.

"My name is Lucy Hayward and I'm the last one left. It took Luke first. It got him on his first day, almost as soon as we arrived... It's funny. You don't know what's going to be in your room until you see it, then you realise it could never have been anything else. I just saw mine. It was a gorilla from a book I'd read as a kid. My God, that thing used to terrify me... The gaps between my worships are getting shorter, like contractions. This is what happened to the others- and how lucky they were... It's all so clear now... I'm so happy. Praise him.’”

“Praise him.” Howie repeated, almost distractedly, and they all turned to look at him with wide eyes.

“What did you just say?” The Doctor took a step forward.

Howie shook his head vehemently, looking like he was gonna be sick. “Nothing.” He insisted, but he was gagging, until finally he shouted “Praise him!” Seemingly against his will, and he clapped his hand over his mouth in abject horror.

Gibbis stood up, already panicking. “This is what happened to Joe!”

Howie was staring down at the table. “God, it's going to come for me now.” He muttered.

Gibbis turned on the teenager. “You'll lead it right here!” He shouted, leaning into Howie and making him stumble back out of his chair.

“I won't leave you. I promise you. You have my word on that.” The Doctor attempted to placate the situation as Gibbis continued yelling at the boy.
He seemed on the verge of tears. “I don't want to get eaten.” He pleaded.

“Calm down.” Amy and Rory tried following The Doctor’s lead.

“He's going to lead the creature right here!” Gibbis cried again, jabbing an accusatory finger in Howie’s face.

“HOLD IT!” The Doctor shouted above the noise, pulling out his sonic screwdriver and making that really horrible noise that was so good at getting people to shut up.

Their mouths all snapped closed as their hands flew to cover their ears.

He clicked the sonic shut, putting it back in his pocket. “Thank you.” He said calmly.

“Don't you see? He'll lead it right here!” Gibbis spoke frantically over him.

Rita huffed exasperatedly up towards the alien. “Well then what do you suggest?”

Gibbis sighed and looked around as he spoke. “Look, whatever it is out there, it's obviously chosen Howard as its next course.” The Doctor turned slowly towards him, face morphing into one of righteous anger, but Gibbis went on. “Now, tragic though that is, this is no time for sentiment. I'm saying if it were to find him, it may be satisfied and let the rest of us go…” They all looked at him with a mixture of horror and disgust and he made a disgruntled noise. “All I want to do is go home and be conquered and oppressed! Is that too much to ask?!” He sat back down heavily in his chair, pouting.

Rose stepped forward to place her hand on her husband’s crossed arms. “Listen, I'll stay with Howie. You take the others and find somewhere safe.” She offered at a whisper.

He shook his head vehemently. “No. We stay together. That's your rule, not mine.” He reminded her, setting her with a serious look and placing a kiss to her forehead before going over to Gibbis.

The Doctor put one hand on the back of Gibbis’s chair, and the other flat on the table, leaning into him as he spoke in a low vaguely threatening voice. “Your civilisation is one of the oldest in the galaxy. Now I see why. Your cowardice isn't quaint, it's sly, aggressive. It's how that gene of gutlessness has survived while so many others have perished.” He paused at the reminder of so many brave souls lost, and held back a growl. “Well, not today. No one else dies today. Right?”

Gibbis muttered his agreement rather indistinctly as The Doctor gave him a hard look.

The Time Lord grinned all the sudden in startling juxtaposition. “Brilliant!” He clapped his hands together and turned back to the rest of the group. “Howie, any second, it's going to possess you again.” He wrapped an arm around the boy’s shoulders and moved him towards the table to sit down. “When it does, I'm going to ask you some questions. Please try to answer them.” He sat down across from him, his family and Rita gathering around as well.

Howie nodded. “I hope my mom’s all right,” he observed vaguely, “she's going to be w-worried.”

Suddenly it was like a flip was switched in the boy, his shoulders straightened, and an odd sort of grin spread across his face. The Doctor tapped the table to get his attention as he started chuckling to himself. “Howie? Howie. Howie, you're next. We're all dead jealous. So, tell us. How do we get a piece of the action? Why isn't he possessing all of us?”

Howie laughed like he knew a secret. “You guys have got all these distractions, all these obstacles. It'd be so much easier if you just let it go, you know?” He tapped the side of his head and sat back
“Clear the path.”

Amy squinted at him. “You want it to find you even though you know what it’s going to do?”

“Are you kidding? He’s going to kill us all. How cool is that?” It should have been sarcastic, but Howie looked genuinely excited at the prospect of being murdered by the Beast.

Rose and The Doctor shared a look, and as they stood the rest followed them to the other side of the room, leaving Howie at the table as they spoke in hushed tones.

“It’s as I thought. It feeds on fear.” The Doctor explained. “Everything, the rooms, Lucy’s note… I mean, even the pictures in reception have been put here to frighten us. So we have to resist it. Do whatever you have to. Cross your fingers, say a prayer, think of a basket of kittens… but do not give in to the fear.”

He started pacing as he thought and Amy followed him. “Okay… but what are we actually going to do?”

The Doctor smirked, turning slowly to look back at her and the rest of them, smirking slightly. “We’re going to catch ourselves a monster.”

Rose felt a pounding in her skull.

She knew what it was. Of course she did. It was obvious that the creature was telepathic. How else would it so clearly be able to know their fears and get inside their heads? It was apparently so strong that it could find her deepest fear even with all of her barriers up, and now it was trying its level best to go deeper. It was taking all of her strength to keep the Beast out, and she was sure by this point she had to be glowing at least slightly.

She surreptitiously checked her reflection as she walked the perimeter of the hotel salon and came across another mirror. She looked as though she was softly back lit by a warm light, and the golden flecks in her eyes shone brighter than usual. She bit back a groan and pinched the bridge of her nose.

Amy appeared beside her then, linking her arm through hers. “You okay?” She asked quietly.

Rose nodded. Her barriers were up high right now, but that wouldn’t stop how observant her daughter was. “Just hope this works.” She answered.

Amy scoffed. “When have you two ever failed?”

Rose pressed her lips together. She could name a number of times she and The Doctor had failed to save the day, but, unwilling to disillusion her daughter, Rose simply let out a long breath and nodded again.

Behind them, The Doctor clapped his hands together. “Alright, everyone to their places.” He ordered, and they all scattered. Amy and Rita shut themselves behind a bedroom door (it had a sad clown inside) near the large front entrance to the spa. Rory took the mop handed to him by his father-in-law, and stood guard outside the back entrance. The Doctor moved the stand behind a dividing wall that would keep him hidden from the beast for a time, and Rose went to the other side of the hotel where Gibbis and a tied-up Howie were waiting for her at reception.

Rose took Gibbis’s place at the doorway leading behind the desk where Howie was restrained, and
directed the man to stand on the far side of the desk near the not-door.

Next to Howie the sonic was set up as a sort of makeshift microphone and hooked up the the speakers that normally played musak throughout the hotel, but was now being filtered directly into the Pasiphaë Spa. He rambled his praises into it, clearly disconnected from where he was or even what he was really saying.

“Bring me death! Bring me glory! My master, my lord, I'm here! Come to me. I'm waiting here for you. He has promised me a glorious death. Give it to me now. I want him to know my devotion.”

Rose screwed her eyes shut tightly as her headache increased. Distantly, she could hear loud thundering footsteps moving in the opposite direction as Howie continued on.

“Praise him. Praise him.”

Amy and Rita kept their ears pressed to the door. Eventually, they heard the Beast approach, passing by slowly, horns scraping against the ceiling, and finally the pitch change as hooves pass over tile instead of carpet when he enters the spa.

“Let his name be the last thing I hear. Let his breath on my skin be the last thing I feel. I was lost in shadows, but he found me.”

They run out of the room, Rita dashing forward to slam the french doors closed behind the Beast, and Amy using her Time Lord strength to pry a large piece of the wooden door frame off the wall and shove it through the handles as a crude lock.

“Rory, he’s in!” She shouted, and on his side of the spa he jammed the mop through the back entrance handles- effectively locking the Beast in with The Doctor.

“His love was a beacon that led me from darkness to light, and now I am blinded by his majesty. Humbled by his glory! Praise-”

The Doctor pulled the wires on the speaker. “That’s quite enough of that.” He mumbled, as sparks flew and a loud squeal of feedback reverberated.

His and the Beast’s reflections bounced around the room as the many mirrors they’d set up did their jobs. “It’s nothing personal.” The Doctor smirked. “I just think we should take things slowly. Get to know each other.” The Beast roared in anger. “You take people’s most primal fears and pop it in a room. A tailor-made hell, just for them. Why?”

A series of growls followed, a language to old for even the TARDIS to translate, but the telepathic frequencies… they weren’t clear- dated as they were, but The Doctor could find a rough meaning. He spoke out loud to get confirmation. “Did you say ‘they take?’” The Minotaur (that’s what it appeared to be now that he had a good look) growled in frustration. “Ah, what is that word? The guard? No- the warden!” The Doctor’s eyebrows shot up and he pulled his chin back. “This is a prison?”


The Minotaur spoke, and it sounded anguished now. “You have lived so long… even your name is lost.”
That took The Doctor by surprise, striking a cord deep within him as the realisation hit. “You want this to stop.” He breathed, and the Minotaur nodded, continuing. “Because you are ‘just… instinct.’” He translated, and then took another step forward, the water feature still dividing them. “Then tell me. Tell me how to fight you.” He implored.

Rose grabbed at her head as Howie continued speaking to her. He’d caught on eventually that she was trying to fight off the Beast, and now he wouldn’t stop singing his praises.

“Our glorious master! Our lord!” He shouted at her. “He will bring us death!”

Rose had time energy swirling around her now, the song of the universe itself echoing throughout the room. She opened her eyes and there was nothing but golden light there now. “NO! STOP!” She screamed with the dual tones of the Bad Wolf.

Rose’s voice reached them in the salon, and The Doctor’s head snapped up as the Minotaur roared angrily, charging forward to smash the glass between them. He spun around to avoid getting cut, and Amy and Rita bursted in, running directly into him.

He held his arms out to stop them. “Stay back! No, no, no, no!” The Minotaur charged towards the back door. “Rory! Watch out!” The Doctor shouted as the Beast shattered that glass as well. The Doctor chased after him as he escaped.

Rory was laid on the floor, and groaned as they came beside him. The Doctor only paused for a moment though, trusting Amy and Rita to help him.

He found Rose knelt on the floor of reception, fingers pressed severely into her temples, still glowing slightly, though (he assumed) not nearly as much as she was before. Gibbis was crouched in the corner, pressed up against the wall and staring at Rose like she might explode any second, and Howie appeared to be slumped over unconscious in his chair.

Ignoring the others, he ran to kneel down beside his wife. “Rose, Rose what happened?” He asked desperately, looking around frantically for any signs of the Beast.

“He’s in my head.” Rose whispered, groaning and falling into his side, pressing her forehead into his shoulder. “He’s in my head.”

The Doctor ran his fingers through her hair as the fear those words inspired settled in his hearts.

Amy was running through the corridors, trying to find her parents, but both of their walls were up so high against the Beast she had no hope of trying the use her telepathy, instead just turning down random corridors in the endless hotel maze.

She came to a halt as a weird pull settled in her gut. A weird brushing sensation against her mind. At first she thought it must be her mum or dad, but when she turned she was faced only with a door she was sure wasn’t there before.

Room 7. How odd.

She stepped forward slowly, turning the knob quietly and only opening the door a crack, as if the
unhurried movements would make them count less. She peeked around the corner, and her eyes dilated at the sight before her, as two words whispered in the back of her mind.

_Praise him._

She slammed the door shut.

They gathered back in the banquet hall.

Howie hadn’t had any inclinations towards worshipping since he’d regained consciousness, seemingly back to his normal anxious self, but he refused the offer to be untied from his chair.

Gibbis sat as far away from Rose as he could, occasionally throwing her terrified glances that she either didn’t see or dutifully ignored as she sat on the table with Howie, Amy, Rita, and another pot of tea.

Rory approached The Doctor as he leaned heavily against the bar, staring unseeingly in front of him, mind clearly turning quickly. He chose not to speak, instead simply taking the seat next to him.

The Doctor looked over to him suddenly though. “Have you found your room yet?” He asked, and he sounded mostly curious, but Rory could detect the worry behind the question.

He shook his head.“No. No…” He watched his father-in-law’s carefully neutral expression. “Is that good or bad?”

The Doctor shrugged smally. “Maybe you’re not scared of anything.” He offered vaguely.

Rory snorted. “Well, after all the time I spent with you in the TARDIS, what was left to be scared of?”

The Doctor squinted at him. “You said that in the past tense.” It was an observation, but it sounded accusatory.

Rory looked up.“No, I didn’t.” He denied immediately, though he knew it had been a Freudian-slip. He glanced behind him for a subject change, and his eyes landed on Howie. “You know, Howie is in speech therapy…” He informed him, turning back around to face his reflection in the bar mirror. “He’s just got over this massive stammer. What an achievement. I mean, can you imagine?” He paused for a long moment, studying himself next to The Doctor. “I’d forgotten not all victories are about saving the universe.”

The Doctor didn’t answer, and Rory let out a long breath, retreating back to the table with the others.

After a moment, Rita stood to go speak with The Doctor.

He grinned brightly upon noticing her arrival. “Rita! Brilliant! How are you? Not panicking, are you?” She shook her head and he nodded. “Good, good. Because I am literally an otter's toenail away from getting us out of here.” He held his thumb and forefinger up in demonstration of the length of an otter’s toenail.

Rita tilted her head at him. “Why?”
“Excellent question. Excellent question.” He said on impulse, and then seemed to catch up with himself as his brow furrowed. “Why what?”

“Why is it up to you to save us? That's quite a God complex you have there.” She challenged him.

He glanced over to his family at that. “I brought them here.” He answered quietly. “They'd say it was their choice, but offer a child a suitcase full of sweets and they'll take it. Offer someone all of time and space and they'll take that, too. Which is why you shouldn't. Which is why grown-ups were invented.” He wrinkled his nose a bit.

Rita raised her brows at him. “All of time and space, eh?”

The Doctor grinned again. “Oh, yeah. And when we get out of this, we’ll show you too.”

She shook her head, chuckling a bit. “I don't know what you're talking about, but whatever it was, I have a feeling you just did it again.”

The Doctor chuckled and opened his mouth to tell her she was right, but a thought struck him before he could. “Rita… did Joe ever stop praising? Once he got to the point Howie did. Did it ever stop?”

Rita’s brow furrowed as she thought about it. “No…” She shook her head. “No I don’t think so.”

The Doctor spun on his heel suddenly at that, taking long purposeful steps towards the boy. “Howie, the Beast, when it was in your head, when you were worshiping, I need you to describe to me what it felt like.”

Howie stuttered over the beginning of his sentence as he tried to find the appropriate words while the Time Lord was staring at him as intently as he was. “It- I mean- he- It- It was like he’d replaced everything I- that I cared about.”

“Like what? Your fears?”

He shook his head. “No- no like. Um. He didn’t replace the fear. Because I wasn’t afraid. It was like I believed that he was the reason not to be afraid.”

“Faith.” Rita whispered, her eyes widening. “It’s faith that the Beast feeds on- not fear.”

“Oh no.” Rose’s head fell into her hands as she shook her head. “Oh no, oh no, oh no.”

The Doctor, likewise, suddenly felt the need to punch himself. “It's not fear. It's faith. Not just religious faith, faith in something.” He started ranting as the pieces fell together. “Howard believes in conspiracies, that external forces control the world. Joe had dice cufflinks and a tie pin with a horseshoe. He was a gambler. Gamblers believe in luck, an intangible force that helps them win or lose. Gibbis has rejected any personal autonomy and is waiting for the next batch of invaders to oppress him and tell him what to do.” He looked directly at Rose. “They all believe there's something guiding them, about to save them. That's what it replaces. Every time someone was confronted with their most primal fear, they fell back on their most fundamental faith.” He screwed his eyes shut and groaned inwardly. “And all this time, I have been telling you to dig deep, find the thing that keeps you brave. I made you expose your faith, show them what they needed.”

Rory put his hand to his forehead at that. “Oh, God.” He mumbled, recalling the conversation he’d been having with Rose just before they’d come here.

Amy was shaking her head confusedly though. “But why us? Why are we here?”
Her parents looked to her with soft eyes. “Your faith in us.” Rose whispered. “That’s what brought us here.”

Rita pressed her lips together, clutching the pendant around her neck and taking a deep breath. “But why?” She spoke up. “Why do we have to lose our faith before we die?”

The Doctor turned back to her. “It needs to convert the faith into a form it can consume. Faith is an energy- the specific emotional energy the creature needs to live. Which is why at the end of her note, Lucy said—”

“Praise Him.” Amy interrupted.

“Exact—” He cut himself off, turning back to his daughter, fear making his blood run cold.

“No.” Rory shook his head vehemently. “Oh, please, no.”

In answer, heavy stomping footsteps shook the room, making tea spill out onto the table cloths and the glasses on the bar clink together. Rita quickly reached over and untied Howie from his chair. From down the corridor there was an angry growl, and it was all they needed to hear before they started running.

“I knew we should have taught her to put up telepathic barriers the second she got her abilities!” Rose shouted towards The Doctor, and she pulled Amy more forcefully again as she started to slow down.

“Yes, I know, you’re right, but we can save the I told you so’s for after we’re done running for our lives, yeah?” He shot back.

“When are we not running for our lives?” Rory interjected, and actually earned a few huffs of laughter despite the situation.

Amy stopped again, this time planting her feet in the middle of the hotel corridor as she turned to face the quickly approaching Minotaur. “Oh, he is beautiful.” She muttered.

Rose stepped in front of her while The Doctor and Rory each took her by the arm and pulled her backwards.

Time energy was beginning to swirl around Rose again, making her hair fly out behind her and her eyes turn to golden motes of time. The Minotaur rounded the corner.

The Doctor, sensing the godly battle that was about the ensue, ran to the nearest door (Room 7), shoving Amy and Rory inside before he could look what was in there, and grabbing Rita, Howie, and Gibbis by the arms as well.

They seemed reluctant to look away from Rose, but he knew that seeing that much power for too long would burn them to ash, and he really didn’t want to have to tell Rose that had happened.

“But-!” Howie protested, but The Doctor ignored him, pulling him by hood of his jacket and practically tossing him into the room.

Rose stood her ground as the Minotaur bowed his head and charged towards her horns first. He hit her energy before he could her, and flew backwards from the full force of the universe crashing down on him. She took a step forward as he picked himself up, snorting and snarling, pawing at the carpet with his hoof to prepare to charge again.
“I am the Bad Wolf.” Rose informed him calmly, and the Minotaur crashed into the time energy again to the same results. “I created this universe. I created you.”

The Minotaur growled loudly and angrily at that, throwing his head in the air and snorting in protest. He charged again, and Rose held out her hand this time- flinging him backwards into the wall and watching as it crumbled down around him.

“Doctor!”

The Doctor spun around, finally managing to pull his eyes away from his goddess wife to see his daughter on her knees in the room behind him.

His eyes flickered up. Against the window, a seven year old Amelia Pond sat, in her nightie and red wellie boots, looking up at the stars and waiting for The Raggedy Doctor and The Golden Rose to return to save her and show her the universe.

Her worst fear.

That they will let her down again.

He fell down beside his daughter- his real daughter, and she whimpered miserably.

“Dad, it’s happening.” She whispered. “It’s changing me. It’s changing my thoughts.”

Outside, there was another loud crash, but The Doctor did his best to put the battle to the back of his mind. “I can’t save you from this.” He told her, even as it killed him to. “There’s nothing I can do to stop this.”

She looked over to him at that, tears streaming down her face. “What?” She asked incredulously. He was always supposed to know what to do. He was always supposed to save her.

The Doctor shook his head. “We stole your childhood, and now we’ve lead you by the hand to your death.” He studied her solemnly. “I turned your mother into a goddess because I was selfish. Because I didn’t want to lose her. I let her give up everything for me. And now she’s out there, willing to fight another god for the rest of her eternal existence, and there’s nothing I can do.”

Amy sniffed pathetically and The Doctor tucked a stray piece of hair behind her ear.

“Look at you.” He said quietly. “So much like your mother. Aemeliastell’laponse- created from stars. The Glorious Pond. The Girl Who Waited.” Tears were visible in his eyes now (the eyes that hers looked so much like). “I’m not a hero.” He informed her sadly. “I really am just a mad man with a box.” He glanced towards the adjacent door that golden light was streaming from. “And she really is just a human who looked into the heart of the TARDIS.”

Describing Rose like that- as anything ‘just’- made his chest tighten and his stomach turn, but it was necessary to save them all. He looked up to her with soft eyes. “I think it’s time we see each other as we really are.”

Amy choked out a sob and fell into his chest.

Outside, the Minotaur groaned and staggered backwards. Rose’s light began to fade back into a dull glow. The Minotaur fell to the ground, and they all gathered around him as the lights flickered. The Doctor kneeled down beside him. “I severed the food supply, sacrificing their faith in us. I gave you the space to die.” He told him.
The Beast let out a pathetic sound and The Doctor hushed him comfortingly. All around them, the hotel dissolved into a hologrid, leaving only them, the Minotaur, and the TARDIS.

“What is it then?” Amy asked, arms crossed protectively in front of her still. “A minotaur or an alien? … Or an alien minotaur?” She looked up to the corner of her eye as her words caught up to her. “That is not a question I thought I’d be asking this morning.” She muttered to herself.

Rose had wandered over to the holographic database near where the TARDIS sat. “It’s both, actually.” She said, scrolling through the ancient alien language easily.

The Doctor came up next to her. “Distant cousin of the Nimon. They descend on planets and set themselves up as gods to be worshipped. Which is fine, until the inhabitants get all secular and advanced enough to build bonkers prisons.” He explained, and they all nodded slowly.

Rory, Howie, and Gibbis were all gathered around a porthole set in the floor. “Correction. Prisons in space.” Rory said, pointing to the star systems below them.

Rita turned in a circle, feeling suddenly much smaller. “If this is a prison, then where are the guards?”

The Doctor threw an arm around her in a comforting sort of way. “No need for any. It's all automated. It drifts through space, snatching people with belief systems and converts their faith into food for the creature.” He poked her forehead for emphasis, and she managed a little smile in return. He smirked and went over to where Amy had joined her mother at the TARDIS.

“It didn’t just want me though.” Amy was saying. “So you must believe in some god or someone.” She looked up to her father as well as he approached and raised a brow. “So what do Time Lords pray to?”

Rose and The Doctor’s eyes met at that. Memories of the last time they’d faced such an ancient god-like creature flooding them. They didn’t actually answer her, but the look they were giving each other was answer enough. Amy nodded smally.

They believed in each other.

They dropped off Gibbis first, and Rita made the executive decision not to look out the doors to the alien planet. She’d already seen too much these past few days. She didn’t think anything could get weirder than the hotel, but then she’d stepped inside a police telephone box spaceship that was bigger on the inside.

Rose sat down next to her suddenly, and she startled a bit.

“Oh, sorry.” Rose apologised quickly. “Would you rather I-” She moved to stand up again.

“No, no it’s okay.” Rita stopped her going. “Sorry I just. I’m feeling a bit lost in myself.”

Rose nodded understandingly. “It’s a lot to take in.”

Rita pressed her lips together. “Are you… are you a goddess then?” She finally asked. “Because that’s what The Doctor said, and you- when you were… glowing. You said you created the universe.”
Rose let out a long breath at that, sitting back heavily. If she were being honest, she didn’t often remember the specifics of what happens when she’s Bad Wolf- especially not when she went full-scale Wolf like that. “It’s complicated.” She said, hoping she could leave it there. But Rita was giving her a pleading desperate sort of look, so she went on. “I was born human.” She sighed. “But when I was nineteen I looked into the time vortex and turned myself into Bad Wolf in order to save him.” She watched her husband move around the TARDIS, flying them back to Earth, throwing her occasional curious glances as he joked around with Amy, Rory, and Howie.

“And what is Bad Wolf?” Rita pressed.

Rose shrugged. “It’s hard to explain. I went back in time and… created time. And then left these messages for myself to follow.” She furrowed her brow. It sounded really weird when she put it like that- like a detective with amnesia and a time machine. She shook her head. “I really don’t remember it. It’s more like… a sort of singing in the back of my head. But… when I’m like that… I can see everything. All of time and space. Every atom. And I can… control it.”

“So you are a god.” She concluded, sounding downtrodden.

Rose screwed her eyes shut. “When I said ‘I created the universe’ I didn’t really mean it how you think. The universe was already there. Someone else did that. I just sort of… bent it to my will a few times. But I’ve never done anything that could spiral. The number of times I wished I could go back in time and fix everything…” She sighed. “But I don’t. Because I’m not all powerful. Time isn’t mine to play with. If anything, I’m a tool of time, not the other way around.”

Rita raised a brow. “Someone else created the universe?” She repeated, hope returning.

Rose gave her an understanding sort of smile. “If a nineteen year old chav from the estates on the East end of London can turn herself into an all knowing being of time and space just to save a guy- I’m pretty sure there’s at least someone out there more powerful.”

Rita smiled softly. “Thanks, Rose.” She whispered.

Rose patted her arm reassuringly and stood up as they landed in America.

The Doctor and Rose stood out on the sidewalk of a rural New York suburbia with Howie as he squinted up at the sun, hands shoved deep in his hoodie pockets. “I’m not sure the CIA knew anything about all that.” He muttered.

The Doctor chuckled, clapping the young boy on the shoulder. “I’d recommend you look into a secret world-government organization called UNIT. I think you’ll find what you’re looking for.”

Howie raised his brows at them. “Secret world government?” He repeated, excitement and hope glimmering behind his eyes again.

Rose chuckled, rocking back on her heels and up to her toes. “Oh yeah. Definitely worth looking into.”

Howie nodded, clearly already planning his research as he started walking backwards towards whichever house was his. “Thank you.” He pointed to them. “Thank you!” He shouted, and turned on his heel, running off into the distance with a distracted wave behind him.

They laughed a bit as they watched him go, until finally The Doctor let out a long breath. “So to Bath to drop off Rita… and then to London?”

Rose’s chest tightened, but she closed her eyes and nodded anyway. “And then to London,” she
Twenty minutes later the four of them stepped out onto a familiar street on the outskirts of London. 

Amy’s eyes widened as she spotted the blue house amongst the many shades of beige. The one with the TARDIS blue door. The one she’d knocked on more than a year ago now in the future.

She spun back around to look at her parents with wide eyes. The Doctor was holding up a set of house keys, he tossed them to her. “You’re not serious?” She asked.

Rory wasn’t paying much attention, instead focused on the red Jaguar E-type convertible parked in front of the house he had known he would move into eventually. “The car too?” He asked breathlessly. He walked towards it and turned towards his in-laws. “But that’s my favourite car. How did you know it was my favourite car?”

The Doctor grinned, following him. “You showed me a picture of it once and said ‘that’s my favourite car.’” He put on a goofy voice to imitate his son-in-law, but he reached in his pocket and tossed him the car keys. Rory caught them, slack-jawed, and laughed in utter disbelief.

Amy tapped her husband on the shoulder. “Uh, Rory. Could you give two minutes?” She asked. He hesitated, so she ducked her head, asking him seriously. “Two minutes?”

He turned to The Doctor, flinging his arm around him and speaking in hushed tones. “She’ll say that we can’t accept it because it’s too extravagant and we’ll always feel a crippling sense of obligation.” He leaned in conspiratorially, holding up the car keys for emphasis. “It’s a risk I’m willing to take.”

The Doctor nodded, winking, and playing along with his son-in-law’s complete misread of the situation. He patted him on the back as he walked off into the house.

Rose and Amy were leant against the bonnet of the car, and he joined them on their daughter’s other side.

“So. You’re leaving aren’t you?” She asked smally.

The Doctor shook his head. “You haven’t seen the last of us. We couldn’t really leave you, Amelia.”

Rose sniffed. “It’s just time you start living your own life. It’s revolved around us for too long now. We’ve been selfish with you. Calling it making up for lost time.”

“Thats what it is though.” Amy protested.

“That’s what it was.” Rose corrected her gently. “Now it’s just pretending.”

Amy sniffed, and The Doctor bumped her shoulder, nodding towards her new home. “There’s a bigger, scarier adventure waiting for you in there.” He said her own thoughts out loud.

She shook her head. “Why now?”

“Because you’re still breathing.” He answered honestly, and she looked up to him. His years were showing through his eyes again, the weight on his shoulders heavier.

Her mother looked the same, and she let out a long breath. “Well, I think this is about the washing
up, personally.” She joked, making them all chuckle through their tears.

They stood up and walked towards the TARDIS, Amy following, and hugging them both in turn. “I’m gonna call.” She informed them, almost like a threat as she pointed a finger at them. “And you better answer. You live in a phone box. It shouldn’t be that hard.”

Rose laughed again and wiped away a stray tear. “I love you so much.” She whispered, and pulled her in for another hug.

Amy tucked her face into her shoulder. “I love you too, Mum.”

They pulled away and The Doctor planted a kiss on the top of her head, making her giggle. “You’re going to be amazing.” He promised her, and she went up on her toes to hug him again too.

“I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too, Amelia.”

She pulled back with another sniffle and held each of their hands in hers. “Look after each other, alright?”

They smirked. “You two as well.” Rose smirked, nodding towards the house, and Amy nodded too, finally letting them go.

They disappeared into the TARDIS, and a second later it began to dematerialise. Rory came up beside her holding a bottle of champagne and glasses. He looked thoroughly confused. “What happened? What are they doing?” He asked, following her gaze up towards the sky.

Amy smiled despite the tears. “They're saving us.” She whispered.

Chapter End Notes

I felt the need to give them all their faith back.
(Except for Gibbis. I don't think the Weeping Angels were his, and I don't think he ever lost his 'faith'.)

Anyway, I'm feeling much better now but I'm trying to use what little time I have left of this Summer to spend with all these people I'm about to have to leave for a very long time. So, even though I am writing, it's only for a few hours every few days. I'm not sure how my schedule will be once I'm in Boston. It might take a while before I find time. But, I really enjoy this story and where it's going, so rest assured chapters will continue to come.

Oh, and some of you more observant ones may have noticed I lowered the chapter count. 32 is a rough estimate, but basically I've decided that the second half of season 7 will be in a separate story. So there's that, lol.

Please leave comments ❤️
"Normal" Life

Chapter Summary

Intermission. An Earth-shattering revelation followed by a series of mostly disconnected conversations.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

January

Amy woke up with a horrible twisting feeling in her gut. She looked over to Rory who was still fast asleep beside her, and past him to the night table where their alarm clock read 6:59- a minute before it was due to start ringing.

She screwed her eyes shut as the memories came back to her. Her parents, running through a military base in the middle of an attack, a river of fire flowing underneath the unbarred catwalk they stood on, half a dozen Sontarans blocking their escape, aiming weapons at their heads.

Her father holding a surfboard.

Him tossing it in the the flames below, grabbing Rose’s hand and jumping-

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Rory groaned and flung his hand out to hit the snooze button. Amy let out the breath that had caught in her throat.

He looked over to her and furrowed his brow. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

Amy stared unseeingly up at the ceiling, eyes wide with worry. “I think my parents are in trouble.”

Rory studied her for a moment. “Telepathy or-?”

Amy shook her head. As far as she could tell through the muted familial bond they seemed fine at the moment. “I had a dream. Which sounds ridiculous but it felt so real.” She looked over to him and he startled a bit at the urgency in her eyes. “Am I mad to call them?”

Rory shook his head and shrugged best he could while still laying on his side. “Better safe than sorry, yeah?”

She was up in an instant at that, flying down the stairs and grabbing the wireless off its hook. She just finished typing in the TARDIS’s routing number when Rory finally caught up to her.

Rose answered on the fourth ring, sounding frazzled and out of breath. “Hey dear-” she cut herself off and Amy could hear the sound of gunfire in the distance. “This really isn’t a great time we’re-”

Amy knew exactly what they were doing. “Do you have a surfboard with you?”

“Find a surfboard. Before you reach the falls.” Amy cut her off quickly.

“What?” Rose sputtered, and then squealed as she dodged another projectile. “How did you-”

“Just trust me, please.” She ran her hand through her hair and listened as Rose relayed the message to The Doctor.

A series of more explosions, yelling, gun fire, and the telltale sounds of running followed- all familiar to the dream she’d just awoken from, until finally she heard their screams as they jumped. The Doctor yelling “GERONIMO!” while Rose just shouted.

A few minutes later gravel crushed into the phone speaker as they apparently crashed and rolled back onto solid ground. Rose reappeared on the other end.

“And how did you know we’d need a surfboard?”

Amy bit her lip. “I… had a dream.” She answered hesitantly.

The admission was followed by a long silence, and then her parents speaking in rapid Gallifreyan. A back and forth that went on for a while until finally she cleared her throat to get Rose’s attention back.

“Sorry, if you’re talking about me I’d appreciate not being in the dark here.” She spoke pointedly.

“Right, sorry.” Rose paused for a long moment. “We’ll be round in a second.”

Amy squinted at the crypticness, but agreed nonetheless. “Okay… be careful.”

Rose laughed a bit at that. “Oh, always.” She nodded. “Ja taimlao’ve`te. Love you.”

“I love you.” Amy repeated the Gallifreyan sentiment easily before hanging up.

Her parents’ arrival was filled with far less fanfare than their entrances normally entailed. The TARDIS landed in the back garden rather than the front room for one thing- which in and of itself was a feat, getting The Doctor to do anything that made sense.

They gathered around the kitchen table, The Doctor leaning casually back in his chair while Rose sat forward over her cup of tea.

“Well, basically,” The Doctor began, “you’re time-sensitive. More so than most Time Lords were actually. Arguably more than Rose even- provided she hasn’t gone all Bad Wolf.”

“That was the red hair thing, yeah?” Amy asked sitting forward. “You said I either got it from Mum’s dad or from being time sensitive?”

Rose nodded in confirmation. “Can’t say if it’s because of Bad Wolf or if it was just luck of the draw.” She shrugged. “I can see how time and the universe interacts with people if I choose to focus on their timelines, but I can’t see specific events like you can.”

“Gingers on Gallifrey tended to run in families, and they held important roles in the government. But every once and a while someone would get lucky with a regeneration and gain sight.” The Doctor added.
“Can I control it? Or is it always gonna be dreams?”

“Specific visions like the one you just had are always just going to come when the universe decides you need to know. Whether you’re sleeping or not.” The Doctor stood up to start pacing suddenly, needing a way to let out his restless energy, and Rose held back a small giggle as she watched him make rounds about the kitchen.

Amy purses her lips, squinting at him. “Is that all?”

“No.” The Doctor spun around, clapping his hands together as he did. “You should also be able to look at people’s timelines. Like Rose and I can see each other’s because we’re bonded together. But you should be able to with anybody. You’re a touch telepath. So just hold someone’s hand and—blamo!”

Amy’s brow furrowed further at that. “What’s that mean then? Their timeline?”

Rose held her hound out for her to take. “Here, I’ll show you.” She offered, and after only a moment’s hesitation Amy took a deep breath and placed her hand in her mother’s—closing her eyes as she did.

Almost instantly in her mind’s eye she could see herself standing in a sort of dark blank space. ‘Where are we?’ She asked, acutely aware that she wasn’t actually speaking out loud— or even really standing there at all. If she focused hard enough she could still feel herself sitting in the kitchen.

‘It’s the psychic plane’ Rose explained. ‘And here… Is my timeline’ She turned Amy around, and in front of them a river of flowing golden dust of time spread out before them. Twisting and turning, breaking off and coming back together. It was pink and yellow in hue, and rolling all around it was a dark blue and burnt orange timeline. It was clearly a different line, but yet at the same time they were one, stretching on endlessly together through time.

‘And Dad’s…’ Amy breathed, eyes blown wide. Finally understanding just how deep a telepathic bond was.

Rose nodded, and a second later let go of her hand. Amy blinked and she was back at the table again. “Whoa.”

Beside her, Rory finally spoke up. “Does it only work with telepaths or can she see everyone’s timelines?”

In response The Doctor simply nodded, silently gesturing for him to hold his hand out to her. Rory swallowed, letting out a long breath before offering his wife his hand.

Amy steeled herself, preparing for the worst, and then entered his mind, instinctively calling upon his timeline.

He didn’t stand with her this time. He couldn’t. But in front of her his timeline burst into life like a fireworks show. Light blue and green hues shone threw the golden dust. Amy watched it twist and pull together, until finally she gathered the courage to look up— to see where it ended.

But it didn’t.

Rory’s timeline went on past her perception. As far as her mum and dad’s. As far as her own.

She gasped and her eyes flew open to stare at her husband in disbelief. “You’re immortal,” she told
him before she could think.

“What?” Rory, Rose, and The Doctor all said it once.

Amy’s eyes fell back over to her parents and flickered between them confusedly. “His timeline. It’s extended. Like ours.”

Rose squinted at her son-in-law, watching how time moved around him for the first time. It was slowed—like Amy’s. “Oh.” She whispered, and looked up to her husband. “It didn’t get undone.”

The Doctor hit himself in the forehead with his palm. “Of course it didn’t. Why would it? Bad Wolf exists outside of time. Anything you do while that powerful—“

“Is permanent.” Rose finished.

Rory raised his hand. “I’m sorry. What’s happening?”

“Two thousand years.” The Doctor answered. “Rose slowed down your body clock to a millionth of its normal speed—right on par with Amy’s.”

“That was permanent? Even after the world got reset?” He asked incredulously.

Rose shrugged helplessly. “Sorry. I can’t control what I do when—“

“No no don’t apologize.” Rory spoke over her quickly. “I mean. Ever since we found out Amy is a Time Lord...” He drifted off. Allowing them to fill in the blanks themselves.

Rose and The Doctor remembered what it was like being in love and thinking they had different life spans. “We understand.” Rose assured him, and The Doctor nodded.

“This is fantastic news, oh my god.” Amy let out, smiling brilliantly.

Rory smirked over to her. “Yeah?”

Amy shook her head at him, laughing at his shyness. “Of course, you stupid idiot.” She grinned and kissed him shortly, finally getting him to smile properly.

Rose was on the phone with Jack Harkness a few hours later as they drifted aimlessly through space once more back on the TARDIS.

“So you did it again, huh?” Jack teased her.

Rose let out a long breath. “Wasn’t quite so bad this time.” She defended herself, but she still nawed on the edge of her thumb nail anxiously.

“Hey, it wasn’t so bad the first time.” Jack assured her, not for the first time. “I’ve had a good old long life. Have a lot to go apparently. Though I really would have appreciated that not-aging thing—Hey, do you think Amy could find out what I look like in the future?”

Rose sighed. “Jack, I already know what you’ll look like in your future.”

“Yeah, but maybe Amy will actually tell me.” He laughed, and Rose couldn’t help but let out a little chuckle herself at her old friend’s cheek.
“She’s not stupid.” Rose rolled her eyes.

“Yeah,” Jack nodded, “must be the Time Lord DNA. Apple didn’t fall too far from the tree and all that.”

Rose laughed at that and fell back against the jumpseat, holding her hand up in the air to absently inspect her wedding as she changed the subject to lighter things.

February

Amy groaned loudly, letting her head fall heavily against the open book in front of her. Her entire kitchen table was currently nearly the entire Gallifreyan Linguistics section of the TARDIS library.

Rory dipped his tea, raising his brows as he watched her from where he meant against the counter. “You know you don’t actually after learn Gallifreyan, right?”

Amy huffed, pouting. “I feel like I should.”

“Whether or not you know your father’s native language doesn’t make you any less Time Lord.” He told her sincerely, finally getting her to look up at him.

“Rose did it.” Amy still argued.

“Yeah, and she said it took her half a century- and that was with a native speaker in her head.” He stepped forward to flip through one of the books and wrinkled his nose. “Any language that requires math to translate probably isn’t worth the headache. At least not this century. Maybe try the next one.”

Amy finally let out a little resigned chuckle at that, nodding in defeated acceptance as she pushed the books away.

March

“I got a job.” Amy informed The Doctor, feet dangling over the edge of the glass floor as he worked underneath. The TARDIS was parked in her back garden while he did repairs and Rose was inside talking to Rory.

Her father squinted up at her. “I thought you wanted to be a writer.”

“Yeah, well. Easier said than done.” She sighed. “Turns out ‘staff writer for the Leadworth News Tribune’ isn’t really impressive enough in London. Especially not as the only thing on my CV.”

“You had a job before that didn’t you?”

Amy raised her brows at him. “You mean as a kissogram?”

The Doctor wrinkled his nose as he remembered that. “Oh yeah no nevermind.” He let out quickly, making Amy laugh at his expense.

She let a moment pass before she spoke again. “Did you have a job, then? Before you stole the TARDIS and decided to start saving the universe?”
“Oh… probably.” The Doctor looked up from his work at that as he tried to remember that long ago. “Academy students weren’t allowed to work though,” he recalled, “and I didn’t stick around long after. Maybe a couple hundred years…”

Amy had the sudden realisation that one day she’ll think of terms of centuries rather than months, but she shook off the feeling quickly as her father continued.

“Oh right yeah I was an inventor. Not really a proper job, I guess. I just liked messing about with things and calling it work. Didn’t make any money…” The plug in his hands sparked as punctuation to that description.

Amy’s brow furrowed at that, and she stood up to go down the stairs so that she could see him properly. “Did you not need money on Gallifrey?” She asked, aware now that she was in dangerous territory, as her dad didn’t often speak about his childhood.

He shrugged noncommittally, not looking up to her as he continued to rewire some things. “The covenant I was woven into were a very influential bunch. Practically ran the Citadel, even if not directly.”

“But you…?”

The Doctor let out a long breath. “I saw all the things that the council was hiding from the Gallifreyan people. The suffering…” His voice was watery and distant now, and he cleared his throat, shaking his head. “I stole the TARDIS when they told me I had to join the war. When they tried to use the things I made to-” He cut himself off again with a heavy sigh.

“You decided to leave and fight for something you actually believed in.” Amy finished for him. “Protecting people who couldn’t protect themselves.”

The Doctor smirked at that. “They wouldn’t let me help on Gallifrey. Always insisting there was no one who needed help. Meanwhile people were starving.” He shook his head minutely, and picked up the wires he hadn’t noticed he’d dropped.

Amy considered his words for a while, letting the silence fall over them again as he got back to work. Sometimes The Doctor would speak so fondly of Gallifrey, of his home, and she could tell how badly he missed it. But whenever she learned more about the planet, it seemed kind of like he grew up in a dictatorship.

It was a lot like how refugees would often speak of the countries they were fleeing. It was still home.

“Hey,” she started, getting him to look up at her. “ja taimelao’ve’te.”

He gave her a soft smile at that. “Ja taimelao’ve’te.” He repeated, hearts full.

_April_

Amy was working as an editorial and runway model, and Rory’s dad found it absolutely hilarious.

“My son! Married to a model!” He cackled, and Rory rolled his eyes as Amy giggled.

They’d already told him that Amy was technically an alien, and that he’s also sort of immortal, but he was far more blown away by the fact that she was a model now.
“You know she’s also an alien, right? Why was that not as surprising?” Rory asked exasperatedly. His dad waved his hand around though, casually dismissing it. “Oh why should I care about that?” He said again, making Rory throw his hands up in defeat.

*June*

Amy had somehow gotten roped into going to Cardiff with her mum to visit Jack. She was boredly going through some old case files while Rose went through the tedious task of translating some old Gallifreyan book Jack needed.

Amy sat back, furrowing her brow as she came across a file labeled ‘Torchwood Attack - Canary Wharf - 2006 - Daleks - Cybermen.’ It was all ringing some distant bell she couldn’t quite pin down. “This is one of those times isn’t it?” She said suddenly, getting Rose to look up as she flipped open the file. “Dad said- the Daleks- they invaded Earth twice. The crack in my wall or Bad Wolf erased this memory, yeah?”

“Oh, um- yeah.” Rose answered lamely, biting her lip and twirling her pen a bit anxiously as Amy started reading.

She took out a thick stapled set of papers, and her eyes widened as she read its heading. “List of the Dead?” She asked incredulously, turning a few of the pages. Rose let out a long breath. “It was a rough day.”

Realisation hit Amy like a brick wall then. “Wait. Was this- was this when you lost your family?” She asked quietly.

“Yeah it-” Rose cleared her throat as she heard how rough it sounded. “They didn’t actually die but- officially…”

Amy shook her head, glancing down to the list again. “What happened?”

Rose pressed her lips together and sighed. “We had to send the Daleks and Cybermen into the Void- the space between universes. It was the only way to get rid of them. They’d come out of the Void, so if we opened it, they’d get sucked back in- basically.”

Amy nodded as she (sort of) understood.

“The problem was that Pete would also get sucked in since he was from another universe.”

“Your dad’s from another universe?” Amy interrupted confusedly.

“No, no. This was my dad from another universe. We lost my actual dad when I was just a baby.”

Amy blinked a few times at that, wondering how she could have not known that about her own mother. But she kept her mouth closed, not wanting to point out again their less-than-conventional mother/daughter relationship.

Rose sighed. “Anyway, he had to go back to his universe before we could open the Void, or else he’d die in there. It’s sort of like hell. It’s just… nothing.” She drifted off as if she was remembering something unpleasant, but shook it off after a few seconds, looking back over to her daughter. “Mum went with him so that she could be with the love of her life again.”
“Were you and Dad already married then? Is that why you stayed?”

“Yes, but I would have stayed even if we weren’t bonded.” Rose shrugged. “I’d made my choice a long time ago. I wasn’t ever going to leave him.”

Amy smiled smally at that. She loved it when they did that. Whenever she was reminded just how in love her parents were.

She looked back to the list in her hands and found the Tyler’s. Her family. Jackie, Pete... and Rose Tyler- “Wait. It says you died?”

Rose cleared her throat again. “Yeah. Well.” She huffed out a long breath and ran her fingers through her hair. “I’d already been through the Void too. Me and The Doctor both had. So, we could get sucked through.”

“But you had to stay in this Universe.” Amy filled in as she caught on, and Rose nodded.

“We held onto these… things. I don’t remember what they were called you’ll have to ask your father. But the Void was too strong. It pulled one of the levers and I had to fix it, and when I did…”

Amy sucked in a breath. “You got pulled in.”

Rose nodded again, and Amy sat forward.

“Into the Void? Hell? ” She asked incredulously.

Rose smirked smally. “I think ‘hell’ might me a bit dramatic. It was just… nothing. Not even time.”

“Like a black hole?”

Rose pursed her lips as she considered that analogy. “Sort of… black holes are condensed nothingness- to the point that everything that enters is destroyed. Including time. But the Void is more like… a blank slate. It’s so quiet your ears ring, and even thought can’t be processed there.” She spoke hollowly now. “For a being that can survive without air, they would still go instantly mad and die from insanity.”

“How- how did you survive?” Amy asked breathlessly.

Rose smirked, making eye contact with her again. “Take a guess.” She joked, and just behind her eyes Amy caught a glimmer of gold.

“Bad Wolf.” Amy whispered.

Rose nodded. “I don’t think I was ever really myself in there. I couldn’t have been. Bad Wolf just sort of instantly took over. I don’t know how long I was there. It feels more like a dream.”

Amy caught sight of the list of names again. “How long were you gone in Earth time?” She asked quietly.

“A month.”

Amy choked on her own air at that. “A month? ” She shook her head. “How did- what about- what about Dad?”
Rose closed her eyes against the reminder of the pain. “The bond was severed when I crossed into the void- our minds unable to form a connection across literal nothingness. It’s… painful, to say the least. Telepathic marriage bonds are not meant to be broken… He was catatonic.”

Amy’s heart broke at the image. “How did you come back?”

Rose shrugged. “Bad Wolf. My connection to the TARDIS. TARDIS’s are built to be able to withstand the Void, because of that she was able to pull me back.”

Amy tilted her head. “Why did it take a month then?”

“It didn’t… really. Like I said, there is no time in the Void. It should have been impossible to come back at all. The energy would have had to slip through the cracks in the…” Rose drifted off, and then suddenly hit herself in the forehead. “Oh my god. We’re so stupid.” She mumbled, and then started speaking in rapid Gallifreyan- something she does when she starts talking to The Doctor in her head in the middle of a conversation with someone else so that they don’t interrupt her.

The TARDIS materialised suddenly in the office then, and Amy jumped as her father flung open the door shouting “THE CRACKS!”

“I KNOW!” Rose shouted back.

“THE CRACKS IN THE FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE!”

“I KNOW!”

“THE TARDIS MADE THE CRACKS!”

“I KNOW!”

“TO SAVE YOU!”

“I KNOW!”

“IN AMELIA’S BEDROOM!” He gestured wildly to their daughter between them.

“I KNOW!”

“THAT’S WHY YOU WERE INCLUDED IN THE EVERYTHING!”

“How did we not figure that out?”

“We’re stupid!”

“We are!”

Amy rolled her eyes and sunk further down into her chair as they continued to yell about how stupid they were, and started doing Gallifreyan mathematics on the chalkboard behind the desk.

August

Rose was out with Donna, but The Doctor really needed help modifying the toaster (again).

Amy had gotten really cross with him last time she’d helped, so instead The Doctor opted to follow
Rory around the hospital begging for assistance.

“Doctor, I’m working!” Rory insisted again, trying to focus on the patient file in front of him.

Next to them a nosey old woman cleared her throat importantly. “Excuse me, sonny, but isn’t it your job to help the doctors?” She asked him pointedly.

Rory chuckled awkwardly. “Oh- oh no, you’ve misunderstood. He isn’t- he isn’t a doctor.” Rory pointed over his shoulder to The Doctor who was smirking amusedly at this turn of events. “This is my father in law.”

“Well that’s even worse!” The woman scoffed.

Rory’s mouth opened and closed a few times in shock before finally his shoulders fell in silent defeat. The Doctor grinned victoriously.

October

Amy was going through the TARDIS’s vast storage space when she came across a small cot. Circular Gallifreyan was engraved in the headboard, and a little mobile of silver stars hung over it. She ran her hand across it reverently. It was old. Really old.

“Dad?” She called, and The Doctor’s head popped out from behind a tall stack of boxes.

“Yes?” He asked, raising his brows curiously.

“Who slept here?” She asked. “Were you… were you ever a father before? Before me and Alina, I mean.”

His eyes fell to the cot in front of her at that. “Oh. That was mine, actually. I slept there.”

Amy didn’t miss how he dodged the question she was really asking. “Were you though?”

The Doctor let out a long breath, and walked forward until he was leaning back against the table she was at. “There wasn’t really such a thing as parents on Gallifrey. Not how you think of it least. Not for Time Lords.”

“You weren’t born, right?” Amy supplied, remembering an earlier conversation.

The Doctor chuckled a little at that. “No, I was loomed. Woven by a machine with the DNA of two other Time Lords. Parents, technically, but it didn’t go past biology- and even that was obscured by technology.”

“So it was the same thing then. You were a parent but not really?”

“It was mandatory that all Time Lords marry and supply children to the citadel.”

“You were married? ” Amy couldn’t help but half-shout the question.

The Doctor shook his head though. “No, no. Poor translation.” He corrected himself quickly. “Khatrasect - a contract. The high council would pair Time Lords together for weaving. To avoid creating siblings across multiple covenants. It wasn’t marriage, no. There was no bond or anything. Time Lords were actually forbidden to take a marriage bond.”
“Forbidden? Why?”

The Doctor shrugged. “Ancient code of conduct. Time Lords were supposed to be above everything, basically.”

“So why did marriage bonds exist then?”

“There were people on Gallifrey who weren’t Time Lords.” The Doctor explained. “Non-Time-Lord-Gallifreyans could marry and bond with and have natural born children with whomever they pleased.”

Amy nodded slowly as she processed all that. “So did you ever meet them? Your kids? Or your family? Or covenant or… whatever.”

The Doctor shook his head. “The looming process was done in a nursery within the Academy. Young Time Lords didn’t leave the school until failure or completion- which took about a century. So I did know the other people in my covenant around my age or older. The House of Lungbarrow, we were called.” He smirked. “Very important House. I had 45 cousins.”

“Forty-five?” Amy repeated, more to herself than to him, making her father laugh at her expression.

“I also did know the woman with whom I was in a contract with.” He chuckled. “One of the few who did, actually. She was a good friend. I did meet a few of my children too. My granddaughter traveled with me for a while.”

It suddenly occurred to Amy then that The Doctor had been alive for more than 800 years before he’d met Rose. “So what about after you left, then?” She asked. “Did you ever get married for real? Or have kids?”

“Nah.” The Doctor answered. “Not for real. Not before Rose.” And with that he ruffled her hair and placed a kiss on her forehead before walking away.

She watched Rory carefully over dinner that night, until finally he set his fork down with an exasperated look.

“Okay, what is it?”

Amy pressed her lips together before answering. “I just realized today that we have a lot of time.”

Rory squinted at her, wondering where this was going. “Bit of an understatement, but yeah.”

“And it’s already been a long time. What, six years since the Atraxi for us? But it’s only been two here?”

Rory shrugged. “Yeah, so?”

“So what’s our plan, here?” Amy sounded frustrated. “Used to be married before 30 and kids before 35, but now I’m not even sure how old I am? And why have kids so early if I don’t have to? But Melody is already established in our pasts and futures so when are we supposed to have her in order to keep the timelines in tact?”

Rory stared at her for a few moments as she caught her breath. “Can’t you see the future?” He
asked eventually, but Amy just looked at him incredulously. “I mean, we’re eating pork right now cus you had a dream last night that we would because it was on sale. If the Universe feels the need to let you know the price of local deli meat, it’ll probably let you know when Melody should come along too.”

Amy felt her stress almost instantly disappear at that logic. “When did you get so level headed?”

Rory raised his brows at her. “Since I unwittingly married into a family of mad aliens.” He replied dryly, shoving another slice of pork into his mouth.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, I disappeared for 2 months and then came back with a miscellaneous chapter half the size of my normal ones. It really be like that sometimes. Anyway, all conversations I wanted them to have in this main installment (rather than Between the Madness) but that couldn't really fit naturally within the next episodes- especially not in an efficient manner.

In regards to the Doctor's life on Gallifrey/before Rose: I don't really count anything that is only ever explicitly stated in Prose and Audio Who as canon- more like suggestions. So Patience is nonexistent in my book, sorry. I know we're supposed to infer from some of The Doctor's comments and demeanor that he was an actual father at some point. But eh. Also I left it mostly open-ended so it's up for your interpretation anyway, friends.

I'm skipping Closing Time for now but I will be rewriting it later for when it makes more sense (you'll see). The Wedding of River Song obviously is not happening. But I do plan to bring back the Silence. I am also not writing Asylum of the Daleks. One of the main issues I had with Clara's character is that she was introduced so many times in so many interesting ways that by the time we got to the Prime version she was just disappointing. Also I don't see the point in making a companion a mystery. I have plans for Clara, don't worry. And yeah, anyway, without Clara or the Ponds divorce... I haven't got much else except for a Dalek Asylum... TBH I didn't really understand the plot of that episode and I kinda hated it in hindsight. I don't want to erase The Doctor from the universe. That's a cop out.

So yeah! I'm in college now and I'm DROWNING, but I am trying to find time to write. I've been here a month now and I'm finally starting to get my head straight, so I'm HOPING we're good. Will be returning (soonish) with Dinosaurs on a Spaceship. Unless someone can convince me of a good reason to write Asylum of the Daleks. Is anything salvageable? How would I even do it without Clara? What's the point, then?

That was a long ass author's note. I guess things build up. Anyway! Leave comments!
❤
“Well dear, you’re ready to pop aren’t you? Little one’s on its way. Here it comes. Push!”

A broken sob escaped Rose as another contraction wracked her body. Pure unadulterated fear ran through her veins. Where was she? Where was the doctor? Where was her husband? What was happening? Why was she so alone?

She screamed, and banged her head against the cold metal table beneath her, pulling uselessly at the rough straps encircling her wrists, leaving bruises in bloody scrapes in their wake.

She couldn’t see the lower half of her body for the wall in the way, but unfamiliar hands kept touching her and she was powerless to curl away from them. Cold, unfeeling eyes kept appearing through the small door, giving her orders she had no choice but to listen to. All as her child ripped through her body.

She seized as Bad Wolf tried and failed to take over. In her mind, a broken bond turned to fire in protest. Where was he? Where was he? Where was he?

Memories of Alina’s birth flooded her as she pushed again. She screamed and fought, kicking out randomly towards villains she couldn’t see.

--Rose flung herself forward in bed, chest heaving frantically as she had to convince herself that she was really herself. She was really on the TARDIS, she was safe, her daughter was safe. Beside
The Doctor stirred restlessly, brow furrowing at her tumultuous emotions, close to waking up now.

Slowly, Rose built her walls up as much as she could against him.

‘Skaro...’

Amy blinked away the visions that swam in front of her. Fire, and destruction. Grating, metallic voices overlapping with discordant shouts for extermination. And over and over again a voice in the back of her head whispering.

‘Skaro.’

She was half way to calling her parents when a bright light suddenly filled the room.

“Amelia Pond Is Acquired.” That same metallic voice filled her ears.

When she opened her eyes it was to see her husband lying next to her in a completely white room. Rory groaned as he stared up at the ceiling. “Oh, I hate teleports.”

Amy stood up, dusting herself off. “Where are we?” She asked, spinning around in a small circle.

Rory rolled his eyes as he stood up as well. “How am I supposed to know? Isn’t this usually the point when your parents walk in with all the answers?”

Right on cue, the TARDIS materialised beside them—though not in the usual way the TARDIS did, but in the same artificial light that had brought the Ponds there.

“Oi!” The Doctor shouted as he flung the door open. “Who is hijacking my ship?” He demanded angrily, stepping out to come face to face with Rory. “Rory? What are you doing here?” He looked back to the TARDIS. “Did you hijack the TARDIS?”

Rory pulled his chin back. “What? No. How would I even-?”

“We got here the same way you did.” Amy cut him off, getting her father’s attention.

“Amelia!” He grinned brightly over to her, but was distracted again as Rose stepped out of the police box, locking it behind her. He squinted over to his wife. “What are you doing that for?”

Rose raised her brows at him. “Why am I locking the TARDIS when we’ve just been transported against our will into unknown territory by likely enemies?”

“Well, what if we wanted to escape right now?”

Rose gave him a blank sort of look that meant she didn’t feel the need to justify that with an answer. She turned instead to her son-in-law. “Rory! How are you doing?” She asked, giving him a hug.

“Hey, well, y’know. I’ve been better.” He gestured to the room at large and Rose nodded in understanding.
“Yeah, about that.” Amy spoke up again. “I had a vision, right before we showed up here. And there was a voice that I could have sworn sounded exactly like-”

She was cut off as the floor they were standing on started rising, the ceiling opening above them. When the platform clicked back into place, and they blinked away the change in lighting, before them sat the worst thing the Doctor could have possibly imagined.

“Daleks.” Amy whispered, finishing her sentence and speaking the word on everyone’s mind.

The Parliament of the Daleks. Surrounding them on all sides, rows upon rows of every version of Dalek The Doctor had ever encountered. A room full of concentrated hate. His blood boiled at the sight, while beside him Rose’s stomach churned.

“What do we do?” Rory whispered.

“Make them remember you.” The Doctor answered determinedly, and then stepped forward to address the Dalek Prime, an organic Dalek in a clear casing set high above the rest, rather than the usual pepperpot-esque shell. “Well, come on then. You’ve got me. What are you waiting for? At long last, it's Christmas! Here I am!”

‘If the Daleks don’t kill you, I will.’ Rose growled in his head, and he turned around to wink at her cheekily.

There was a long pause, until finally-

“Save Us.” The Dalek Prime spoke. “You will Save Us.”

The Doctor let out an incredulous noise at that. “I will what?”

Beside the Prime, the Dalek Supreme rolled forward. “You Will Save The Daleks.” He insisted, like it was an order, and at that the entire Parliament started chanting.

“Save The Daleks. Save The Daleks. Save The Daleks. Save The Daleks. Save The Daleks.”

The Doctor spun around as the noise filled the room, eyes wide. It was cut off though as the Dalek Prime spoke again. “We Have Arrived.” He announced.

“Arrived where?” The Doctor quirked his brow.

“What Do You Know Of The Dalek Asylum?” It answered with a question.

The Doctor sighed, rocking back on his heels. “According to legend, you have a dumping ground. A planet where you lock up all the Daleks that go wrong. The battle-scarred, the insane, the ones even you can't control. It's never made any sense to me.”

“Why Not?” The Dalek Prime asked, seeming as curious as a Dalek was capable of being - perhaps only because it pertained to his own.

The Doctor shrugged. “Because you'd just kill them.”

“It Is Offensive To Us To Extinguish Such Divine Hatred.”

“Offensive?” The Doctor repeated the word like it didn’t have a meaning.

“Does It Surprise You To Know The Daleks Have A Concept Of Beauty?”
The Doctor’s face was one of pure disgust. “I thought you'd run out of ways to make me sick.” He practically spat, shaking his head. “You think hatred is beautiful.”

In the middle of the floor they were standing on a large hole opened up, making them all step back.

“The Asylum,” the Prime said as they all looked down to the light blue planet below them, it had a sort of visible forcefield around it, like hexagonal plates of glass all fit together.

The Doctor looked up to his family at that. “It occupies the entire planet. Right to the core. Millions of armed, insane Daleks.”

“The Asylum Must Be Cleansed.” The Dalek Prime interrupted again, making The Doctor spin back around to face him.

“Then why is it still here? You've enough firepower on this ship to blast it out of the sky.”

“The Asylum Forcefield Is Impenetrable.”

“Turn it off.”

“It Can Only Be Turned Off From Within The Asylum.”

“Well, that’s rubbish.” Rory muttered, earning a small hit from Amy and mumbled shut up.

The Doctor sighed. “A small task force could sneak through a forcefield. Send in a couple of Daleks- Oh.” He cut himself off suddenly as Rose’s thoughts caught up to him. “Oh. Oh, that's good. That's brilliant.” He applauded them sarcastically. “You're all too scared to go down there! Not one of you will go, so tell me, what do the Daleks do when they're too scared?”

“The Predators Of The Daleks Will Be Deployed.”

The Doctor scoffed. “You don’t have a predator. And even if you did, why would they turn off the forcefield for you?”

“The Predator Of The Daleks Is The Time Lords.” The Dalek Supreme rolled forward again. “You Will Have No Other Means of Escape.”

Rory raised his hand at that. “Actually,” he pointed to himself. “I’m not a Time Lord so if I could just-”

The Doctor and Rose tilted their heads as if they were considering it. “Well…” The Doctor started.

“No, No.” Rory cut him off, jabbing a finger at him. “I’m Human.” The Doctor put his hands up in surrender.

“You Are Two Thousand And Twenty Six Years Old. You Are A Time Lord.” The Dalek Prime insisted.

Rory raised his brows at it. “Oh, yeah? And how old are you?”

“Five Thousand Eight Hundred And Forty Three.” It answered.

“Guess that makes you a Time Lord then, too, huh?” Rory shot back, ignoring the angry and offended sound The Doctor made.

There was a long pause as the Dalek Prime seemed to study him, and then next thing it was firing
an energy blast right towards his head.

Rory ducked just in time to avoid being killed, and when he stood back up Amy punched him in the arm. “Maybe don’t piss off the Daleks, yeah?” She gritted out.

“The Gravity Beam Will Transfer You To The Transmission.” The Dalek Prime said, moving on, and from the porthole a bright white beam directed itself at the Asylum.

The Doctor pulled his chin back. “You’re firing us at a planet?” He asked incredulously. “That’s your plan? We get fired at a planet and expected to fix it?”

“To be fair, it is slightly your M.O.” Rory commented.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose at him. “Don’t be fair to the Daleks while they’re firing us at a planet!”

Amy was looking sort of nauseous, and Rose put a comforting hand to her shoulder. “Hey, we’ll get through this.” She assured her. “Don’t be scared.”

Amy blew out a long breath of air, steeling herself. “Scared? Who’s scared?” She asked, only slightly convincingly. “Geronimo.”

“Ha!” The Doctor exclaimed, and then a second later four Daleks rolled forward to push them into the gravity beam.

They landed in a snow field, but she wasn’t cold. She had no idea if that was to do with the planet or her being a Time Lord. Amy stood up just as her father did. “Where are Mum and Rory?” She asked, spinning in a small circle- not an easy task while standing in three feet of snow.

The Doctor pointed to a spot in the distance. “Another gravity beam touched down over there. They must have gotten separated from us in the fall.” He took her hand and started them towards that direction.

Amy smirked. “Is it bad I sort of missed this?” She asked.

The Doctor looked over to her. “Yes.”

“Good,” she said, earning an amused smile from him.

Rose was already walking around the the dimly lit basement-esque dwelling when Rory finally came to, green tinted sludge dripping into his face from the water damaged ceiling above him. He looked around confusedly. “Where are they?”

Rose was squinting at an unresponsive Dalek shell in front of her, and she pushed it away boredly. “On the surface.” She answered casually, pointing above them to a massive kilometer-long tunnel. “Something must have gone wrong with the transport. We were separated and flung right into the thick of it…” She poked another dead energy blaster for emphasis and shrugged. “They’re on their way but…”

Rory took out his pen light and stared up through the chute- the surface nothing more than a small dot of white above them. “Yeah…” He sighed and brought the light back down to shine at her.
“Are you okay, by the way? You seem a little… off.”

Rose smirked at that. “I’m always okay, me.” She answered flippanently, patting him on the shoulder as she walked past him further into the Dalek-littered Asylum.

“And more distant.” Rory mumbled to himself, sure she could hear him anyway.

‘Where are you going we’re about to be there- oh.’ The Doctor cut himself off as he and Amy came about the massive hole in the ground.

‘Yeah I mean you could try abseiling, but we haven’t got that much time.’ Rose replied sarcastically, still mostly focused on combing through the Asylum in front of her.

‘We’ll find another way down.’ He assured her.

‘Yeah I’m sure you will, dear.’ She answered distractedly, still wandering off.

‘You know that would be easier if you stayed in one spot, actually.’

Rose sucked in a pseudo-empathetic breath. ‘It really be like that sometimes.’ He rolled his eyes in her head, and she smirked. ‘There’s no point waiting around. I know you want to get off this planet just as badly as I do.’

‘What are you going to do if you find the transmission?’

She squinted at that. ‘You know I am actually capable of hitting an off switch without you.’

The Doctor sighed heavily. ‘I wasn’t saying you aren’t, love. I am, however, saying that they will definitely immediately destroy the planet with us still on it as soon as the shields are down.’

Rose bit her lip. ‘I’ll figure something out.’

‘We will.’ He corrected her quietly, but she didn’t answer.

Amy’s brow furrowed as she watched The Doctor pinch the bridge of nose, squeezing his eyes shut as he did. Her parents walls were usually pretty high, but even with that she could tell something was wrong.

“What’s going on?” She asked, not really completely sure herself what exactly she meant by it.

The Doctor shook his head. “Nothing.” He answered shortly, not giving her time to reply before he turned on his heel to lead them back through the snow.

“No,” Amy insisted, running to catch up with him. “Something’s wrong. I know you. I know when you’re lying.” She grabbed his arm to make him face her. “You’ve been gone for a year. Only stopping in for chats. And I know it’s been longer for you. Rory and I haven’t left Earth in that entire time- what’s going on? Did we do something wrong? Did I do something wrong?”

The Doctor’s eyes softened at that, pulling her into a hug. “Amelia,” he admonished, “you’re our daughter. You could never do anything so wrong that we would leave you.”

She sniffed, shaking her head and pulling back so that she could look at him. “Then why are you
two acting so weird all of the sudden? What happened?"

He shook his head, looking down at her sadly. He didn’t have the answers she was looking for. He

“You know you can actually talk to people that aren’t your husband.” Rory had started ranting out
loud to Rose as she refused to answer any of his persistent questions. “I am trained to deal with
emotional trauma. Professionally. But just continue to ignore me. That’s fine.”

“If The Doctor ever spoke to my mum like this she would have slapped him.” Rose huffed angrily,
and Rory rolled his eyes.

“The difference is I was your friend before I was your son-in-law. I am trying to help.”

“Stop.”

“No. I’m-”

“No, really, stop.” Rose held her hand out to stop Rory in his tracks. She was squinting
suspiciously at the Daleks that surrounded them now, feeling the sudden shift of frequencies in the
air. “I think they’re waking up,” she whispered.

In front of them, a Dalek eyestalk lit up. “Egs… Egs…”


“Shush!”

“Egs… Egs… stir… min… ate…”

Rose’s eyes widened and she grabbed Rory’s hand as all around them the other Daleks started
chanting as well. “Exterminate! Exterminate!!” Their weapons started firing randomly, ricocheting
around the room.

“Duck!” Rose shouted, yanking Rory towards the far side of the room where a disengaged control
panel sat against a bulkhead door. “Cover me.” She ordered, prying open the covering to reveal the
burnt out wires.

“With what?” Rory asked incredulously, again narrowly avoiding an energy blast while the Daleks
continued to spin in uncontrolled circles as they fired.

Rose didn’t answer however, too focused on getting the door open, so Rory looked around and
grabbed a random piece of sheet metal to use a shield. A second later the blast burnt a hole right
through it, revealing Rory’s terrified face as he tossed the flaming metal to the side.

“Aha! See!” Rose mashed a button and the door started rising. “Capable.”

“Yes, very good, now go!” Rory shoved her through the door just before another blast could hit
her, and jammed the button on the other side to close it right behind them, one more blast flying
through in the last second and hitting the far door at the end of the corridor.

They both leaned heavily back against the wall, now in the relative safety of a Dalek-free corridor.
Rory turned his head slowly to look at her as they both breathed heavily. “You’re going to have to
tell me what’s wrong eventually.”
Rose huffed and slid down the wall until she was sitting, and waited until Rory followed suit. “I just feel so alone.” She whispered eventually, staring off towards a point no one else could see. “I didn’t know I could feel alone anymore. Not since The Doctor. But even with him in my head I just can’t shake this feeling…” She sounded miserable.

“Have you told him?” Rory asked quietly.

Rose shook her head. “I can’t. There’s nothing he can do and he’d just be upset. I don’t want to hurt him.”

“What happened? You seemed okay before we left, is it because-”

“No,” Rose cut him off quickly. “It just settled in once you left, I guess. I finally had time to process what had happened to me and I-” She took a deep shuddering breath. “God, that sounds so selfish.”

It hit Rory then what she was talking about. “No, Rose it isn’t. It happened to you more than it happened to anyone else.”

“Amelia-”

“-was a baby and had no idea what was going on.” Rory interrupted, finally getting her to look at him. “Have you ever said out loud what happened?”

Rose shook her head again; Rory hadn’t known someone as strong as her could ever look that vulnerable. “I was so alone, Rory. I was frightened and confused and I didn’t know where I was or who all those people were. The Doctor wasn’t there, and all these people kept touching me while I was tied down and afraid… And then they just took her. And it happened all over again. I lost both of my children twice in a row and there was nothing I could do about it. I was so helpless. I still feel helpless. I just keep reliving that birth over and over again and I can’t get it out of my head-” Rose choked on a sob and shoved her face into her hands.

Rory closed his eyes as he pulled her into a hug. It was something he’d seen half a dozen times in the maternity ward before. Distressed mothers unable to recover from traumatic births, feeling like they had to power through anyway because at least their baby was okay, and everyone kept telling them that that’s what mattered most.

Meanwhile, Rose felt like the entire universe would fall apart if she didn’t keep going.

And he couldn’t even tell her for sure that it wouldn’t.

Amy and The Doctor had ended up in a wrecked ship. A small starliner that had chosen the wrong planet to try and contact for an emergency landing. There was no sign of life anywhere, but it was buried deep in the planet’s ground, and if he was correct then it should have-

“Aha!” The Doctor pushed away the debris to reveal a rusted metal wheel. “An escape hatch! Give us a hand.” He and Amy worked together to turn it until finally it came open, and they looked down a long shaft with a ladder on the side. “Looks like it goes straight down to the Asylum. Where Rose and Rory are.”

Amy looked at him seriously. “You need to talk to her.”

“I’ve tried, Amy. She won’t tell me what’s wrong.” He huffed and started down the ladder.
“Try harder then!” She shouted after him, and he only growled in response. She rolled her eyes and started down after him. “What’s the other option then? Go the next ten thousand years without speaking? It’s not like you can get divorced.”

The Doctor lost his footing at that, and he just nearly caught himself before plummeting towards his death. “Don’t say things like that!” He reprimanded her, still attempting to keep the bile from coming up.

Amy pressed her lips together and gave him an apologetic look, though she was admittedly pleased with the response. Things weren’t as bad as they could be then.

“Now, shut up. I need to focus.” He ordered.

“Oi! Don’t tell me to shut up.”

“Well don’t say stupid things then.” He retorted, and Amy smirked.

“They’re coming.” Rose said suddenly, and Rory watched her entire demeanor shift as she locked away all her emotions and stood up. The whole process only took a few seconds, and she was back to looking like her usual endlessly brave self. But he could still see the loneliness behind her eyes. The tiredness on her shoulders. And the fear in way she held her hands. “Come on.”

Their feet hit the ground in a small sort of cubby hole, and they peaked around the walls to see a chamber full of disoriented Daleks all rolling around aimlessly, occasionally running into walls and random junk, a few of them just spinning in mindless circles.

The Doctor put a finger to his lips and looked to Amy. “Just stay quiet. Maybe they won’t notice we’re here.” He whispered, taking her hand and leading her towards Rose’s direction.

“Yeah, because that plan has always worked out brilliantly.” She replied sarcastically, only to get shushed a moment later. She rolled her eyes and continued to step lightly through the Dalek infested room.

They managed to get to the far end of it and start down a corridor before the ran into a slightly-better-functioning Dalek. “Intruder!” It screeched, and The Doctor reeled backwards, shoving Amy behind him as he did.

The Dalek tried to discharge its weapon systems, but nothing happened other than a small wiggle.

“It’s damaged.” The Doctor observed, straightening up again.

“Okay, but we’re still trapped. What do we do?”

The Doctor stepped into the Daleks line of sight again, getting back its attention from its broken arm. “Identify me.” He ordered. “Access your files. Who am I? Come on, who’s your daddy?”

There was a long pause wherein the Dalek seemed to be studying him. “You Are The Doctor.” It proclaimed eventually.

“Access your standing orders concerning The Doctor.”

“The Predator Must Be Destroyed!” It screamed, and attempted to shoot it’s weapon again.
“And how are you going to do that, Dalek?” He challenged. “Without a gun you’re a tricycle with a roof. How are you going to destroy me? Huh?”

“Self Destruct Initiated.”

“What’s it doing?” Amy asked frantically, taking a step back in the small space.

“It’s going to blow itself up, and I with it. Only weapon it’s got left.” He answered flippantly, using the sonic to pull the lid off the Dalek’s shell as he did.

‘What the bloody hell are you doing? That can’t be countermanded!’ Rose demanded angrily in his head.

The Doctor huffed, answering her out loud on accident. “I know that, dear. I’m not looking for a countermand. I’m looking for a reverse.”

Right on cue, the Dalek started whizzing backwards at full speed, shouting “Forward! Forward!” over and over again as it did to no avail. It bumped into another Dalek along the way, taking it with him into the chamber.

An explosion went up, and in front of them the bulkhead opened to reveal Rory and Rose.

In an instant Rose grabbed Amy and hauled her into a fierce hug, tucking her face into her hair and taking a deep breath before she lost it. “Thank God, you’re okay.” She mumbled breathlessly.

Amy laughed a little at that, hugging her back. “Course I’m okay. Always okay, me.” She said, and she sounded so much like her and her dad it made Rose’s stomach squirm. She pulled back and managed only a small smile that didn’t quite reach her eyes.

She turned to The Doctor and pulled him into a hug as well. “Please don’t ever do that again.” She whispered desperately, pressing her head into his shoulder in an attempt to stave off a headache. “Please.”

The Doctor wrapped his arms around his wife’s waist and held her to him tightly. He sent Rory a confused look over her head, but Rory only shrugged unconvincingly, making The Doctor squint further. “Okay, no problem.” He attempted to reassure her. “Never again, I promise.”

Secretly, Rose took that as a completely different promise all together.

She sniffed, composing herself, and took a step back. “Let’s get off this planet.”

“Right,” The Doctor clapped his hands together. “There has to be a teleport around here somewhere.”

“Tick, next room over.” Rose answered, tilting her head towards the way her and Rory had come from. “Internal use only, but between the both of us we could probably hack into it.”

“Hack into the security systems of the most advanced warrior race in the universe?” The Doctor asked her, raising his brows.

Rose shrugged like she was unfazed. “Yeah, why not?”

The Doctor laughed at that and pulled her into a kiss, making her squeal in surprise. “Rose Tyler, I love you.” He told her firmly, pausing only for a second before getting back to business and leading them back into the room Rose had indicated where a telepad sat in the middle and a control
“We’ll have to turn off the forcefield remotely from here. Otherwise we haven’t got a chance.”

He nodded. “We can boost the power. Once the forcefield is down we can use the teleport to beam us right off the planet.”

“You said when the forcefield is down the Daleks will blow us up.” Rory spoke up.

The Doctor pointed to him. “We’ll have to be quick, yes.”

“Fine, we’ll be quick.” Amy said. “But beam to where?”

“The only place within range is the Dalek ship.” Rose bit her lip.

Amy shook her head. “They’ll exterminate us on the spot.”

The Doctor gave them a look that said he knew that, and there wasn’t anything he could do about it.

“Ah, so this is the sort of escape plan where we survive about four seconds longer.” Rory replied dryly.

“What’s wrong with four seconds? You can do loads in four seconds.” The Doctor grinned and started typing madly into the computer terminal. “Rose, I’m going to need your help if we’re going to do this.”

She joined him on his other side. “I’ll work on the teleport; you work on locating the signal for the forcefield.”

Eventually, Rose was sitting cross legged on the floor in front of the telepad, rewiring the circuits with the sonic screwdriver, while The Doctor continuously ran his hands through his hair as his frustration grew in looking at the security system.

Amy sat down next to her and laid her head on her shoulder. “I know you’re not feeling well.” She whispered, and Rose paused in her work, but didn’t dare to look over to her daughter for fear of spilling everything she was holding in. “… And I can’t pretend to know what’s bothering you. I don’t think I’ll ever fully understand you two.” She sighed. “But no matter what it is, I want you to know that I love you.”

Rose dropped the circuit board at that to pull her daughter into a hug. “I love you too, Amelia. More than I could ever say.”

“Pasen’iavortnabe!” The Doctor shouted suddenly, making both the girls jump and look over to him. Rory just rolled his eyes while the Doctor rather dramatically hit the computer in front of him. “I can’t get into this stupid system!” He growled.

“Doesn’t that make it a pretty smart system then?” Rory commented casually, eyes widening andducking quickly when The Doctor spun around and threw a banana at him.

“Where did you even get a banana?” Rory sputtered incredulously, turning to the girls. “Where did he get a banana?”

Rose sighed and stood to go to her husband’s side. They started speaking in Gallifreyan though as
they tried to work through the problem, so Rory went to go sit next to Amy.

“Did she tell you what’s wrong?” Amy asked him, giving him a knowing look.

Rory let out a long breath, not wanting to break Rose’s trust (especially since he was pretty sure she hadn’t meant to tell him anything), but not wanting to lie either. He nodded slowly. “Sort of…” He glanced over his shoulder to look at the woman in question worriedly. “I think she has PTSD, but she’s not willing to do anything about it. I don’t even think she’d accept it if I told her.”

Amy opened her mouth in an attempt to find words to respond to that, but her father stood up suddenly, pumping his fist in the air. “Rose Tyler you are brilliant!” He exclaimed, kissing her fiercely. He turned back to the rest of their family before she could catch her breath. “Okay, everyone on the teleport.” He ordered, and Rose ran around to finish the wiring quickly and snap all the panels back into place.

She grabbed Amy and Rory’s hands. “Hold on to me. No matter what you do. No matter what happens. Hold on to me.” She told them firmly.

The Doctor mashed a final few buttons on the control panel, and everything around them started exploding. He jumped onto the teleport, pulling them all into a group hug, and everything went white.

When their vision cleared they were standing on the TARDIS.

“Aha!” The Doctor spun around happily. “Pinpoint accurate! We had to beam to the Dalek ship but-”

“-but the TARDIS was also on the ship.” Amy interrupted, the pieces falling together. “Mum is connected to this ship so-”

“I just rewired it to… find the rest of me -for lack of a better English phrase.” Rose finished, shrugging.

Outside, they could hear the Daleks screeching as their systems registered the teleport as an attack. Energy blasts made the TARDIS shake with the battle cries of “Exterminate!” ringing a thousand times over.

The Doctor’s face hardened at the sounds, and he made to start towards the doors, but Rose pulled the dematerialisation lever before he could make it there.

“What are you doing?” He demanded angrily, spinning around and running up the stairs to try and stop her progress.

Rose continued flying the ship though, not flinching at his tone. “We’re leaving.” She answered firmly.

“Leaving? What do you mean leaving? There’s an entire Dalek army out there and you just want to leave it?” He chased her around the console, shouting now.

Rose rounded on him. “What were you gonna do?” She shouted back. “Go out there and talk them to death? What was the plan?”

“I’d figure it out!”
“No, you’d get us all killed!” Rose jabbed an accusatory finger at him. “You never think! You just drag us all into these dangerous situations constantly! And you don’t worry! What if you hadn’t found the reverse on that Dalek? What if I’d had to go on without you two?” She had tears streaming down her face now. “I’ve already lost my family. I’ve already lost one daughter. I’ve already had Amy taken away from me once. I can’t do it again. I can’t-”

Rose cut herself off on sob, shaking her head vehemently before turning on her heel and disappearing into the TARDIS.

“Rose!” The Doctor called after her, moving to follow, but before he could the ship dinged angrily at him, flashing the lights and slamming shut the corridor Rose had gone down. The Doctor’s outstretched hand closed around empty air, and he dropped his head with a defeated sound.

A second later the TARDIS landed with a soft thud.

“You’re home.” He said quietly to the floor.

“Dad…” Amy started, taking a small step forward.

The Doctor shook his head, and looked up to them finally. Amy had never seen him look so defeated. Not since Demons Run. “If this is where she landed then this is where she thinks you should be.” He said. “Probably best I didn’t go against her right now.” He tried to joke but it sounded broken and wrong, the smirk looking unnatural- like it was plastered on.

“Dad…” Amy tired again, but he turned away from her, and Rory grabbed her hand.

“Come on.” He whispered, pulling her towards the door. “Come on.”

Amy couldn’t find it within herself to fight. The door closed behind them, and the TARDIS was gone before she could process that she’d left it at all.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, I said I wasn't going to write this one. But then I was inspired. Sorry about this particular brand of inspiration. This was always the plan for this season, but it happened a bit more dramatically than I thought it would. Sometimes characters just start doing things without writers really having control and... I'm sorry. It will get better, I promise.

I'm more likely to answer specific plot questions this time around so leave them in the comments!

Also, just general comments are always nice too ❤
(Even if you’d just like to shout at me)
Amy’s parents had a tendency to let things build up, explode, and then pretend that nothing had ever happened. Constantly putting things off until “later.” A consequence of having a near infinite amount of time to do so.

It was frustrating, to say the least.

“So you’re travelling again, then?” Amy asked, earning a curious look from Rory as she spoke into the phone with her mother. “What made you decide this?”

Rose let out a long breath. “He was miserable cooped up in here after a while… and honestly I was too. I don’t think it’s the travelling that makes me anxious.”

“Oh,” Amy quirked a brow. “What do you think it is?”

Her mother was silent for a long time, and Amy could practically hear her planning out a strategy for another game of verbal chess. “Oh, it’s nothing. No matter,” she answered vaguely, and Amy nearly chucked the phone across the room.

“So, hold on,” Rory shook his head, shoving his mobile in between his shoulder and his ear as he tried to find bandages in the supply closet at work. “You just haven’t talked about it?”

“Well… we apologised.” The Doctor defended quickly, and in the background Rory could hear something that sounded like a small explosion, but his father-in-law didn’t react to it, so neither did he.

“But you just didn’t say what for?” Rory clarified incredulously.

“It was implied!” The Doctor shouted over yet another, larger explosion, and then huffed in frustration. “No, no, sorry. I’m going to have to deal with this one,” he said before hanging up without so much as a goodbye. Rory rolled his eyes and shoved his mobile in his pocket with a bit more force than necessary.

It became a regular topic for discussion over dinner.

“I mean, with the telepathy thing, doesn’t he kind of know what she’s feeling, even without her saying?” Rory asked, sounding hopeful.
Amy bit her lip as she considered that. “More than any other couple would but…” She sighed, shrugging helplessly, “it’s still not healthy.”

Rory looked down sadly at that.

Rory’s dad came round for tea, but ended up getting distracted by their sitting room light fixture, which hadn’t been working for a while now since they hadn’t found the time to change the bulb. Brian, unable to cope with an unlit light, ended up pulling out the old wooden step ladder from their shed.

He took out the old bulb and shook it near his ear. “I think it’s the fitting.”

Rory sighed exasperatedly, “Dad, it’s not the fitting. It just needs a new bulb.”

Brian squinted down at him. “You’re wobbling the ladder.”

Rory held his hands up. “I’m not,” he insisted.

Amy peaked around from the other side at that. “How’s my side, Brian?”

He smiled down at her brilliantly. “Perfect as ever, Amy.”

“Thank you, Brian,” Amy smirked, throwing her husband a cheeky look as she did. Rory mimicked her sarcastically, rolling his eyes.

“I don’t know what he said to make you marry him, but he’s a lucky man.” Rory’s dad commented, not for the first time in the last three years, and certainly not for the last either.

Amy was about to say something clever to that, but suddenly all around them papers started flying around, the sounds of the TARDIS filling the room.

“Really?” Rory asked to his wife and the universe at large, “now?”

“You leave the back door open?” Brian asked confusedly.

“What’s he doing?” Rory looked to Amy frantically as they started to see the interior of the TARDIS replacing their surroundings.

“I’m gonna kill him,” Amy proclaimed, and a second later the console room came into focus- the three of them now standing in the floor near the stairs.

“Hello!” The Doctor exclaimed, spinning around the console, pulling levers, mysteriously by himself in piloting. “You weren’t busy, were you? Well, even if you were, it wasn't as interesting as this probably is. Didn't want you to miss it. Now, just a quick hop.”

From the top of the ladder, Brian dropped the lightbulb, eyes wide as he stared around the time ship, but The Doctor still didn’t seem to notice him. They all rocked backwards as they landed, and Rose came down the stairs, carrying a box of torches.

“Alright, everybody, grab a torch,” she ordered and Amy finally realised there were two other unfamiliar faces onboard the TARDIS with them, but she did as she was told, handing one to Brian as well while Rory pulled out his usual pen light.

The Doctor was out the door before they’d even fully landed, flashing his light at a nearby insect.
“Spiders in space…” he observed, “don’t normally get spiders in space.”

Rose was the last one out of the TARDIS, just after Brian. “What the…” he whispered, spinning in a small circle as he stepped into unknown territory.

The Doctor turned on his heel suddenly, pointing his torch at Brian accusingly. “Don't move! Do you really think I'm that stupid I wouldn't notice? How did you get aboard, eh? Transmat? Who sent you?”

“Doctor,” Rory interrupted from behind him. “That’s my dad.”

The Doctor looked over Brian’s shoulders to see Rose raise her brows at him, and he turned around to face Rory. “Well, frankly, that’s outrageous.”

“What?” Rory asked incredulously.

“You think you can just bring your dad along without asking? I'm not a taxi service, you know.”

“You materialised around us!” Rory shouted over his father-in-law’s barely coherent rambling.

“Oh. Well, that's fine then. My mistake.” His entire demeanor shifted back to friendly as he turned to shake the man’s hand with a wide grin. “Hello, Brian. How are you? Nice to meet you. Welcome, welcome. This is the gang. I've got a gang. Yes. Come on then, everyone.” He started walking off, the two new companions following dutifully.

Amy paused for half a second giving Rory an intentional sort of look, with a glance towards their respective parents, before running off after her father.

“Yeah, thanks!” He called after her sarcastically, before sighing and turning back to them, giving Rose a pleading look.

Rose stuck her hand out towards Rory’s father. “Hi Brian, I’m Rose—Amy’s mum. That mad man in the bow tie you just met was my husband—her father. I apologise for his rudeness.”

Brian took her hand and shook it slowly, “I’m not entirely sure what is going on here.”

Rose looked around him towards Rory. “Does he know we’re aliens?” She whispered even though Brian could definitely hear her.

“Yeah, know about all that,” Brian answered for himself, making Rose straighten up again. “Not too bothered. Mostly just curious as to why I’ve been dragged along.”

She sighed at that. “Because I let The Doctor fly by himself,” she answered tiredly, not waiting for a reply before walking past them both.

Amy chased after her father as a loud roaring reverberated around them from somewhere else in the ship. “Alright, where are we? What is that noise? And what on earth have you been doing for the last six months?”

“Well it certainly wasn’t ‘on Earth’—”

“Dad,” Amy cut him off, “seriously.”

He still hasn’t turned to her. “We’re on a spaceship. I sense it’s orbiting—more like pre-crashing,
actually.” The roaring and banging was louder now—closer, “don’t know.”

“And the last question?”

He finally looked at her then, opening his mouth to answer, but caught sight of the two new companions behind her and saw that as a good enough distraction. “This is Neffi and Riddell. They’re with us,” he finally introduced the woman dressed like an Egyptian and the man dressed like he had just been on an African safari, just as Rose, Rory, and Brian came around the corner.

“They’re ‘with you’?” Amy quoted incredulously, looking between her parents. “What, are they the new us?”


Amy squinted at him, seeing that lie for what it was. They didn’t need a gang. They wanted a buffers.

In Neffi’s and Riddell’s defenses though, they seemed wholly unbothered by being talked about as if they weren’t three feet away from the conversation.

At the far end of the hold they were standing in red lights started flashing around the bulkhead door. The noise was quickly approaching now.

“It’s coming,” The Doctor announced.

“ What is?” Riddell finally spoke up.

The Doctor wouldn’t look away from the door, “no idea.”

Rose stepped in front of Amy, and for the first time in a while Amy let her. The alarms started blaring as the doors slid open. Behind them two massive creatures were backlit by a bright light.

“Not possible…” Rory mumbled.

The Doctor seemed lost for words, he stared at the creatures in front of him, unable to fight back the massive grin making its way across his features. “Run,” he finally managed to get out, and the rest of them didn’t need telling twice, turning on their heels and sprinting away.

The Doctor stayed rooted in place though, and both Rose and Amy screeched to a halt when they realised after only a few paces that he wasn’t with them. “Dad!” Amy shouted, exasperated.

“I know!” He shouted back over his shoulder, completely missing her tone. “Dinosaurs! On a spaceship!” It was that same giddy excitement he usually got when something amazing and inexplicable happened. A small part of both the girls loved hearing that, and seeing the goofy grin plastered on his face, but the larger parts of their psyches were distracted by his impending death should he continue standing there any longer.

Rose ran forward and yanked on her husband’s arm, tugging him with her and grabbing Amy as well as they ran after the others away from the rampaging prehistoric creatures.

“In here!” Neffi took a sharp left into a sort of alcove, and The Doctor skid a bit on the dust-covered floor in his haste to follow. Rose caught him just before he could tumble backwards, and they both stumbled in after the others.
Riddell, closest to the corner, peaked around it to see the ankylosaurus standing there huffing, looking annoyed. “I could take one of them,” he said, pulling a hunting knife from his vest, “short blow up the throat.”

The Doctor leaned around his daughter to glare at him. “Or not,” he reprimanded in a loud whisper. “We’ve just found dinosaurs in space. We need to preserve them.”

“Who’s going to preserve us?” Riddell shot back.

Amy rolled her eyes. “Shush,” she ordered, and in front of them the dinosaurs moved on down the corridor, their massive armored tails knocking support beams and their thundering footsteps causing the ship to shake as they went. They all creeped out quietly after them, watching them go.

“Okay so, how,” Rory held up one finger, “and whose ship?” He held up another, coming up to his father-in-law, well aware of his own father sticking close to his heels.

The Doctor didn’t have the answer to either question though. “Well there’s so much to discover!” He exclaimed flippantly instead, “think of how much wiser we’ll be by the end of all this!”

“Sorry, sorry,” Brian peaked around Rory’s shoulder, struggling to keep up with what was going on. “Are you saying dinosaurs are flying a spaceship?”

The Doctor scoffed. “Brian, please, that would be ridiculous. They're probably just passengers.”

‘—Six hours, dear,’ Rose whispered, and his head snapped up at the reminder.

“Did I mention missiles?” He asked, trying his best to sound casual in the hopes that his tone would keep them from properly processing the word.

Unfortunately, that didn’t work. “Missiles?” Brian repeated, flustered.

“Didn't want to worry you,” The Doctor patted his shoulder distractedly. “Anyway, six hours is a lifetime. Not literally a lifetime. That's what we're trying to avoid. And we're all really clever—” He cut himself off as he noticed the computer terminal inset in the wall. “Ooo, let's see what we can find out! Come on!” He motioned with his torch for Rory and Brian to follow him while Rose and Amy examined large scratches in the wall, and Neffi and Riddell continued their search of the ground.

The Doctor pulled the cobweb off of the dark monitor and wrinkled his nose at it, wiping it on Brian’s vest with a small “ergh.”

“How many dinosaurs do you think are on here?” Amy asked her mum, and Rose shook her head in answer, brow furrowing as she turned in a small circle.

The Doctor sonicked the monitor back to life. “Oh, well done, whoever you are,” he praised the technicians as the system came up and automatically produced a diagram of the ship. “Looking for engines,” he spoke out loud, and instantly the image zoomed in. “Thank you, computer… Look at that,” he pointed to a specific part of the diagram, “different sections have engines, but these look like the primary clusters. Where are we now, computer? We need to get down to these engines to —”

What for though was cut off as the three men were suddenly transported away.

Neffi’s eyes were wide, “what happened?” She asked incredulously, and both the Time Lords spun around to see their respective husbands (and Brian) missing.
“Oh, great,” Rose mumbled sarcastically.

“…Find out—” The Doctor cut himself off, suddenly they were standing on a beach, Earth-like and vaguely British if the grey skies and cold winds bouncing off the rocky cliffs were anything to go by. “What?”

“We're outside! We're on a beach!” Brian sputtered incredulously, spinning in a small circle.

“Teleport,” The Doctor grumbled, “oh, I hate teleports. It must have activated on my voice.”

Brian charged back over to where The Doctor was standing next to Rory. “Ah, yes, well, thank you, Arthur C Clarke! Teleport! Obviously! I mean, we're on a spaceship with dinosaurs! Why wouldn't there be a teleport?! In fact, why don't we just teleport now?” He threw his hands up in exasperation and walked off again towards the water.

The Doctor and Rory had shared a look while he was ranting, and The Doctor furrowed his brow towards his son-in-law now. “Is he all right?”

“No,” Rory shook his head, eyes trained on the tense lines of his father. “He hates travelling. Makes him really anxious. He only goes to the paper shop and golf.”

“Well what did you bring him for?”

Rory’s head snapped back around to The Doctor. “I didn't!” He shouted, “why can't you just phone ahead like any normal person?”

The Doctor pressed his lips together and hung his head slightly. There were a number of reasons he couldn’t have phoned ahead. Not the least of which being that Rose had had no clue he was going to pick them up in the first place, and phoning ahead would have given him away.

He just needed to prove—and already—

Brain interrupted the Time Lord’s morose thoughts by coming back into his face. “Somebody tell me where we are, now,” he demanded.

The Doctor stuck his tongue out at that request, making both men pull their chins back in confusion. “Well, it's not Earth,” he answered, nixing his previous assumption, “doesn't taste right. Too metallic.”

Overhead, a dark winged creature was circling, and it made a sort of squawking sound. Brian looked between it and the The Doctor. “Is that a kestrel?”

The Doctor smiled at him, “I do hope so.”

Rory glanced down to his feet and noticed the water was shaking slightly. He bent down to feel it, “the beach is humming.”

“Is it?” The Doctor asked, and bent down to rest his fingers against the sand as well. “Oh yes. Right, well, don't just stand there you two! Dig!” He spun on his heel and clapped his hands together as he faced the cliffs. “I'm going to look at rocks. Love a rock.”

“Dig with what?” Rory called to his back.

Brian didn’t hesitate though. “Ah, well,” he said, and produced a small foldable garden trowel
from his vest pocket.

Rory stared between it and his father’s proud smile incredulously, “did you just have that on you?”

“Of course,” Brian’s brow furrowed slightly, confused by the question. “What sort of man doesn’t carry a trowel?” He bent down to start digging as The Doctor had ordered. “Put it on your Christmas list,” he told him as he pushed the sand out of the way with much more efficiency than their hands would have done.

Rory squatted down next to his father, steepling his hands in front of him seriously. “Dad, I'm thirty one. I don't have a Christmas list any more.”

The Doctor had impeccable hearing. From his place above them on the rocks he spun around excitedly, throwing his hands in the air. “I do!”

Rory pressed his lips together and gave him a mostly sarcastic thumbs up.

Brian’s trowel hit hard metal, and he looked up with wide eyes. “There's a floor under this beach!”

The ship was in obvious disrepair as Rose lead the group further into its bowels.

“There's clearly more than just two of these creatures,” Riddell said as he pushed yet another overgrown vine away from his face. The amount of organic matter in this ship was confusing to say the least.

Amy glanced back as he pulled out a hip flask and took a long drink from it. “Hey, put that away,” she reprimanded him automatically. “I need you sober.”

“It's medicinal,” he lied, “and I don't take orders from females.”

Both Neffi and Rose turned to look at him at that. “Then learn,” Neffi said sternly, stepping forwards to lean into him threateningly. “Any man who speaks to me that way, I execute.”

Riddell smirked, “you're very welcome to try.”

Amy glanced over to Rose at that. She looked annoyed, but she still only rolled her eyes in response. Riddell definitely didn’t seem like their choice of companion to Amy, and even Neffi seemed a weird choice— what with the Egyptian get-up and talk of ‘executing.’

Neffi started leading them then, and Amy picked up her pace slightly in order to catch up to her. “Sorry, what was your name again?” She asked.

“Lady of the Two Lands, wife of the great King Amenhotep,” she answered her without taking her eyes off of the path ahead of them, “Queen Nefertiti of Egypt.”

That seemed to sober Riddell. “I'll be damned,” he breathed.

“Oh, my god. Queen Nefertiti? ” Amy looked incredulously between her mum and the Queen of Egypt. “I learned all about you at school. You're awesome. Big fan. High five.” She held her hand up, and Neffi squinted at it. Amy dropped her hand, waving it casually. “Yeah, bit behind on that…” she muttered awkwardly, sounding like her father. “You're really famous—”

“Shush,” Riddell cut off Amy’s fangirling, “listen.”
They all paused to hear the heavy breathing that was close… really close. Their heads dropped, and at their feet a dinosaur laid sleeping, simultaneously separating them and blocking their path.

“Okay,” Amy breathed, “at a guess, T-Rex—not yet full size. We're in the middle of a dinosaur nest.”

Riddell whispered, “I propose a retreat.”

They all nodded and moved to turn on their heels, but stopped short as an ominous shadow of yet another dinosaur was coupled with a deadly hissing noise.

Riddell tilted his head, “perhaps forwards.”

“Agreed,” Amy said, “just don't wake the baby.”

Rose hopped over the T-Rex rather elegantly, her feet landing silently on its other side next to her daughter. Meanwhile, Riddell lifted his leg up slowly over the dinosaur’s next, and then wobbled as he lost his balance straddling the massive creature as he was. The women held their breath as they watched him fight to quietly catch himself before falling on the carnivore.

Riddell looked up to him and laughed as he regained himself and finished crossing over.

“Oh, my god,” Amy shook her head in annoyance. “Who are you, anyway?”

Riddell grinned and straightened his shoulders. “John Riddell, big game hunter on the African plains. I'm sure you've heard of me, too.”

Amy could tell he was expecting the same reaction she had given Neffi. She pressed her lips together, “nope,” she answered boredly.

Riddell scoffed, “you clearly have some alarming gaps in your education!”

“Or men who hunt defenceless creatures just don't impact on history,” Amy didn’t miss a beat, already moving to lead them further through the ship. “Face it, she's way cooler than you,” she sang mockingly.

“And you, Amy,” Neffi started, “are you also a queen?”

She paused for half a second. “Yes,” she nodded slowly, “yes, I am.”

Rose couldn’t help the snort that came out of her at that, and Amy turned around to grin impishly at her mother, eyes twinkling with mischief. “Daughter of a goddess, surely that makes me queen of something.”

Rose smirked at her daughter’s antics, “Time Queen?” She offered playfully, and Amy giggled and nodded enthusiastically. “There’s an old saying,” Rose told her, allowing the humans to take the lead as the two of them fell back a few steps. “‘Auzwinteche’Auzwalquezesu,’ it means ‘friends of gods, divine power.’ It’s a lot like how the Egyptians felt about their royalty. It’s one of the few Gallifreyan phrases that is used by other races, even today.”

Amy squinted at her, wondering where this was going, “it describes Time Lords?”

Rose nodded, pressing her lips together. “It’s one of the things they kept saying, when you were born, back on Demons Run.” She shook her head, “it annoyed me because it was so obvious they had no idea what they were saying.”
Amy stayed silent at that, watching how distant her mother’s eyes got.

“I’m so terrified you’re going to get hurt again, Aemelia,” she used the Gallifreyan inflection of her name, and Amy felt it probably meant more that way. “You and Rory both.”

Amy opened her mouth in a desperate attempt to find a response to that, but was saved from having to when Riddell called out from in front of them.

“Hey! Come have a look at this!”

The Doctor had found another computer access point embedded into the seaside cliffs. “See? Metal floors, screens in rocks. It was just a matter of a short range teleport. We’re still on the ship,” he explained, pointing to the complicated set of algorithms flitting across the screen.

Rory nodded like he understood, but Brian shook his head stubbornly. “No, we're outside on a beach,” he insisted.

“It’s part of the ship, Dad,” Rory sighed exasperatedly.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Brian scoffed.

“Well, it is quite ridiculous,” The Doctor allowed, cutting off whatever Rory’s indignant reply was going to be. “Also brilliant. That’s why the system teleported us here. I wanted the engines. This is the engine room!” He spun around as he shouted the last words out towards the expansive space surrounding them. “Hydro-Generators! Ha!”

“I have literally no idea what he's saying,” Brian complained to his son.

Rory rolled his eyes. “A spaceship powered by waves,” he translated.

“Fabulously impossible,” The Doctor flung his arms around the father and son. “Oh, think of the things we could learn from this ship—if we manage to stop it being blown to pieces,” he tilted his head as he remembered that particular fact.

“Plus not dying,” Rory added.

The Doctor was already pushing buttons madly as his eyes darted about the screen. “Bad news, can’t shut the wave system down in time. Takes–” he cut himself off as turned around again to look warily towards the sky as another screeching noise sounded, “–takes way too long.”

“If these are the engines, there must be a control room,” Rory suggested, scanning the readouts on the computer.

“Exactly,” The Doctor snapped his fingers and pointed at his son-in-law, landing back around their shoulders. “That’s what we need to find. Now…” He leaned into the two humans and spoke at a whisper, “what do we do about the things that aren't kestrels?”

Brian’s eyes widened as they all turned around to look up to the sky to the things now getting closer, flying in predatory circles above their heads. “Oh my lord,” he breathed, “are those pterodactyls?”

“Yes,” The Doctor clapped his hands together. “On any other occasion, I'd be thrilled. Exposed on a beach—less thrilled. We should be going.” He grabbed their hands and started dragging them off.
the rock face they were currently standing on.

“Where?” Brian asked, chasing after him.

“Er, definitely away from them!”

“That's the plan?” Rory asked incredulously.

“That's the plan. Amendments welcome,” The Doctor nodded, motioning them both forwards. “Move away from the pterodactyls!”

“I think they might be noticing!” Rory called, pointing towards the dinosaurs as they were definitely now zeroed in on them.

“Amendment passed, run!” The Doctor yelled over the noise, hitting Rory in the chest and sprinting in the direction Brian had already started running in five witticisms ago.

“Can’t we just teleport or something?” Rory called to The Doctor’s back, jumping over a rock.

“No! Local teleport burnt out on arrival!” He took a sharp left and stuck his arm out towards a cave, “there's something in the cliffs over there!”

“Come on!” Rory called behind him to his father as they passed him.

“I'm trying!” Brian panted, far less used to running for his life than the time travellers.

Rory fell back a few steps to keep pace with him, and was rewarded by a pterodactyl snapping at his shoulder, he jumped back and Brian smacked the dinosaur over the head with the trowel, giving them just enough time to escape into the cave after The Doctor.

“Are you all right?” Brian asked as Rory held his shoulder.

“Yeah, I'm fine,” Rory waved him off easily. Now really was not the time to explain that he healed faster nowadays as well. “Right, what do we do now?” He looked to his father-in-law as he came beside him to check on him as well, “there's no way back out there.”

The Doctor looked up at that, “through the cave, come on,” he answered, starting that way only to stop short a moment later as there was a loud metallic thud. “That suggestion was a work in progress.”

Brian turned back around to see the pterodactyls still snapping at the cave’s entrance, waiting for them to come back out, “we're trapped.”

“Yes, thanks for spelling it out,” The Doctor replied sarcastically just as more noise came from in front of them—footsteps.

“Doctor, whatever's down there is coming this way,” Rory said frantically.

“Spelling it out is hereditary. Wonderful,” he mumbled.

Brian further emphasised that point when he said, “that sound's getting nearer.”

The three of them took small steps back as the metallic clanging got louder and louder, all of them stuck between a rock and a pack of dinosaurs.

Then, two very large rusty robots came around the corner, one of them sparking. “We're very cross
with you,” it spoke.

Whatever any of them had been expecting, it wasn’t that. For once The Doctor was lost for words. He glanced behind him to Rory for help, but only got a confused look in response.

Amy pushed aside a low hanging vine as they stepped into the room Riddell had called them into. “Bit of weed killer wouldn't go amiss in here,” she huffed, brushing away a spiderweb.

“Whoever was running this vessel left in a hurry,” Riddell commented, grimacing at the state of the room.

“Maybe a plague came and took them,” Neffi offered.

“No, there'd be corpses and bones,” he pointed out condescendingly.

“Unless the animals ate them,” Neffi shot back easily.

“Whoa, Chuckle Brothers,” Amy interrupted their bickering sarcastically. “Lighten up, would you?”

She pulled back some plant life in order to brush the dust off an old computer terminal, and a second later she had it powered back on and turning on the lights.

“How'd you know how to do that?” Neffi asked, coming to look over her shoulder along with Riddell while Rose hung back and watched.

“Well, I've spent enough time with The Doctor to know whenever you enter somewhere new, press buttons,” Amy explained, smirking a bit as she continued typing at random.

“What else have you learned from him?” Neffi asked curiously.

“Don't stop at button pressing,” Amy answered smartly, inserting a disc into the computer.

A static filled image appeared on the already struggling screen display. “One hundred and seventeen years,” the blurry figure started speaking.

“Data records,” Amy mumbled.

“The ship's owners?” Riddel asked.


“Mainly cryogenic,” the figure went on. “I will continue to work…”

“How about a picture, huh? Come on, for me,” she resorted to begging the AI.

“Far beyond our knowledge…”

“Look,” Neffi pointed breathlessly as the image finally came into focus. “Oh, it's beautiful.”

“I can't tell how far we have come. Far enough to avoid the destructive impact forecast for our planet. Far enough for me to feel a profound sense of loss,” the alien told them.
“What is that?” Riddell asked.

For once Amy didn’t need to ask her mum for the species name. She already knew, “Silurian.”

“You're going straight on the naughty step,” one of the robots ranted as they led them through the ship, walking behind them like they were prisoners.

Brian leaned over and spoke out of the corner of his mouth to The Doctor, “what's the escape plan?”

“Why do we want to escape?” The Doctor whispered back.

Brian furrowed his brow. “They have us hostage,” he continued only opening the corner of his mouth.

“They're taking us somewhere,” Rory explained quickly, “we might learn from it.”

“Oh, you see?” The Doctor grinned brilliantly and tweaked Rory’s cheek. “He's so clever! I've missed you, Rory!”

Rory shoved his father-in-law’s hand away, “don't do that.”

Brian still wasn’t convinced though, “what if they kill us?”

“They wouldn't do that,” The Doctor brushed off his concern easily and stopped to spin around and face the robots. “You're not going to kill us, are you, Rusty?”

“Who are you calling Rusty?” Robot A jabbed a sparking finger at the Time Lord.

The Doctor smirked, raising his brows, “have you seen yourselves lately?”

“You try being on this ship for centuries, see how your paintwork does.” Robot A shot back, and The Doctor realised then just how whiny the voices were in these models— like petulant children but in adult octaves.

“Don't listen to him,” Robot B consoled. “He's just being mean because we captured him.”

“Oh, my goodness,” Brian interrupted the back-and-forth as a dinosaur came thundering towards them.

“Whoa!” Rory exclaimed, taking a step back.

The Doctor turned around a grinned happily at the three-horned creature approached them. “Ooo! Herbivore!” He laughed, “don't panic. Triceratops! Ha! Beautiful!”

“Shall I shoot it?” Robot B asked.

“We're not supposed to shoot the creatures, stupid.”

“Stop calling me stupid!”

The Doctor didn’t pay any mind to the bickering machinery behind him, opting instead to scratch the dinosaur behind his ears and stroke his nose, earning delighted roars in return. “Roar yourself! Hello, cutie! Good boy! Who's a lovely Tricy then? Yes, you are. Yes, you are,” he spoke in a baby
voice like humans often do with their pets.

Rory suddenly wondered if The Doctor and Rose had ever owned a dog… or some alien form of a dog.

The triceratops however seemed to be incredibly interested with the middle seam of Brian’s trousers. “What do I do? What do I do?” Brian asked frantically. “What're you doing? What're you doing?”

The Doctor’s brow furrowed and he stood up fully again. “You don't have any vegetable matter in your trousers, do you, Brian?”

“Only my balls.”

The Doctor’s brows shot into his hairline and he pulled his chin back at that while Rory facepalmed behind him, “…I'm sorry?”

“Golf balls,” Brian clarified, though the confusion had gone completely over his head. He pulled out the balls in question and held them up, “grassy residue.”

Rory was done being embarrassed and was back to just being completely flummoxed by his father. He’d really been positive before today that he had the normal dad of him and Amy. “What are you carrying those around for?”

The triceratops licked Brian’s face before he could say something about respectable men always carrying around golf balls or whatever ridiculous explanation he had.

“Urgh,” Brian let out, now covered in dinosaur drool as well as still being terrified out of his mind. He was officially about ten billion miles outside of his comfort zone.

“Oh, bless,” The Doctor smiled lovingly at the creature.

Brian was less impressed. “Get it away from me!”

The Doctor smirked. “Throw one,” he told him.

“Really?” Brain asked, and at The Doctor’s encouraging nod he waved one of the gold balls around in front of the triceratop’s face. “Is this what you want? Is it?” He tossed it as far away as he could, and the dinosaur went bounding after it, disappearing around a corner.

“And breath out,” The Doctor patted Brian’s back as his shoulders fell. “Right,” he spun back around to face the robots, clapping his hands together as he did. “Take us to your leader.”

“Really?” Rory mumbled as they turned back around.

The Doctor smirked, clearly pleased with himself. “Too good to resist.”

Rose failed to conceal her amused grin as she watched the scene unfold in front of her husband. She shook her head lovingly and bit her nail to keep herself from laughing.

On the screen the Silurian scientist continued speaking. “...of the fifty species loaded, only one has had any difficulty surviving. All the others are thriving, and we expect them to be able to repopulate.”
“We're on an ark,” Amy concluded, “A Silurian ark.”

“Lizard people herding dinosaurs onto a space ark?” Riddell summed up incredulously, “absolute tommyrot.”

“Only an idiot denies the evidence of their own eyes,” Neffi snapped, gesturing to the computer.

Riddell wrinkled his nose at her. “Egyptian Queen or not, I shall put you across my knee and spank you.”

“Oh lord,” Amy let out while behind her Rose pressed her lips together.

Neffi didn’t back down, however. “Try, and I'll snap your neck in a heartbeat,” she challenged.

Riddell’s eyes glowed at that. “They certainly bred firecrackers in your time,” he commented.

“Oh, no, no, no” Amy cut them off, the word getting stuck on repeat just like it did for The Doctor when he was uncomfortable. “Please don't start flirting. I will not have flirting companions!” She insisted, and Rose bit the inside of her cheek at that. Dear lord, she sounded so much like her father.

Neffi glared at Riddell. “If the Doctor and Rose trust Amy, so do I. Stop doubting her.”

Rose felt those words hit her like bullet, and settle heavy in her gut. The guilt was almost unbearable as she watched Amy smirk proudly at the assurances and spin around to face her “companions,” setting Riddell with a challenging look.

Riddell sighed, seeming to finally accept that he currently stood in a matriartical society. “If this ship was built by…”

“Silurians,” Amy supplied, “yeah.”

“Where are they?”


No life signs were detected.

“But where have they gone?” Amy mumbled to herself. She glanced surreptitiously towards her mother, but Rose kept her face carefully blank, curious as to how Amy would handle this on her own.

“Perhaps they found another world, left the ship,” Neffi offered.

Amy shook her head. “Why are the dinosaurs still on board then, and why is the ship coming back to Earth? It doesn't make sense. What’s changed between then and now? Wait—” She paused as an idea came to her. “Computer, show me the ship at launch with all life signals,” she started.

The image that appeared was lit up like a Christmas tree. Amy bit her lip, hoping this would work, “now show me the ship today with all life signals.” The next graphic had only a few dots.

“Thousands less… but why?” She drifted off, screwing her mouth to the side as she thought.

“Show me both images, then and now, side by side.”

“What are you looking for?” Riddell asked.
“Okay, two images, spot the difference,” Amy explained. “What changed? What happened to the Silurians?”

Neffi leaned forward and pointed to the middle of the image for today, “the centre.”

Amy squinted, seeing the slight blip now as well. “Computer, zoom in to the centre… Hold on.”

“What is it?” Riddell asked, squinting at the triangle shaped thing in the centre of the ship.

“Another spacecraft,” Amy breathed, and then spun around to face her mother. “This ship's been boarded before.”

“You can’t tell me she’s not doing wonderfully,’ The Doctor said as he watched Amy solve the mystery.

‘Of course she is. She is our daughter after all,’ Rose answered easily.

There was a long pause as The Doctor considered those words, and he knew Rose could feel his confusion. ‘Then what is the issue, love?’ He finally asked, unable to keep away the desperate tones.

‘What if we lose her again?’

‘We won’t.’

‘You can’t say that anymore.’

The Doctor sighed outwardly, he didn’t have a good enough reply to that—not right now anyway as they were climbing up a ramp leading the a gated ship, the whole place was in obvious disarray, as if no one had been taking care of it for centuries.

“Love what you've done to the place down here,” he commented mildly, kicking away a stray piece of scrap metal.

“Let him in,” a rasping voice ordered from inside the ship, “open the gate.”

The crossing bars slid back just long enough for The Doctor to step through, closing behind him immediately in Rory’s face. He gave his father-in-law a hesitant questioning look—awaiting orders.

“It's fine,” The Doctor assured him, watching his shoulders drop minutely as the tension faded with the words. Maybe Rose had a point.

“He's not interested in you,” Robot A mocked.

Rory rolled his eyes and turned to the robots as The Doctor disappeared around the corner. “Look, you need to learn some manners,” he reprimanded them.

“No, you need to learn some manners,” Robot A repeated him petulantly.

Rory folded his arms across his chest and his jaw tensed in annoyance. “No, you do.”

“No, you do, Mister Manners.” Robot B joined in.
The Doctor ignored this useless back and forth as he stepped further into the ship, he could hear piano music playing now, “Fantasia in F minor for four hands.”

“You know it,” the voice responded just as The Doctor came into his quarters. He was clearly very old, and very injured, laid across a medbay bed and hooked up to about four different machines.

“Know it?” The Doctor scoffed, keeping his face carefully unaffected by the state of the man in front of him. “Say hello to hands three and four. Schubert kept tickling me to try to put me off. Franz the hands. Oh, that takes me back,” he rambled as his thoughts went to about a thousand different places—at least half of which were trying to figure out how he was going out get his family (and friends) out of this mess. “Well, this is cosy.”

“It’s fate you came,” the man rasped.

It was hardly the first time the Time Lord had heard those words, but he certainly hadn’t been expecting them this time. “Is it?” He raised his brows, “I’m the Doctor.”

“Yes, I know. I'm Solomon,” he nodded.

The Doctor was about to respond, but suddenly he was being scanned by a laser set to the side of the room. “What's that?” He asked, watching as the computer ran through a complicated list of algorithms that he couldn’t quite translate.

“System malfunction,” Solomon clearly lied, “ignore it.”

The Doctor decided he would—for now at least. “What happened to you?”

“I was attacked,” Solomon answered, gesturing to his leg that was rather crudely bandaged. “Three raptors. They cornered me. The robots rescued me but it was nearly too late.”

“Oh yes, the robots,” The Doctor glanced behind him before he tilted his head towards Solomon. “They're… unusual.”

“I got them cheap from a concession on Alyria 7,” he explained quickly, waving off the implied question in order to get back to his point. “The robots did as best they could with my legs, but you can help me so much more.”

The Doctor’s head struggled to keep up with everything that was going on and he might have stared at the man for a bit longer than should have been strictly necessary. “Oh! A doctor doctor! I see. Let's have a look,” he stepped forward to pull back the bandages.

“They chewed through part of the bone in my legs,” Solomon supplied.

The Doctor failed to conceal his grimace at the gruesome scene in front of him. “Yes…” he managed to get out, glancing up to the man, “very nasty.”

“But you can repair them,” Solomon said, his tone not leaving any room for refusal.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels, taking a small step away from him and letting the bandage fall back down. “If you tell me how you came by so many dinosaurs,” he challenged.

Solomon glared him for a second before calling out towards the others. “Injure the older one,” he ordered the robots.

“What?” The Doctor asked frantically, but less than a heartbeat later there was a sound of a laser
discharging and The Doctor ran to the gates in time to see Brian fall.

“Dad! Dad!” Rory caught his father and lowered him slowly to the ground. “It’s all right, Dad. It's okay.”

The Doctor fumed, marching back into the captain’s quarters. “I don't respond well to violence, Solomon,” he gritted through his teeth.

“And I don't like questions, Doctor,” he shot back easily. “You boarded without my permission. Now, fix me, or the next bolt will be fatal.”

The Doctor could hear Rory shouting at the robots in the other room. “I will take you apart cog by cog and melt you down when all this is over!” His son-in-law growled, and the easy way in which he was able to threaten the things that could just as easily kill him made The Doctor start to work repairing the man’s leg.

Hours passed before either one of them spoke again. The Doctor passed the time as he worked on healing the man against his will by speaking idly with Rose. “How did you get on board, Doctor?”

“Oh, I never talk about myself with a gun pointed at me,” The Doctor mumbled as he sonicked something. “Let's talk about you. Your cosy little craft embedded in a vast old ship.”

“You're very observant,” Solomon replied, bordering on impressed. He didn’t know he had his wife in his head informing them of everything that they had discovered downstairs.

“I'm a Sagittarius, probably,” he answered flippantly.

“I'm transporting it to the Roxbourne Peninsula,” Solomon finally gave him a real answer.

“A commerce colony,” The Doctor nodded slowly, the pieces falling into place. “You're a trader.”

“I search out opportunities for profit across nine galaxies,” he agreed.

The Doctor remembered the laser scan from earlier. “Ah, the purple light—that's what it was. An IV system, identifying value. The database of everything across space and time allocated a market value. Argos for the universe. You were trying to find out how much I'm worth.”

Solomon smirked, “would you like to know?”

The Doctor, unable to help his own rampant curiosity, looked with Solomon towards the computer, but it just continued beeping, searching endlessly through the universe in an attempt to figure out who he is.

“You don't exist,” Solomon concluded despite the machine giving no such indication that it was done looking, “it's never done that.”

It’s was more likely that the database was just outdated, and it would take it longer to find him in this regeneration. Which was good, but it also meant they were now on an even stricter deadline. “That's me: worthless,” he agreed. “Unlike these creatures you have on board. Very valuable, given they're extinct.” He finished fusing his work together and patted the man’s leg. “Done. Up you get.”

Solomon groaned only slightly as he pulled himself into a sitting position for the first time in years. “The pain in my legs is gone. I can move them,” he observed happily. “Thank you, Doctor.”
The Doctor failed to fight back his look of distaste at being thanked by the truly horrific man in front of him. “What did you do to the Silurians?” He asked firmly.

Solomon didn’t seem surprised to hear that he knew he’d taken the ship. “We ejected them,” he answered easily, like he was speaking about what he had for supper rather than how he committed mass genocide. “The robots woke them from cryosleep a handful at a time and jettisoned them from the airlocks. We must have left a trail of dust and bone.”

“Because you wanted the dinosaurs,” The Doctor theorised.

Solomon shrugged, “their ship crossed my path. I sent out a distress signal, they let me board, and when I saw the cargo… things became more complex.”

“Piracy and then genocide,” The Doctor defined those complexities.

“Very emotive words, Doctor.”

“Oh, I'm a very emotive man,” it came out like a threat.

Solomon didn’t back down, however. “The lizards wouldn't negotiate. I made them a generous offer,” he continued.

“The creatures on board this ship are not objects to be sold or traded,” The Doctor just barely kept from shouting.

“I feel like you're judging me,” he replied boredly.

The Doctor shook his head, closing his eyes as he tried to tie up all the loose ends. “You said Roxbourne Peninsula… so why are you heading to Earth? You're on the wrong course.” He opened his eyes to see the hesitant look on Solomon's face. “Oh, you don't know how! Brilliant!” He scoffed, “you couldn't change the pre-programmed course without instructions. The ship defaulted, returned home. Oh dear, the Silurians outwitted you even after you'd massacred them, so now you're a prisoner on the ship you hijacked,” he was mocking him at this point.

Solomon glared at him. “Not now you're here. You going to help me go wherever I want to, Doctor.”

“Little bit of news, Solomon,” The Doctor set him with a hard look, letting the oncoming storm penetrate his words, “you're being targeted by missiles. Get off this ship while you still can.” It was simultaneously a warning and a threat.

Solomon scoffed, “you think I believe that? You just want them for yourself! You won't profit from me, Doctor!”

“Don't ever judge me by your standards,” The Doctor was already backing up towards the gate, in the process of fixing Solomon’s leg he’d connected his screwdriver with the security systems. The gates slid open and he dashed out of them.

“Well, don't just stand there, Rory!” He called as he ran past. He paused though at the robots, “hey, he wants to see you.”

“Dad, up!” Rory hauled his father back to standing and they chased after The Doctor.

They skidded around a corner and The Doctor spotted the triceratops a little ways away. He stopped suddenly as his mind started racing, causing both Rory and Brian to crash into him.
“What are we doing?” Brian asked incredulously, looking behind him to where they could hear the robots fast approaching.

“Just do exactly as I do,” The Doctor answered, and started running towards the dinosaur.

“Doctor, no!” Rory shouted, already seeing where this was going.

“Geronimo!” The Doctor leaped onto the triceratops’ back, grinning madly and looking behind him as Rory and Brian followed suit, both of them screaming as they did.

“Go, Tricy! Run like the wind!” The Doctor ordered, but the herbivore remained firmly in place. Even when a laser fires right bast their ears.

“After them!” One of the robots shouted.

“Quick, how do you start a Triceratops?” The Doctor asked his companions, looking around the dinosaur frantically as if he might find an on switch.

“There they are!”

“I know, I saw them before you!”

Brian, in an a moment of genius, pulled out his remaining golf ball. “Tricy, fetch!” He tossed it off the herbivore’s nose, sending it bouncing down the corridor.

The triceratops charged after the treat and The Doctor let out a triumphant laugh. “Go, Tricy!” He shouted as it picked up speed, Brian and Rory shouting in terror again behind him as the robots continued discharging their weapons and only narrowly avoiding hitting them. “Come on, Tricy, faster baby!”

“I'm riding a dinosaur!” Brian yelled breathlessly as they turned a corner and finally stopped getting shot at, “on a spaceship!”

Rory chuckled, “I know!”

“I only came round to fix your light!”

“Come on, Tricy,” The Doctor patted the dinosaur. “Where are the brakes?”

They skid to a sudden halt then, all of them getting flung off the triceratops back. It picked up the golf ball and lumbered away.

“Good,” the Doctor breathed out, pulling himself back to standing, “that worked.” He found another computer terminal and tapped it in order to bring it back to life. “Okay. Er, where are we now? Ooo, incoming message from Earth. Hello, Earth, how's things?”

Sergeant Indira Khatri from the Indian Space Agency of 2367 lit up the screen. “Doctor, the ship's coming through the atmosphere. I have to start the missile programme.”

“No. No, no, no,” The Doctor answered frantically, “don't do that. Everything's completely under control here. Turning round any moment. Need a bit of wriggle room on the timings.”

Indira shook her head. “I can't do that,” she told him, sounding regretful but firm.

“You can. Of course you can. Tiny bit more time, Indira, please,” he begged. “This ship contains
the most precious cargo.”

“My only responsibility is the Earth’s safety. I’m launching the missiles. Goodbye, Doctor.” She severed the connection before he could argue further.

“No, Indira—” He hit the side of the terminal. “Hey! Come back! Please!”

Riddell was sorting through a cupboard and made a triumphant noise. “Now, these are what we need! Dinosaur protection!” He spun around, proudly holding up two guns.

Amy yanked one of them out of his hand angrily. “No weapons,” she reprimanded him, sounding like her father again. Riddell only smirked though and handed her the ammunition. She raised her brows as she read what was printed on the side, “anaesthetic? These are stun guns,” she glanced back up to his smug face. “You’re almost clever,” she gave him.

“Enough to make a dinosaur take a nap. Even the Doctor couldn't object to that!” Riddell grinned over towards Rose who just rolled her eyes in response.

“So, Amy,” Neffi started, leaning towards her. “This Rory, are you his queen?”

“Yep,” Amy answered, but caught herself in the last second as her mother snorted. “Wife,” she corrected quickly, wincing slightly. “Wife. I am his wife. Please don't tell him I said I was his queen. I'll never hear the end of it.”

“Shame,” Neffi replied mildly.

Amy raised her brows at that. The Queen of Egypt fancied her husband? She wasn’t sure if she should be offended or flattered, so she settled for neither. “I thought you had a husband?”

“The male equivalent of a sleeping potion,” Neffi answered dryly.

“You clearly need a man of action and excitement,” Riddle interrupted. “One with a very large weapon,” he cocked his gun purposefully, giving her a wink before exiting.

All three of the girls tilted their heads at that, and Rose and Amy turned to Neffi. “So, human sleeping potion or walking innuendo,” Amy said. “Take your pick.”

“That's very bad indeed. Completely unhelpful,” The Doctor was muttering as he paced.

“Doesn’t the ship have any defence systems installed?” Rory offered.

A smile lit up The Doctor’s face. “Oh good thinking, Rory!” He strided back over to the computer terminal and kissed Rory full on the mouth in his excitement.

Rory made a disgusted face and wiped at his mouth while The Doctor seemed to have not realised he’d done anything at all.

“Computer, show us weapons and defence systems,” he requested.

The screen flashed with a message informing him that no such systems were available.

“Oh, well, that was a waste of time, wasn’t it?” He turned back to his son-in-law angrily in sharp
juxtaposition from earlier. “Getting my hopes up like that.”

Rory watched him start pacing again, unaffected by his mood swings. “What ship doesn't have weapons?” He asked incredulously.

“Ah, they're ancient species, Rory… Still full of hope.”

“What about the control deck?” Brian reminded him, “you said we should go to the control deck next.”

“It's too late,” The Doctor shook his head. “It won't make any difference.”

Rory made an annoyed sound at that. “We could at least try,” he just barely kept himself from shouting.

The Doctor did less well on that front. “It won't work, Rory,” he insisted angrily, and the conversation sounded a lot like one they’ve had plenty of times since the Asylum. “The missiles are locked on.”

Rory raised his brows and crossed his arms. He didn’t miss the irony either. “So what, we're just giving up?”

“I don't know,” he answered honestly, and at Rory’s incredulous look he repeated it, “I don't know!”

Behind them there was a bright flash as Solomon teleported in, the robots standing behind him. He had sharp crutches attached to his arms, clearly also doubling as weapons.

“You were telling the truth, Doctor,” he said by way of greeting. “Earth has launched missiles. This vessel is too clumsy to outrun them, but I have my own ship.”

The Doctor took a few steps forward, “you won't get your precious cargo on board, though. It’ll just be you and your metal tantrum machines.”

“We do not have tantrums!” Robot A whined, stomping his feet and effectively driving home The Doctor’s point.

“Shut up,” Solomon threw over his shoulder before the second one could join in. “You're right, Doctor. I can't keep the dinosaurs and live myself. But I had the IV system scan the entire ship, and it found something even more valuable. Utterly unique. I don't know where you found it, or how you got it here, but I want it.”

“I don't know what you're talking about,” The Doctor lied through his teeth.

“You're carrying very precious cargo yourself, I’d say,” Solomon’s eyes glinted evilly. “The last Time Lord in existence would have been enough for me, but then I saw your wife—”

“Don’t you dare—” The Doctor growled, taking a step forward.

Solomon didn’t back down though. “The Golden Rose, the Bad Wolf, the Goddess of Time and Space, the Creator of the Universe,” he listed off only a few of her titles. “Do you know how much she’s worth?”

The Doctor’s jaw clenched. To him she was everything. To the universe she was—

“Priceless,” Solomon finished, practically hissing the word. “Give her to me, and I’ll let the rest of
you live. Including Earth Queen Nefertiti of Egypt, a face stamped across history... and your
daughter, Doctor. The Human-Time Lord crossbreed who would go for—"

He was cut off by the sound of another teleport, and The Doctor spun around to see Rose, Amy,
Neffi, and Riddell appear in the room. “No,” he said firmly, seeing the determined look on his
wife’s face as she stepped forward. “What are you doing?”

Rose didn’t look at him as she began walking towards Solomon, but The Doctor grabbed her waist
and stopped her before she could pass him. “No, no, no, no, no. No way.” He shook his head
vehemently, and looked into her eyes pleadingly.

“This isn’t your choice,” Rose answered.

“To hell it isn’t,” he snapped. “Rose, I can’t do this without you.”

She searched his eyes for the lie and came up empty.

“Give her to me, or the robots will make their way through your corpses,” Solomon interrupted
whatever reply Rose was trying to come up with.

She let out a long breath and brought her hand up to brush against her husband’s cheek. “You have
to,” she whispered, “I can’t let them hurt her.”

“Rose—” he started to argue again, but she was already pulling away from him.

Solomon smiled triumphantly as she came to his side. “My bounty increases,” he said, extending a
wretched hand towards her face, “and what an extraordinary bounty you are.”

Rose slapped his hand away. “Do not touch me,” she growled, eyes glowing.

Solomon flung his crutch forward, making it come into contact with her throat and flinging her
against the nearby column. The Doctor, Amy, Rory, Neffi, and Riddell all took defensive steps
forward, but were stopped as the robots raised their weapons. The light in Rose’s eyes faded as
Solomon spoke. “I like my possessions to have spirit,” he rasped. “It means I can have fun breaking
them. And I will break you in with immense pleasure.”

Every single atom in The Doctor’s body was screaming at him to save her at whatever the costs.
He could feel the Oncoming Storm building inside him now as his ears rang. Distantly he heard
Solomon thank him before they teleported away, and he couldn’t get his eyes to leave the spot
where Rose had just stood.

“Dad,” Amy’s voice finally broke through the static. “Dad, what do we do?”

Behind her, the computer was repeatedly alerting them to the hostile target in progress as all around
them the lights flashed red. The Doctor marched up to the computer and sonicked it, and a second
later they all teleported.

“Okay, control deck,” The Doctor huffed, already moving to start sifting through the mess of
wires in front of them.

“So, what's the plan?” Rory asked, stepping up to where he was digging through a sort of tube-like
structure in between two captain chairs.

The Doctor looked up to him, “come on,” he said encouraging Rory to figure it out himself, but
Rory just continued staring at him. “The missiles are locked onto us. We can't outrun them. We
have to save the dinosaurs and get Rose back. Isn't it obvious?"

“It's sort of the opposite of obvious,” Rory answered.

“Seventeen minutes before the missiles hit. We need to turn this ship around.”

“You said it was too late. That there wasn't any time.”

“Ah, yes, but I didn't have this plan then, did I? Riddell? Keep an eye out for dinosaurs,” The Doctor ordered.

Riddell grinned and cocked his weapon. “I was rather hoping you'd say that,” he said and then motioned for Neffi to follow him out into the corridor.

“No killing any!” Amy called after them.

Rory came up to her side, asking her quietly is she was all right. She just shook her head and went to go join her father as he started yelling at the circuitry in his hands.

“No, don't be like that! Really unhelpful!”

“What's the matter?” Amy asked.

He glanced up to her, “parallel pilot compartments, both configured. Needs two operators of the same gene-chain. That's why Solomon couldn't change the ship's course, and neither can we.”

“Wait but we're the same gene-chain. Why couldn't we?”

The Doctor shook his head. “Our genetics are far too complicated for the system to recognise. You’re partly me but you’re also partly ten other versions of me, as well human and a little bit of TARDIS—”

“Wait, what, I'm part TARDIS?”

The Doctor looked at her like she’d just dribbled on her shirt. “You're your mother’s daughter, of course you’re part TARDIS,” he said like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

Brian raised his hand before Amy could make some other indignant remark.

The Doctor looked over to him, “what?”

“We can pilot the ship. Me and Rory. We must be the same gene-thingy you said.”

The Doctor ginned suddenly, but it was the manic sort of grin that he got when something good happened, but his brain was still short circuiting at the lack of Rose in the room. “Brian Pond, you are delicious!” He exclaimed, clapping him on the shoulders.

“I'm not a Pond.”

“Course you are!” The Doctor didn’t miss a beat.

Brian looked to his son for explanation of that, but Rory just shook his head. It was just easier to go with it.

“Sit down, both of you, licketty split,” The Doctor ordered. “The ship does all the engineering. The controls are straight forward. Even a monkey use them. Oh look, they're going to.” He smiled
proudly, waiting for the laughter, but only got dead stares in return. “Guys, come on! Comedy gold!”

Amy shook her head, and The Doctor huffed, “where's a Silurian audience when you need one— Anyway, two eye line screens. Velocity and trajectories. Steer away from the Earth. Try not to bump into the moon otherwise the races who live there will be livid—”

“What?” Brian interjected, and again Rory just shook his head.

“—Primary controls in the arms of the chairs. Principle’s the same as any vehicle,” The Doctor finished, and then glanced down to his watch. “Eight minutes forty five seconds.” He sonicked the chairs the two men were sitting in and the controls came back to life, “get us as far away as you can.” He spun back to the control unit and pulled at the wires again. “Right, phase two sorted. Now for phase one.”

“No… phase two comes after phase one,” Amy said, coming up to his side.

“Humans, you are so linear,” he scoffed, ignoring the fact that they’d literally just established that she isn’t even mostly human. “Shine the torch in here,” he requested, and she pulled out the pen light.

“What are you doing?”

“Mixing my messages,” he answered vaguely. “How's the job?”

Amy raised her brows at him. “We're about to be hit by missiles and you're asking me that?”

“I work best when I'm multitasking,” he told her, which was true, but he also just really needed a distraction from the overwhelming panic threatening to swallow him whole at the prospect of losing his wife. “Keep talking. How's the job?”

Amy shrugged, “I gave it up.”

He looked up to her at that, “you gave the last one up!”

“Yeah, well, I can't settle,” she defended herself quickly. “Every minute I'm listening out for that stupid TARDIS sound.”

“Right, so it's my fault now, is it?” He shot back, and the conversation was now so reminiscent of a normal father-daughter row that it nearly sent Amy reeling. If only it wasn’t for their impending deaths keeping it from being baseline sitcom.

She shook her head. “I can’t not wait for you,” she whispered, “and they're getting longer, you know, the gaps between your visits.”

“Any other daughter would be pleased to have moved out of their parents house. Isn’t it supposed to be us begging you to come round more often?” He tried to deflect her silent question, but she set him with a serious look, and he sighed. “Rory and you, you have lives, have each other. I thought that’s what we agreed.”

“You know it isn’t,” she said firmly and he looked up to her sheepishly. “Look, I’m not an idiot. I know Mum doesn’t want me travelling anymore. She’s bloody terrified of losing me again. But this never seeing you two at all thing— I just worry there'll come a time when you never turn up. That something will have happened to you and I'll still be waiting, never knowing.”
She looked like a little girl again, saying that. Her worst fear was the same as Rose’s. They’d both lived through that. And they both had different solutions for avoiding it happening again—neither one of them good. Amy wanted to have a human life on the TARDIS. Rose wanted to keep their part Time Lord daughter safe (and stuck) on Earth forever.

“No, come on, Aemelia,” The Doctor whispered. “You’ll be there till the end of us.”

Amy smirked sadly, “or vice versa.”

The Doctor’s face fell. “Don’t,” he begged of her not to remind him. Extended as her timeline may be, she still couldn’t regenerate. He and Rose were doomed to continue losing their children.

A second later he teleport ed to go save his wife.

Solomon was banging on the controls when he arrived. “Hello! Having trouble leaving?” The Doctor quipped, and shorted out the robots with a spare set of wires before they could even think to raise their weapons. “Ship's still magnetised. Just couldn't bear to lose you.”

Solomon put the blade of his crutch to Rose’s throat again. “Release my ship, Doctor, or I kill this precious little object.”

Rose glanced over to her husband as she spoke to him telepathically, making sure he’d done it. That he had a plan and that she could—

Rose’s eyes turned to liquid gold and both of the blades turned to dust in his hands, making him lose his balance as he lost his crutches as well. Solomon fell to the ground, and Rose leaned over him, the light of the universe swirling around her in earnest. “I am not your possession now, nor will I ever be,” her voice was dual toned, “you cannot cage the Wolf.”

The Doctor smirked proudly at his all-powerful wife. “Don't mess with Time Lords, Solomon. I hope you’ve learnt that now.” He pulled the Silurian ship’s core processor out of his pocket and tossed it in the air smartly, sonicking Solomon’s control panel as he did.

“What are you doing?” Solomon rasped from the floor.

“Disabling this ship's signal and replacing it with the one from the Silurian ship. I send this craft off emitting the signal they're looking for, the missiles will follow. Hopefully, Silurian ship safe, dinosaurs safe, everybody safe. Bit tight for time, though. Shouldn’t really be chatting.” He held his hand out for his wife, and the light slowly faded back to its normal warm subtle glow as she joined him. He set the green orb he’d taken from the deck down on the table. “The thing about missiles, very literal. This is what they latch on to,” he took a step back, Rose in tow as he held up the sonic, “now, one press of this and the ship's demagnetised.”

“Doctor, whatever you want, I can get it for you,” Solomon bargained for his life from the floor. “Whatever object you desire.”

“Did the Silurians beg you to stop?” The Doctor shot back, and then glanced towards the radar where they could see the missiles were now fast approaching. “Look, Solomon. The missiles. See them shine? See how valuable they are. And they're all yours.”

“You wouldn't leave me, Doctor.”

The Doctor raised his brows and stepped back behind the gates, allowing them to shut in front of him. “Enjoy your bounty,” he said, and demagnetised the ship.
“Doctor!” Solomon screamed after them as they ran.

They didn’t look back as they heard the ship zoom into space, or when they felt the subsequent explosion as the missiles hit it a few minutes later.

They stood outside the TARDIS later, just as The Doctor and Rose finished magnetising the ships together so that they could transport the dinosaurs to a safe planet a few galaxies and a number of light years away.

“Right,” The Doctor clapped his hands together, “dinosaur drop off time.”

The planet they landed on was almost completely like Earth had been two hundred million years ago, save for a few minor inconsistencies. But these dinosaurs had survived on a spaceship, they would be just fine on a planet.

Riddell stepped out onto the grass and looked around, hands on his hips. “Yep, this’ll do quite nicely,” he declared.

“I’m sorry?” The Doctor raised his brows.

Riddell turned back around to look at him. “I’m staying here Doctor,” he told him firmly. “I thought Africa had interesting creatures, but this…” He laughed incredulously as he made a grand gesture to the expansive and diverse biome surrounding them, “this is a whole other world.”

Rose looked incredibly uncomfortable at the prospect of leaving the hunter on the planet, like leaving a kid in a candy store—but the kid also had a gun. Riddell seemed to pick up on that. “I don’t want to hunt them,” he assured the Time Lords quickly. “You’ve showed me the error of my ways, I swear.”

“You want to stay here all by yourself?” Rose asked.

Riddell shrugged, “I was by myself for near a decade in Africa.”

“But there’s no one here, Riddell,” Rose continued, “not even—”

“I’ll be here,” Neffi interrupted her, stepping around them to stand beside him. She held her head up high and spoke in that way that meant there wasn’t any room for discussion, “I’m staying as well.”

“But,” The Doctor sputtered incredulously, “Egypt!”

“Will be fine without me,” she answered firmly, and that was the end of it.

Back inside the TARDIS they took their time getting them into the vortex.

“Right, back home then?” The Doctor asked hesitantly.

Before Rose, Amy, or Rory could protest however, it was Brian who objected first. “Actually,” he started, surprising all of them, “can I ask a favour? There’s something I’d like to see.”

Which is how they ended up in orbit around the Earth.
Brian sat in the door frame, feet hanging off the edge as he ate a peanut butter and jam sandwich, thermos of tea beside him. Amy and Rory peeked around the edge of the open doors, and took in the sight of the planet below them. The Doctor and Rose came up behind them.

“Please,” Amy begged them quietly, not taking her eyes from the stars, “please don’t take this away from me.”

Rose pulled her daughter close and promised her she wouldn’t.

Chapter End Notes

So, as it turns out I don't procrastinate my school work, which is why I've been too busy to post regularly. But I despise studying, and I'll procrastinate that endlessly. It's finals week. Wish my luck on my exams. I'm dying. But I'll have a month off starting Wednesday. Stuck in my tiny town without any friends, that means I'll finally have time to write again!

I still really love answering questions so leave them down below! ❤️ Or just general comments, because they are priceless to me ;)
Mercy

Chapter Summary

A Town Called Mercy

(Or the one where Amy finally gives her parents what-for, and The Doctor and Rose finally talk)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rose held her hand out in front of her, and wiggled her fingers at the stars.

A second later his hand filled hers.

They always fit together so nicely. No matter the body, his hand always fit perfectly in hers. Like it was a given. The Doctor would always as a rule have terrible fashion sense and a hand made for holding hers.

“We’re falling apart,” she whispered.

The Doctor breathed in deeply, letting the scent of the applegrass against their backs fill his senses. “I know,” he answered, and it sounded broken.

Rose looked over to him, letting their arms drop to the ground between them, but keeping his hand firmly in hers. “I don’t know what to do.”

He watched the stars dance in her eyes for a few moments, the light of the universe mixing with the golden flecks of her irises. “I don’t know either,” he told her honestly.

They could feel it. They were hurtling towards something terrible, and they were powerless to stop it.

“I’d tear the universe apart for you, Rose Tyler.”

She curled into his side and he pulled her as close as he possibly could, praying silently that no matter what happened, he wouldn’t lose her.

“Right,” The Doctor rubbed his hands together before letting them hover over the TARDIS console — “awaiting orders.”

Rose smiled at the mischievous glint in her husband’s eyes as he smirked up at her. Beside her, Amy laughed indulgently at her father’s antics and Rory shook his head in mild amusement.

She had to admit that despite having persistent reservations about putting Amy in danger, it was much nicer having them on the TARDIS than off.

In the back of her mind the ship prodded in an insistent sort of way. ‘Trust me,’ she was almost
saying, and right down to her core Rose wanted it. The thrill of not knowing, the adrenaline rush that came with the danger.

She bit her lip at the idea as the worry that she might panic again almost had her spouting off exact coordinates for her husband to type in. But she squared her shoulders and let herself pretend that she was 19 again.

“Let’s let the TARDIS decide, yeah?”

Amy and Rory shared confused but excited and hopeful glances while The Doctor just barely let himself dare to believe he’d heard her correctly. “Yeah?” He asked, sounding breathless.

Rose nodded in confirmation, and he let out a happy little noise as he pulled the dematerialisation lever and swooped her into his arms to plant an over-the-top kiss to her lips. The TARDIS dinged happily as she flew them through the time vortex and settled into a content hum when they landed.

Rose was the one who ran to the doors, confident now that she could find herself again on whatever alien planet in peril they’d flown to.

It was a little perplexing then when they stepped out onto—

“A desert,” Amy said, squinting out into the too-bright, sepia-toned landscape.

“Well this is exciting!” The Doctor enthused, honestly sounding wholly overjoyed by their surroundings.

A tumbleweed rolled by in laughable juxtaposition to his words, almost as if the desert itself was protesting the adjective.

Rory wrinkled his nose and turned in a small circle. “This… is America,” he corrected.

The Doctor squinted at him, “what?”

“I spent two months running through Nevada and Arizona,” he reminded him, “I’d know this desert anywhere. Well maybe not this *exact* one but—”

The Doctor stuck his tongue out to taste the molecules in the air, effectively cutting his son-in-law off as Rory pulled his chin back. “Nevada, 1870,” he concluded, earning eye rolls from the entirety of his family.

“This way I think,” Rose said, marching purposefully forward as she followed the telepathic push of the TARDIS.

Amy and Rory dragged behind just a bit and allowed The Doctor and Rose to take the lead.

“This is weird,” Rory whispered, “but I can’t figure out why?”

Amy nodded in agreement, “it’s like she’s pretending she feels like herself.”

They came to a stop outside the entrance to the main street of an old western town, complete with a cattle skull and keep out sign.

“Mercy, 81 residents,” The Doctor read aloud the sign that had recently been marked out and changed from 80.

Amy furrowed her brow at her feet where an inches tall barrier of sorts seemed to circle the town.
“Look at this. It’s a load of stones and lumps of wood… What is it?”

The Doctor pulled out the sonic with a flourish and scanned the town line. “A load of stones and lumps of wood,” he answered, and then promptly jumped across it and turned around to face the rest of them expectantly.

“The sign does say Keep Out,” Rory said, raising his brows even though he knew pointing this out would be futile.

“I see Keep Out signs as suggestions more than actual orders, like ‘dry clean only,’” The Doctor replied flippantly.

Rose squinted at that, “have you been putting those suit jackets in the washer?”

The Doctor pressed his lips together and didn’t answer as he turned on his heel and walked quickly into the town.

Rose chased after him, “Doctor, those are tweed!”

Amy and Rory rolled their eyes and with heavy sighs stepped over the barrier and jogged to catch up with them.

The Grand Central Bank ended the Main Street as the largest building in Mercy, and the four of them started towards it, but stopped as a street lamp over the post office sparked and flickered.

The Doctor furrowed his brow. “That’s not right,” he mumbled.

“It’s a street lamp,” Rory narrated dully.

“An electric street lamp about ten years too early,” he corrected.

Rory shrugged, still a little bit convinced the TARDIS had just dropped them off in yet another unexciting anytown, USA. “It’s only a few years out.”

“That’s what you said when you left your phone charger in Henry VIII’s en-suite,” The Doctor threw back, and Rory had the decency to look sheepish at the reminder of how that had gone.

Amy tapped her father’s shoulder to get his attention, “Dad, er…” she drifted off with a pointed look towards the glaring stares they were getting from the townsfolk stood upon their various porches.

The Doctor grinned. “Anachronistic electricity, Keep Out signs, aggressive stares. Has someone been peeking at my Christmas list?”

“Doctor,” Rose started, sounding hesitant, but she cut herself off as she watched her husband pull a toothpick from his pocket and begin chewing on it.

He then proceeded to walk off towards the saloon with a gait he certainly did not have ten seconds ago.

All conversation ceased as soon as they walk in as everyone turned to look at the newcomers.

The Doctor didn’t seem to notice as he leaned against the bar, trying and failing to look casual as he put on a really terribly awful American western accent. “Tea,” he ordered, voice low as he thought he sounded cool, “but the strong stuff. Leave the bag in.”
The bartender set him with a hard look, “what're you doing here, son?” She asked.

The Doctor giggled incredulously at that, “son?” He repeated, grinning, “you can stay.”

A man wearing a clergy collar stood up and took slow steps towards them, “sir, might I enquire who you is?”

“Of course! I'm the Doctor. This is—”

Everyone in the saloon stood up before he could even begin to introduce his family.

“No need to stand. You see that? Manners,” he gave Amy a significant look and she squinted up at him, wondering what the hell he was getting at and also how he couldn’t see the threatening looks all these armed Americans were currently giving him.

One of the townsfolk came up and began measuring The Doctor’s shoulder width. “Oh, thank you,” he turned to look at him, “but I don't need a new suit.”

“I'm the undertaker, sir,” the man corrected his assumption.

The Doctor nodded shortly and then did a double take. He opened his mouth to try and find a reply to that but was interrupted as a younger man (no older than eighteen, surely) stepped forward.

“I got a question,” he started, “is you an alien?”

The time traveling family’s eyes all widened at that. “Well, er, bit personal,” The Doctor hedged. “It’s all relative, isn’t it? I mean, I think you're the aliens!” He chuckled and looked around for someone to join him but none of them did so he cleared his throat awkwardly, “but in this context... yes. Yes, I suppose I am.”

In the next second three men were dragging The Doctor out of the saloon and hauling him towards the town line by his armpits while the rest of them held Amy, Rory, and Rose back.

“Guys!” The Doctor sputtered incredulously.

“Dad!” Amy shouted over their yelling insults at him. “Put him down!” She growled.

The barmaid yanked on The Doctor’s elbow as he tried to struggle. “Don't think we won't kill you,” she warned.

Rory lunged forward along with Rose, “leave him alone!”

The Doctor startled as suddenly all of Rose’s walls came crashing down in her panic. The overwhelming sense of fear nearly sent him reeling while every single emotion she’d kept hidden away for months came tumbling to the forefront. It was like she was 23 again and new to telepathy. Their minds were completely and wholly one again. Not even the slightest sense of a barrier separated them.

“Rose,” he spoke out loud and in her mind. “Everything is completely under control. It’s all right —”

He cut himself off as he was literally thrown out of town. Rose’s fear accelerated, and he focused on surrounding their bond with calm and comfort. He watched as her breathing began to even out again even as she still struggled against the human holding her back.

“Please!” She begged them, “he’s my husband! Please!”
They paid her no mind though, as The Doctor instinctively tried to step towards her they all pulled out revolvers and aimed them at his head.

In the distance, there was a zap of electricity.

“He's coming. Oh God, he's coming,” the preacher said.

The electricity zapped again, closer this time, and the teenager squared his shoulders. “Preacher, say something.”

“Our Father who art in heaven,” zap, closer, “hallowed be thy name…”

The Doctor turned around slowly to see a cyborg approaching via dimension jumps. His blood ran cold.


They all jumped as suddenly shots were being fired into the air, and they turned to see a mustachioed man standing behind them, holstering his gun.

“You, bow tie, get back across that line,” he ordered, and pulled back his coat to reveal the six pointed star that deemed him marshal. “Now.”

The Doctor stepped back over the load of rocks and lumps of wood, and behind him the cyborg stopped, and then vanished.

A second later Rose was flinging herself into his chest, and his arms wrapped protectively around her waist as hers went around his neck and she buried her face in his shoulder.

“Isaac, he said he was a doctor!” The teenager protested, “an alien doctor!”

“That a reason to hand him to his death?” Isaac challenged coolly.

“Isaac, it could be him.”

“You know it ain't.”

The marshal gave him and the rest of a town a significant look as they all hung their heads, and Isaac began walking back down Main Street.

Amy and Rory chased after him but The Doctor and Rose stuck back for just a second longer.

‘You okay?’ He asked telepathically in order to further assure her that he was still there, pulling away just slightly so that he could look into her eyes.

Rose nodded, ‘I don’t like guns,’ she whispered, ‘especially not when they’re pointed at you.’

The Doctor chuckled slightly at that and kissed her before wrapping his arm around her shoulders and guiding her in the direction of the marshal’s office. She leaned more heavily into him than was strictly necessary, and he didn’t mind one bit.

They walked in to hear Amy already interrogating the marshal. “What was that outside?” She asked.

Isaac leaned heavily against the front of his desk, and crossed his arms in front of him. “The Gunslinger,” he sighed. “Showed up three weeks back. We've been prisoners ever since. See that
border line stretching round the town? Woke up one morning, there it was. Nothing gets past it, in or out. No supply wagons, no reinforcements. Pretty soon the whole town's going to starve to death.”

“But he let us in,” Rory noted.

“You ain't carrying any food,” Isaac raised his brows. “Just four more mouths to feed... We'll all die even sooner now.”

The Doctor ignored that dark prediction as obviously they weren’t going to let that happen. “What happens if someone crosses the line?”

Isaac leaned behind him to grab a stetson with a bullet hole blown perfectly through one side and out the other.

“Ah, well,” The Doctor stuck his finger through the hole, “he wasn't a very good shot, then.”

Isaac grimaced, “he was aiming for the hat.”

The Doctor looked scandalised, “he shoots people's hats?” he asked incredulously.

Rory pressed his lips together and tired to keep from rolling his eyes at him, if only because he did nearly just get killed. “I think it was a warning shot,” he spelled it out for him.

“Ah, no, yes. I see. Hm.” The Doctor let out the quick succession of noises. It wasn’t the near-death experience that was making him slow—those happened all the time. No, it was the realisation at just how distant he and Rose had gotten in the last decade since Amy was born (in their timelines).

He should have noticed. Why hadn’t he noticed?

“What does he want?” Amy spoke up again, pulling him from his thoughts, “has he issued some kind of demand?”

Isaac shrugged, “says he wants us to give him the alien doctor.”

Amy pulled her parents around until they were facing her and Rory. “But that's you,” she spoke quietly, “why would he want to kill you? … Unless he's met you.”

“And how could he know that we'd be here?” Rory added, “we didn't even know we'd be here.”

Rose bit her thumbnail as she thought through every detail of the last fifteen minutes, and their eyes met in silent conversation. He revelled slightly in how it felt to walk with her amongst their mindscape again. How had he not noticed the absence of this?

He cut off his own thoughts as they finally put it together and he spun on his heel to face Isaac again. “Anyway, I think it's about time I met him, don't you?”

Isaac squinted at him, “who?”

The Doctor clapped his hands together. “The chap outside said I could be the alien doctor, but you said I wasn't, so you already know who it is. Two alien doctors. We're like buses. Resident eighty one, I presume, so beloved by the townsfolk he warranted an alteration to the sign. Probably because he rigged up these electrics, and I'm guessing he's in here, because if half the town
suddenly wanted to throw me to my death, this is where I'd want to be.”

“I don’t know what you—” Isaac started to deny it.

He stopped as the pile of blankets that had been on the bed in the cell stood up. A bespectacled aging man faced them, squaring his shoulders, human-like save for a raised black design that swooped across the side of his face—the only outward indication that he wasn’t.

“Isaac, I think the time for subterfuge has passed,” he said calmly. “Good afternoon. My name is Kahler-Jex. I’m the doctor.”

The Doctor grinned happily as Jex let himself out of the cell. “The Kahler! I love the Kahler! They're one of the most ingenious races in the galaxy. Seriously, they could build a spaceship out of Tupperware and moss!”

Kahler-Jex smiled politely and took the seat next to Isaac behind his desk.

Rose shook her head, “how did you get here?”

“My craft crashed just outside of town. I would have died if Isaac and the others hadn't pulled me from the wreckage.”

The Doctor smirked, “and you stayed, as their doctor!”

Kahler-Jex gave a small nod, “on my world I was a surgeon, so it seemed logical. And it gave me an opportunity to repay my debt to them.”

“Listen to him,” Isaac interrupted, “talking like it was nothing. Tell them about the cholera.”

“Now, Isaac, I’m sure our guests are—”

“Two years after he arrived, there was an outbreak of cholera. Thanks to the doc here, not a single person died,” Isaac informed them proudly.

Kahler-Jex waved his praises away easily, “a minor infection we'd found a treatment for centuries ago.”

“No, no, and—what, what do you call them?” Isaac pouted to a nearby flickering bulb. “The electrics?”

Jex rolled his eyes and looked up to his fellow aliens with the sort of look that said ‘look at this human, bless him.’ He shrugged, “using my ship as a generator, I was able to rig up some rudimentary heating and lighting for the town.”

The Doctor nodded politely. Even if it did technically mess with the laws of space and time a bit, he was willing to forgive a lot of things. “So why does the Gunslinger want you?” He asked, bringing the conversation back around.

“It don't matter,” Isaac answered firmly.

The Doctor tilted his head curiously at the marshal, “I'm just saying, if we knew that—”

“America’s the land of second chances,” Isaac cut him off seriously. “We called this town Mercy for a reason… Others, some round here, don't feel that way.”

“Now, Isaac, we've discussed this—”
Isaac clearly did not want to hear again whatever they had discussed. “People whose lives you've saved are suddenly saying we should hand you over.”

“They're scared, that's all. You can hardly blame them,” Kahler-Jex spoke rather calmly for someone defending the thought processes of those calling for his execution.

“Them being scared, scares me,” Isaac shook his head as he looked back to the Time Lords. War only ended five years back. That old violence is still under the surface. We give up Doc Jex, then we hand the keys of the town over to chaos.”

“Did you try to repair your craft?” The Doctor asked Jex, “surely someone with your skills…”

“It really was very badly damaged,” Jex insisted.

The Doctor squinted at that, but decided to ignore it for now. “We evacuate the town then. Our ship's just over the hills, room for everyone. I'll pop out, bring it back here, Robert's your uncle,” he butchered the American phrase, but no one felt the need to comment on it.

“Really?” Amy asked incredulously, “simple as that? No crazy schemes, no negotiations…?”

“I've matured. I'm nearly eleven hundred years old now,” he joked.

Rose wrinkled her nose at that, ‘wait, really?’

‘Pretty sure, yeah. Around that.’

‘How old am I, then?’

‘142 probably.’

Rose pulled her chin back at that as she tried to count backwards with very little to go on. She’d been in her her early 130’s when she had Amy…

“Oh, so you're not even a tiny bit curious?” Amy challenged, pulling Rose out of her attempt to do mental math.

“Why would I be curious? It's a mysterious space cowboy assassin. Curious? Of course I'm not curious,” he scoffed indignantly as Amy and Rory squinted at him in disbelief and Rose continued to be a million miles away (hitting home why he’d rather just get on the TARDIS and go—no matter how curious he really was.)

“Son?” Isaac got his attention back, “you've still got to get past the Gunslinger. How you gonna do that?”

The Doctor smirked and put on the shot-threw stetson. “With a little sleight of hand,” he answered mysteriously.

The Doctor, Rory, and Isaac went off to execute the plan while Amy and Rose stayed behind with orders from Isaac to protect Kahler-Jex from any overtly-homicidal townsfolk.

Amy watched her mother carefully from across the room. She was clearly on edge, anyone who knew her could see it—and probably anyone who didn’t could too.

“How long has it been?” She asked suddenly, surprising even herself as she walked walked forward
to join her in leaning against the marshal’s desk. “How long has it been since Demon’s Run?”

“Is now really the time—?”

“If not now then when?” Amy cut her off, raising her brows.

Rose studied her daughter for a few moments, opening and closing her mouth a few times in a desperate attempt to find an out, but coming up empty. She sighed and shook her head, “a decade, I think… probably longer. I stopped counting. How long for you?”

Amy shrugged, “only a couple of years…” she drifted off as her eyes flickered across her mother’s profile. She knew it was always longer for them than it was for her, even with her having an extended timeline the odds were that they were going to outlive her, but still… ten plus years?

“Are you avoiding me?”

Rose’s eyes snapped up at that to meet hers. “No, Amy, of course not. I would never—you’re my daughter!”

“Then what is it?”

Rose searched the room for her answer and let out a long breath. “Ever since I met your father,” she started slowly, “I was never able to understand the vast amount of guilt he always carried around… Even after Bad Wolf and after he’d told me—showed me—everything, after we were married, all of it. I still wasn’t capable of comprehending…” she drifted off. “Then this all happened,” she made a vague gesture with her hand to the universe at large, “and I got it.” Rose looked back up to her daughter, her eyes full of sorrow. “I failed you, Amy, I did. And you can say it’s not my fault all you want, but it was my responsibility to keep you safe and I didn’t do that.”

“But, Mum, look at me! I’m here! I’m safe! It all worked out in the end!”

“Did it?” Rose threw back without missing a beat. “We weren’t there! We missed everything! You’re all grown up now and you’re perfect, but I’ll never see my baby again.”

“What so I’m not good enough now because I’m not a child anymore?”

Rose sobered, “that’s not what I said.”

“Yeah well that’s what it feels like.” Amy closed her eyes and clenched her jaw, willing her anger out of her as she tried to understand what her mum was saying. She missed out on being able to raise her—no, it was ripped away from her. “I can’t pretend I understand what it feels like to lose a child,” she started, “much less two of them. But I feel like you’re forgetting that I missed out too. Do you not think I wonder what my life would have been like had Madame Kovarian and the Silence not gotten involved? Do you think it doesn’t make me so angry I could just give up completely?” She shook her head and let out a long breath, “but I don’t. And that’s the point, Mum. Give up and they win.”

Rose felt like her feet had hit solid ground for the first time in… years. “When did you get so smart?” She asked breathlessly.

Amy smirked, “must be genetic.”

The Doctor slowed Susan-the-preacher-man’s-horse to a stop as they came across Kahler-Jex’s ship before they did the TARDIS.
He knew Rory and Isaac were currently running unguarded through the desert as a distraction for the Gunslinger, but The Doctor just simply couldn’t help himself. Jex’s story just wasn’t adding up.

Nary a barrier stood between his and Rose’s minds anymore though, and she nudged him in question as he dismounted.

‘There’s something bothering me,’ he told her in answer as he surveyed the ship.

‘Where’s the damage?’ Rose asked as he showed her an image of the white pod-like vessel in front of him.

The Doctor nodded, ‘where indeed,’ and pulled out his sonic to get the door open.

‘Wait—’ Rose started, but it was too late. The Doctor has already opened the hatch and an alarm rang out loudly through the desert all the way back to Mercy, and also surely within hearing distance of the Gunslinger.

“That’s the alarm on my ship,” Kahler-Jex said, pulling Rose from watching The Doctor struggle with remembering how to disengage a self-destructing security system.

“Maybe The Doctor wants to get it working again?” Amy offered, even as she could tell by her mum’s telepathic signature that this was not the case.

“But that’s not the plan…” Kahler-Jex mumbled to himself, “he’s not following the plan.”

Amy snorted, “welcome to our world.”

“Security breach,” the computer spoke as The Doctor slid into the compact ship’s pilot’s chair. “You have ten seconds to enter the passcode or this vehicle will self-destruct. Thank you for choosing Abarakas Security software. Incinerating intruders for three centuries. Nine, eight, seven —” The Doctor successfully sonicked his way through the security protocol, and “self-destruct overridden.”

“This is an awful lot of security for a titchy spacecraft,” he mumbled to himself as he squinted at the rudimentary circuitry.

“Awaiting command,” the computer informed him.

The Doctor screwed his mouth to the side. “Tell me everything you can about the Gunslinger,” he tried on a whim.

“File not found,” it predictably answered, but then helpfully supplied a menu list. “Please choose from Technical Specifications, Flight Recorder, Personal Files, Maps and Charts.”

“Personal files of Doctor Kahler-Jex,” he requested.

In front of him the file for “Experimental Cyborg Program, Military Science Unit” opened.

Kahler-Jex’s own voice spoke over the terrified screams from the torture videos set on autoplay, “names of deceased subjects can be found on the drop down menu.”
Rose was unable to keep the abject horror from her face as she saw what her husband did.

Kahler-Jex must have seen it too. “What species did you say you were again?”

“Time Lord,” Amy answered on impulse, not seeing the warning look her mother was attempting to give through the back of her skull.

Quick as lightning he pulled the gun they hadn’t realised he’d had strapped to his belt and aimed it at Rose’s head. “You’re telepathic aren’t you?” He asked, and Rose could only nod silently. He tilted his head, “I’m really very sorry, he should have followed the plan.”

The Doctor exited the ship to find Gunslinger aiming his weaponised arm at him. His eyes widened and he ducked quickly back inside again.

“Don’t shoot, don’t shoot, don’t shoot,” he pleaded as he slowly raised back up with his palms facing outwards near his face. “I know who you are, and who Jex is, too.”

The Gunslinger powered down his weapon at that, a silent invitation for him to go on.

The Doctor put his hands down, “now, what I don't understand is why you haven't just walked into town and killed him.”

“People will get in the way,” he answered in a graveling voice—marred as it was by unconsenting machinery.

“You want justice, you deserve justice,” The Doctor told him earnestly, “but this isn't the way. We can put him on trial—”

The Gunslinger cut him off, “when he starts killing your people, you can use your justice.” He said darkly, “no more warning shots. I'll kill the next person to step over that line. Make sure it's Jex.”

Kahler-Jex spoke frantically as he ruffled through a few drawers, grabbing random items as he did and keeping the gun carefully trained in either one of the women. “Isaac says he doesn't care about my past, but things may have been uncovered that even he might struggle to forgive, so it's best we beat a hasty retreat.”

“We?” Amy repeated, “we’re coming with you?”

“It's unlikely the Gunslinger will shoot if I'm with you. As far as I can tell he's programmed to take innocent lives only if absolutely necessary.”

“Oh, well, colour me reassured,” Amy answered sarcastically as she and Rose followed him to the door.

He opened it backwards only to receive a gun pressed to the back of his neck.

“Doc?” Isaac asked, him and Rory both stood confusedly in the doorway at the scene in front of them. “What are you doing?”

Rory pulled the gun out of Jex’s hand while he was still too surprised at having been caught to stop
him. He made a disgusted sort of face at the weapon, but kept it in his hand in order to keep it away from the now-apparently-hostile alien.

Isaac pushed Kahler-Jex to sitting while Rory asked Amy and Rose if they were okay.

“I was just—just leaving, you see, I thought—I was stupid of me, I realise that now. I just thought I'd put you all in enough danger. Perhaps if I left—”

His rambling explanation was cut short as The Doctor banged open the door and practically flew into the room in a wave of anger. “He's lying. Every word, everything he says, it's all lies. This man is a murderer.”

Kahler-Jex has stood up in a huff at The Doctor’s accusations. “I am a scientist!”

“Sit down,” The Doctor scoffed, and then shouted when he didn’t listen, “Sit down!” He roared, making everyone in the room jump and Jex fall back into his seat. “Tell them what you are,” he demanded through gritted teeth.

“What am I? A war hero,” he declared with a sly smirk and slight glint in his eyes.

The Doctor growled and started marching purposely forward at that, making the man shirk back in his chair again in fear.

Isaac though stepped in front of him before he could reach his target. “Okay, somebody want to tell me what is going on?”

The Doctor’s faze flickered between Jex and Isaac as he attempted to gain control over his breathing once more. “The Gunslinger is a cyborg,” he answered finally.

“A what?” Isaac asked.

“Half man, half machine. A weapon. Jex built it. He and his team took volunteers, told them they'd been selected for special training, then experimented on them, fused their bodies with weaponry, and programmed them to kill,” his words were biting as he glared daggers at the man in question.

“Okay…” Isaac still remained surprisingly calm in the face off all this new information. “Why? Why would you do that, Doc?”

“We'd been at war for nine years. A war that had already decimated half of our planet. Our task was to bring peace, and we did. We built an army that rooted the enemy and ended the war in less than a week,” Jex answered, sounding even proud of himself now, to which The Doctor looked disgusted. “Do you want me to repent, to beg forgiveness for saving millions of lives?”

The Doctor practically lunged at that, “and how many died screaming on the operating table before you had found your advantage?” He shouted angrily, grabbing Jex by the lapels.

They were brave words, really, from the man who committed double genocide in the name of ending a war. But maybe that was the point.

“War is another world,” Kahler-Jex said, shaking his head as if every single one of them hadn’t also seen their fair share of battles. “You cannot apply the politics of peace to what I did. To what any of us did.”

Rory watched as The Doctor made an angry sound and went to lean against the wall on the other side of the room with Rose bruttingly. “What happened then?” he asked, “how come you're here?”
“When the war ended we had the cyborgs decommissioned, but one of them must have got its circuitry damaged in battle. It went offline and began hunting down the team that created it until just two of us were left.” He explained, “we fled, and our ships crashed here.”

Rory let out a long breath and looked back to Rose and The Doctor, but they were too busy caught up in their own silent conversation, The Doctor looking worse for wear now as anger and sadness mixed beneath the surface of his skin. He turned so that him, Amy, and Isaac were facing away from Jex, “so what do we do with Jex?”

“What do we do with him?” Isaac repeated incredulously.

“Yeah. I mean, he's a war criminal.”

“No… he's the guy that saved the town from cholera, the guy that gave us heat and light,” Isaac argued.

Amy sighed as her husband stared at Isaac in obvious disbelief, “look, Jex may be a criminal and yeah, kind of creepy—”

“And still in the room,” Jex interjected.

Amy continued as if he hadn’t spoken, “—but I think we should put aside what he did and find another solution.”

“Another solution? It's him or us,” Rory hissed, and really, it was fair enough. He had been the one that was just hunted by the Gunslinger and nearly killed had it not been for the ship’s alarm.

Amy didn’t know that though. “When did we start letting people get executed?” She demanded, “did I miss a memo? Dad, tell him.”

The Doctor and Rose were clearly very deep in their own conversation though, the Time War waging just behind his eyes. “Hmm?” He said as his head snapped up at being addressed, the room clearly just now coming to focus. “Yes. I don't know. Whatever Amy said.”

Jex spoke again before Amy could ask what they were doing. “Looking at you, Doctor, is like looking into a mirror, almost,” he said making The Doctor’s shoulders tense and his jaw clench. “There's rage there, like me. Guilt, like me… Everything but the nerve to do what needs to be done. Thank the gods my people weren't relying on you to save them.”

“No,” The Doctor let out suddenly, getting to his feet in an instant, “no, but these people are.” He grabbed Kahler-Jex by the collar and shoved him toward the door. “Out!” He shouted as he pushed him, all the force of the Oncoming Storm electrifying the air around him. “Out! Out!”

Isaac and Rory chased after him, but Rose just barely managed to catch Amy’s hand before she could follow. “Amy…” she started, giving her daughter a pleading look.

“Oh you’re really letting him do this?” She asked incredulously.

Rose shook her head, “I don’t know.”

Amy made an irritated sound before pulling her mother with her out the door. “Come on,” she growled.

They got to the town line along with the rest of Mercy’s residents just as The Doctor was shoving Kahler-Jex over the border. “Get over, and don't come back.”
He turned away from the man, but when he caught him trying to come back over out of the corner of his eye, The Doctor pulled the gun from the holster nearest him, spinning and pulling back the safety in one fluid movement as he aimed it Jex.

Jex took a step back, “you wouldn't,” he said confidently.

The Doctor looked between the gun in his hand and the despicable man in front of him. “I genuinely don't know,” he answered honestly, sounding even a little afraid of himself.

There was a long moment where no one moved, hardly anyone breathed. Isaac said his name a few times, but The Doctor didn’t even flinch.

Amy suddenly pulled the gun of the teenager beside her and fire it into the air, making everyone jump and The Doctor spin around to stare at his daughter incredulously as she pointed her gun at him. “Let him come back, Dad.”

“How do you know?” She asked, gesturing wildly with the gun, “maybe I've changed! I mean, you've clearly been taking stupid lessons since I saw you last!” She gestured with the gun again, finger still over the trigger, and accidentally fired it into the ground.

“Ah, sorry—” the gun fired again, making everyone scream and duck, “I didn't mean to do that.”

Isaac fired his gun into the air to get their attention back. “Everyone who isn't an American, drop your gun,” he ordered gruffly, giving both Amy and The Doctor pointed looks.

The teenager, Dockery, stepped forward quickly to get his gun back from Amy’s loose grasp.

The Doctor’s eyes searched hers frantically. “We can end this right now. We could save everyone right now.”

“This is not how we roll, and you know it,” Amy told him fiercely. “What happened to you two, huh?” She turned briefly to include her mother in what she was saying, “when did killing someone become an option?

“Jex has to answer for his crimes,” he argued.

“And what then?” She threw back, “are you going to hunt down everyone who's made a gun or a bullet or a bomb?”

“But they’re coming back, don't you see?” He sounded desperate now, “every time I negotiate, I try to understand. Well, not today. No. Today, I honour the victims first. His, the Master's, the Dalek’s, Kovarian’s—all the people who died because of my mercy! ”

Amy shook her head, “you see, this is what happens when you two travel alone for too long. Well, listen to me, Dad. We can't be like him. We have to be better than him.”

That made him drop back on his heels. “Amelia Pond,” he whispered, shaking his head in silent wonder at his daughter. “Fine, fine,” he turned back around to shove the gun back into the hands of its owner as he walked to the line. “We think of something else. But frankly, I'm betting on the Gunslinger.”

Just then, the Gunslinger appeared a few metres away and The Doctor froze.
“Jex, move over the line…” he spoke urgently, “now.”

Jex didn’t move though, and a second later the Gunslinger had his weapon aimed directly at him. “Make peace with your gods,” he said as Jex turned to face him.

“Kahler-Tek, isn't it?” Jex’s voice shook as he spoke, “I remember all your names, even now. I'll never hurt anyone again. I'm even helping people here.”

Kahler-Tek was unmoved by his pleading, “last chance. Make peace with your gods.”

Jex shut his eyes, prepared to die, the weapon’s system loaded, ready to fire.

But in the last second Isaac pushed him out of the way. “No!” He shouted, and then fell to the ground as the energy blast hit him square in the chest.

“Isaac!” The Doctor ran forward, kneeling at the dying man’s side. “Isaac. Isaac. It's okay, it's okay. We can get you to Jex’s surgery. He can save you.”

Isaac knew he was going though. He grabbed The Doctor hand, placing something sharp and metal there. “Listen to me. You've got to stay. You've got to look after everyone,” he begged.

The Doctor shook his head vehemently, still convinced this wasn’t the end of him. “It won't come to that, Isaac.”

“Protect Jex. Protect my town. You're both good men. You just forget it sometimes,” he told him earnestly, and they were his final words.

The Doctor hung his head, and after a few moments he stood up, pinning the marshal badge Isaac had left in his hand onto his jacket before turning to address the town. “Take Jex to his cell,” he spoke to the nearest set of blokes, “if anything happens to him, you'll have me to answer to.”

As a few of the men did as he ordered, The Doctor turned to Kahler-Jex. “This has gone on long enough.”

“You are right,” he agreed before taking a few steps back the way he’d come. He turned back around though, weapon raised. “You've got until noon tomorrow. Give him to me or I'll kill you all,” he told them, and then disappeared on the spot.

The Doctor took a deep breath and turned back to his family. “Oh, my god. You're the marshal,” Amy noted incredulously.

“Yeah, and…” he drifted off as he gave Rose a questioning look.

She shook her head though, “no don’t look at me. I would have let you kill him.”

The Doctor nodded in understanding and looked back to Amy, “and you're the deputy.”

That evening, Rose and The Doctor stood to the corner of the room, speaking in quiet Gallifreyan as Amy and Rory sat across from each other at the desk, and Kahler-Jex leaned against the wall of his cell.

There was a knock on the door and The Doctor looked up, breaking off mid-sentence (or word—no one could really tell when it came to Gallifreyan). “Come in,” he called.
“Marshal,” the preacher nodded to The Doctor politely as he entered, and then to Amy and Rose, “Ma'am's.” He glanced to Rory and shrugged, “... Fella.” Rory rolled his eyes, but the preacher went on speaking to The Doctor. “You need to come outside,” he told him.

“Why, what's wrong?”

“Just come outside,” he repeated, and then nodded to the gun holster hanging by the door, “and you should put that on.”

The Doctor gave him a curious look, but looped the holster through his belt loops nonetheless and followed him out onto the porch, Rose, Amy and Rory close to his heels.

Outside a large majority of the small town had gathered, seemingly lead by Dockery.

“What's going on?” The Doctor asked, taking a hesitant step forward.

“He in there?” The teenaged boy asked, nodding over the Time Lord’s shoulder. “Look, just leave the keys and take a walk. By the time you get back, this'll all be done.”

The Doctor didn’t move, “I promised Isaac I'd protect him.”

“Protecting him got Isaac dead. Tomorrow, it's going to be us all dead,” Dockery argued. “We thought Isaac was right to fight, but it's different now. We've got to say all right we lost, and give that thing what it wants.”

The barmaid put her hands to her hips, apparently leading the charge for the side that wanted to stop Dockery’s execution mob. “What it wants is to kill our friend!” She countered angrily.

Dockery ignored her, stepping towards The Doctor again. “We don't got any ill feeling towards the Doc. We just thinking about our families. Hand him over and we all safe again.”

“You know I can't do that.”

“Then we got us a problem,” Dockery said before pulling back his jacket and allowing his hand to hover over the gun holstered to his side.

The Doctor mimicked the movement, albeit warily, “please don't do this.”

“Why, you reckon you're quicker than me?”

“Almost certainly not,” The Doctor answered, “but this? Lynch mobs? A town turning against itself? This is everything Isaac didn't want.”

Dockery drew his gun and cocked it.

The Doctor tilted his head at him, “how old are you?”

“Nearly nineteen,” he answered defensively.

“That's eighteen, then,” The Doctor took slow steps forward, keeping one hand over the gun he had no intention of drawing and one hand out in front of him placatingly. “Too young to have fought in the war, so I'm guessing you've never shot anyone before, have you?”

Dockery shrugged, but he was visibly anxious, “first time for everything.”

“But that's how all this started. Jex turned someone into a weapon. Now that same story's going to
make you a killer, too. Don't you see? Violence doesn't end violence, it extends it, and I don't think you want to do this. I don't think you want to become that man."

His resolve was clearly waning now. “There's kids here,” he argued weakly.

“I know,” The Doctor answered honestly—he could never not count the children, “who I can save if you'll let me.”

Dockery glanced back towards the marshal’s office where he knew Jex was still safely tucked away in his cell. “He really worth the risk?”

“Don't know,” The Doctor gave him an earnest look, “but you are.”

There was a tense moment where nobody moved, until finally Dockery dropped his weapon. He gave them a short nod before walking away, dispersing the rest of the crowd with him.

The Doctor let out a long breath and turned back to his family. “Frightened people,” he sighed, shaking his head, “give me a Dalek any day.”

Amy and Rory stayed out on the porch with the preacher while Rose and The Doctor went back inside.

“Let me guess,” Jex spoke as he leant casually against the wall of his cell. “The good folk of Mercy wanted me to take a little stroll into the desert…” The Doctor’s responding silence was enough of an answer. “You could turn a blind eye. No one would blame you. You'd be a hero.”

The Doctor’s shoulders went rigid, “but I can't, can I? Because then Isaac's death would mean nothing.” He spun around to face him, stomping angrily towards the bars between them. “Just another casualty in your endless bloody war! Do you want me to hand you over? Is that what you want? Do you even know?”

“You think I'm unaffected by what I did?” Kahler-Jex threw back. “That I don't hear them screaming every time I close my eyes?”

The Doctor huffed at that and turned away again so that he was facing Rose. Worry was radiating from every inch of her being until it was practically consuming her. He realized that this was her normal now, and he ached for a way to help her, but every time he tried to focus on his wife this bloody Kahler—

“IT would be so much simpler if I was just one thing, wouldn't it?” Kahler-Jex spoke up again from where he was laying on the cot now, making The Doctor have to bite back a growl at the sound of his ever-condescending tone. “The mad scientist who made that killing machine, or the physician who's dedicated his life to serving this town. The fact that I'm both bewilders you.”

The Doctor’s face flickered with regret towards Rose before he was forced to turn his attentions back to the killer in the cell. “Oh, I know exactly what you are, and I see this reformation for what it really is. You committed an atrocity and chose this as your punishment. Don't get me wrong, good choice. Civilised hours, lots of adulation, nice weather, but, but justice doesn't work like that. You don't get to decide when and how your debt is paid!” He was shouting by the end of it, and Jex had turned away from him.

A few beats passed as The Doctor attempted to get his breathing under control, and then Kahler-Jex turned back to him. He spoke quietly to his back, “in my culture, we believe that when you die your spirit has to climb a mountain carrying the souls of everyone you wronged in your lifetime… Imagine the weight I will have to lift. The monsters I created, the people they killed… Isaac, he
was my friend. Now his soul will be in my arms, too. Can you see now why I fear death? You want to hand me over. There's no shame in that. But you won't. We all carry our prisons with us. Mine is my past. Yours is your morality.”

The idea that his past was not also his prison was laughable at best, but the phrasing gave him an idea. “We all carry our prisons with us…” he repeated thoughtfully.

With the majority of the town hiding, and the rest of them in their designated places, The Doctor walked slowly towards the center of town, cracking his neck as behind him the clock above the Grand Central Bank creaked into place at 11:59. He rested his hands on his belt loops. The low clicks of the gears counting down the seconds sounded loud in the tense silence.

In the distance, the air crackled, and Kahler-Tek appeared just outside the town line.

Overhead, the gears turned in place. Noon.

The first bell chimed, and the Gunslinger stepped over the barrier.

Second, third, fourth… The bells mixed with the thundering metal footsteps as the cyborg marched ever closer. He planted his feet little more than three metres from The Doctor.

Sixth, seventh, eighth… The Doctor let his right hand hover over the gun holstered to his side, fingers twitching slightly in anticipation.

Ninth, tenth, eleventh… Their eyes narrowed.

The twelfth bell chimed and they both drew their weapons. Kahler-Tek raised his mechanised arm while The Doctor pulled the sonic screwdriver from his left-hand pocket. He flung his arm towards the sky as he sent out a sonic wave, squeezing his eyes shut as the noise pierced the eardrums of every living thing within a mile radius, and caused any electronic thing to malfunction—including the Gunslinger, who keeled over with a scream of anguish. The Doctor ducked as the windows burst with the intensity of the wave as well, and the Gunslinger began shooting his weapon haphazardly.

He ran before the cyborg could regain his bearings.

Amy took the noise as her cue, and unlocked the cell containing Kahler-Jex, leading him to the back exit and allowing him to escape.

Rose, meanwhile, continued frantically painting the unique birthmark that identified Jex as part of the Kahler onto the townsfolk of Mercy who volunteered to act as trick targets. She sent them out into the streets as soon as they were finished.

Rory stood with Dockery, both of them sporting the paint. “Ready?” He asked, and the teenager nodded bravely just before dashing out of their hiding place and towards another.

All around the town the volunteers did the same, making the Gunslinger turn around each time, the paint appearing to him to look like Kahler-Jex, but being just different enough for the targeting systems of his programming to inform him that they were not, in fact, his intended victim.

“Disengage,” he said as this happened a seventh time, “it’s a trick.”

Both The Doctor and Rose turned as a few minutes later there was a loud blast with the sound of
breaking wood and glass, mixed with the screams of all those who had taken shelter in the church. Rose finished painting the side of his face in a rush.

She grabbed him by the lapels and kissed him just before he could run off. “Be careful,” she begged of him, and he kissed her soundly once more before turning on his heel.

He saw Kahler-Jex still standing near the town line, hesitating as the sounds of fear emanating from the church. “Go! Just go!” The Doctor shouted, waving him on, “I can't save them while you're here!”

The Gunslinger exited the church, apparently without any casualties. He spotted The Doctor dashing in between the saloon and the marshal’s office. “Deactivate automatic targeting,” he said, “switch to manual.”

He stepped towards where The Doctor was crouched, and aimed his weapon at his head.

“Right,” The Doctor muttered, standing up and putting his hands in the air.

“Where is he?” Kahler-Tek demanded, following as The Doctor took frantic steps backwards.

“He's gone.”

“What?” A beat, another step off the porch, “answer me.”

“Away from here. Look up. Any second now you'll see the vapour trail of his ship. This is their home, not the backdrop for your revenge. Look up, go after him, take this battle away from—”

“Kahler-Tek,” Jex’s voice interrupted him, coming from the tannoy unit of his spacecraft.

“Jex!” The Gunslinger shouted to the sky, “coward! Where are you?”

“I'm in my ship.”

“What are you doing?” The Doctor shouted, ducking as Kahler-Tek spun in a wide circle in a desperate attempt to pinpoint where his voice was coming from. “Just go!”

Jex, predictably, ignored him. “Where are you from?” He asked, “where on Kahler?”

“Now? You're asking him this now?” The Doctor ducked again as he shouted incredulously upwards.

“Gabrian,” Kahler-Tek answered.

“I know it. It's beautiful there,” Jex answered, as if he was having a friendly little chat with his buddy. “When this is over, will you go back?”

“How can I?” Tek shouted, words accusatory, “I am a monster now!”

“So am I,” Jex answered quietly.

“Just go!” The Doctor tried again exasperatedly, “finish this!”

“I'll find you!” The Gunslinger warned, “if I have to tear this universe apart, I will find you!”

“I don't doubt that. You'll chase me to another planet,” Jex sounded like he was doing something else now as he spoke, “and another race will be caught in the crossfire.”
“Face me!”

“No. You’ve killed enough. I’m ending the war for you too,” he said, and a second later the computer voice of his security system came back online.

“Countdown to self-destruct resumed,” it announced pleasantly. “Ten…”

“What’s going on?” The Doctor spun in a frantic circle now along with Tek.

“Nine… Eight…”

“The count down,” The Doctor muttered to himself and the, “What’s going on? Jex!”

“Thank you, Doctor,” Jex spoke earnestly, “but I have to face the souls of those I’ve wronged.”

“Five… Four…”

“Perhaps they will be kind.”

“Two… One… Zero…”

Their circling stopped as in the distance there was a loud explosion, and black smoke rose above the rooftops.

Kahler-Tek bowed his head, “he behaved with honour at the end… Maybe more than me.”

The Doctor glanced at him sideways, he had too many conflicting emotions about the man and the situation as a whole to comment on that. “We could take you back to your world,” he offered instead. “You could help with the reconstruction.”

Kahler-Tek shook his head. “I will walk into the desert and self-destruct,” he said as he made his way out of Mercy. “I am a creature of war. I have no role to play during peace.”

Rose, Amy, and Rory joined him at his side as he called to the Gunslinger’s back. “Except maybe to protect it,” he suggested lightly, smirking as Kahler-Tek paused just long enough in his progression to suggest he would do exactly that.

The people of Mercy stood around and watched as the police telephone box dematerialised before their eyes, but none of them found it strange—they were used to the impossible by now.

Perhaps that’s why it was as though none of them noticed when a little girl appeared amongst their number in much the same way.

Or perhaps it was for another reason entirely.

The Doctor sat down next to Rose in the TARDIS doorway, letting his feet swing down along side hers over the galaxy beneath them.

Silently, he handed her her cup of tea, made just how she liked it—same as she had for nearly two centuries now.

Rose accepted it gratefully and shifted so that her head was against his shoulder. She let out a long
breath and closed her eyes, allowing herself to escape into their minds and surround herself with their bond.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered eventually. “I should have noticed.”

Rose shook her head, “I shouldn’t have put the walls up to begin with.”

“I took you for granted, Rose,” he countered her seriously. “The one thing I promised I’d never do. I allowed myself to become complacent at the very moment you needed me most and I can’t even begin to ask for forgiveness because I don’t think I deserve it—“

“Stop,” Rose cut off his self-deprecating rant quietly. “Please, love. This isn’t your fault. I should have told you—“

“I should have asked,” he interrupted and Rose huffed.

“You couldn’t have known.”

“We’re bloody well telepathically linked it should have been obvious!” He sighed as Rose flinched slightly and he wrapped his arms around her to pull her closer to him. “Maybe... maybe we’re both at fault,” he finally allowed.

“I should have been honest and you should have been more observant?” Rose offered, glancing up to him.

“I should never have allowed myself to become complacent in our marriage,” he corrected gently. “You’re the best thing that ever happened to me, Rose Tyler, and I’d be a fool to forget that.”

Rose buried her face in his shoulder at that and failed to keep her tears at bay, “I love you so much.”

“And I love you so much,” The Doctor smirked, placing a kiss to the top of her head. He shifted back a bit so that he could look into her eyes, “will you please tell me what happened?”

Rose sniffed and nodded, wiping at her eyes. “All that healing we did, after Demon’s Run. Most of it was spent in relative safety, save for a few times. And then that hotel of fears thing happened and...” she drifted off as the memories of her room resurfaced. “Seeing Alina and Amelia stand there like that, saying those things... it dredged it all back up. All of the worst things I’d ever thought about myself said out loud—by my daughters no less.”

“Rose, what happened isn’t your fault.”

“Logically, I know that. But I can’t stop thinking, y’know, of all the things I should’ve done differently. All this power,” she held her hand out in front of her and after a second it began glowing, “I can control it now. If only I’d done that before—“

“You’ll reach the end of the expanding universe before you run out of what-ifs to dwell on,” The Doctor stopped her self-deprecating ramble before it could go to far.

Rose sighed at that because she didn’t have an argument to it. “Now I just can’t stop the worry. It’s like my head is at war with itself all the time. I love traveling, I really do. I love the running and the trouble. It’s w hat we do. It’s who I am. ”

The Doctor squeezed her hand as she paused.
Rose squeezed it back tightly, gaining the strength to go on, “but every time something happens every single worse case scenario flies through my head and I can’t help but to make myself live through every one until I can hardly even breathe—“ She shut her eyes and willed herself to calm down, allowing The Doctor to help her. “I don’t know what to do,” she finished miserably.

“We could stop traveling,” The Doctor offered.

Rose snorted, “you’d be miserable.”

“No, I wouldn’t,” The Doctor contradicted her immediately, making her look up to him. “I’d be with you. That’s really all I need. I’d get a house with a mortgage and front lawn and an annoying neighbor and a job if that’s what it took to make you feel happy and safe and secure.”

Rose opened her mouth to argue again but he cut her off.

“And I’d do all of it very happily,” he finished, giving her a knowing look.

Rose smirked and tilted her head up for a kiss, a request which his fulfilled very happily. “Today was better,” she said as they pulled apart, looking back out to the stars. “I think I was making it worse for myself, putting all those stupid walls up—thinking somehow I was protecting you.”

“My Rose,” The Doctor sighed, “always trying to protect me.”

She laughed lightly at that and placed her head against his shoulder once more. “Always and forever,” she promised, not for the first time.

The timelines sang with approval at her words, just as they always did, and The Doctor let out a sigh of relief. No matter what it was they were hurtling towards, at least that wouldn’t change.

“Always and forever,” he repeated, pulling her closer.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Holidays everyone! Hope you all had a lovely December! I’m on holiday and have nothing to do until February so welcome back to frequent updates!

Also because apparently I haven't I cleared this up: I won’t be writing Angels Take Manhattan. On top of it just not working with my plot, it’s just an objectively bad episode and also sort of ruined the Weeping Angels for me. He did so well with Blink, and Flesh and Stone was okay, but Angels Take Manhattan was just kind of a bust in my mind. I know the point in this whole thing is to fix the bad, but sometimes that just means taking out the garbage.

Instead I'm gonna be writing my own sort of "series finale" type chapter that pulls-from-but-isn't The Wedding of River Song. It will be tying up most of the loose ends (so remind me down below of any that have been irking you), and (officially) starting the plot line for the last batch of chapters before the end of this story! Day of the Doctor should be the last chapter unless I decide to write an epilogue.

Anyway you know the drill. Please leave comments ilysm it's all I ask for ❤❤ I love answering questions and having discussions about this so much it makes all this work worth it ❤❤
Amy and Rory were back to mostly living in London as opposed to across all of time and space in the TARDIS (with a few rare exceptions), and Rose and The Doctor had taken on the once-familiar habit of stopping by every Sunday for dinner.

Brian Williams also stopped by more often nowadays. Since his accidental alien abduction via the TARDIS, he’d gotten over his fear of leaving Leadworth more than twice a year, and had even moved only a few streets over from where Amy and Rory resided in South Kensington.

It was domestic to be sure, but in the best, weirdest way possible. As they fell into their little pattern, Amy found herself the happiest she’d ever been.

Then things went a little sideways.

It was early in the morning on the fourth Saturday of September in the year of our lord 2012 when Amy and Rory woke up not to their alarm clock, but to the incessant ringing of the doorbell.

Rory groaned as he spotted the time, “did they get AM and PM mixed up again?”

Amy huffed and rolled out of the bed as the ringing failed to cease. She shuffled sleepily towards the window overlooking their front door, and Rory followed behind her after a few moments of blinking blearily up towards their ceiling.

They leaned out their window though to find not Amy’s father, but Rory’s.

“What are you doing lying around?” Brian asked, and he held up a small black cube, about the size of his palm, and void of any identifying marks. “Haven’t you seen them?”

He made a wide sweeping motion, and the Ponds looked up to see the street was cluttered with hundreds of the little cubes—all of them exactly alike. They looked over their shoulders to see that the mysterious things had even materialised in random spaces about their bedroom.
There was one sitting in the flower box below their windowsill, and Rory picked it up hesitantly. “What are they?” he asked.

“Nobody knows,” Brian shook his head, “they’re everywhere!”

“Well where have they come from?” Amy asked, but then furrowed her brow as she caught sight of two familiar figures in the distance, “wait…”

Across the street, in the playground, Rose was hanging upside down from the vault bar while The Doctor sat cross legged in the rope netting above her, both of them holding up magnifying glasses as they inspected the cubes in their hands.

“Mum! Dad!” Amy shouted exasperatedly.

The Doctor raised his brow as he looked up to her, “Invasion of the very small cubes…” he mused.

“That’s new,” Rose finished cheekily, and The Doctor grinned down to her while the Ponds rolled their eyes.

The Doctor flipped through the television channels while Rose spoke on the phone with Jack Harkness.

“World leaders are appealing for calm—” Matthew Amroliwala started.

“After the global appearance of millions of small cubes,” Joanna Gosling finished on the next channel. “Despite official warnings, people have been taking the cubes from the streets into offices and homes.”

The next few programs carried similar messages.

“What are they?”

“Where do they come from?”

“And why are they here?”

The Doctor pressed the channel button quickly until a familiar face flashed across it. “Well, they’re certainly not random space debris,” Professor Brian Cox explained from some random street in central London. “They’re too perfectly formed for that. Are they extraterrestrial in origin? Well, you’ll have to ask a better man than me.”

He switched the telly off in annoyance and turned to his wife as she was ending her phone call.

“Jack said Torchwood is looking into it, but they seem just as clueless as the rest of us,” she informed her family. “I got the impression UNIT is taking the reins on this one though.”

The Doctor made an irritated sort of noise at that. “Military,” he scoffed bitterly.

“You worked for them,” Rose reminded him blithely.

“You what?” Amy asked, head snapping around to squint at her father incredulously.

The Doctor pursed his lips and shook his head. “Long time ago,” he waved her off shortly. He tossed the cube in his hands into the air, “also not the story of the hour.” He walked towards the
TARDIS (which was already parked in the lounge) as he rambled. “All absolutely identical. Not a single molecule's difference between them. No blemishes, imperfections, individualities…”

Rose, Amy, Rory, and Brian all followed him through the door and into the console room.

“What if they're bombs?” Brian suggested suddenly, “Billions of tiny bombs. Or transport capsules maybe, with a mini robot inside. Or deadly hard drives. Or alien eggs? Or messages needing decoding. Or they're all parts of a bigger whole. Jigsaw puzzles that need fitting together,” his eyes widened further and further as he spoke, until he was staring down at the cube in his hands with a mix of wonder and terror, while the rest of them just stared at him.

The Doctor smiled, “very thorough, Brian. Very, very thorough. Well done. Stay here. Watch these,” he placed his and Rose’s cubes on top of the one he was already holding, “yell if anything happens.”

He spun on his heel back into the Ponds sitting room, and Amy chased after him. “Is this an alien invasion? Because that's what it feels like.”

“There couldn't be life forms in every cube, could there?” Rory asked, right behind her.

“I don't know,” he answered truthfully, walking through to their kitchen, “and I really don't like not knowing.” He grabbed the stock pot sitting on the counter and brought it over to the sink, “right, I need to use your kitchen as a lab. Cook up some cubes. See what happens.”

“Right…” Rory watched as his in-laws began grabbing random food products and utensils and shook his head. “I'm due at work. My shift starts in an hour…” He finally pulled his eyes away from the quickly escalating scene in front of him to look to Amy, “You don't know where my scrubs are, do you?”

“In the lounge, where you left them,” Amy answered quickly in the sort of tone of voice that meant it was a thing she said often.

Rose smiled at the domesticity of the statement. “I’m so proud of you two,” she told her daughter as Rory disappeared to get ready for work. She leaned against the counter across from her, “the writer and the nurse—long way from Leadworth.”

The Doctor was sonicking a gizmo together, “Long way from Gallifrey,” he snorted.

Amy grinned, clearly pleased with the affirmation. “We think it's been ten years,” she said, suddenly reminded of the math they’d decided to do the last rainy afternoon. “Not for you or Earth, obviously, but for us. Ten years older. Ten years of you two, on and off.”

“Look at you now,” The Doctor smirked up at her, “all grown up.” He was clearly proud, but he still wasn’t able to keep the slight bit of sadness from his voice.

Amy’s eyes softened and her chest tightened a bit, but just as she was opening her mouth to form some heartfelt reply, her front door was kicked open, and a dozen soldiers filled her house while even more lined her back garden.

“Clear! Trap one, kitchen secured,” one of them spoke as they all pointed weapons at them, and a few seconds later Rory was marched in at gunpoint.

Apparently, they hadn’t let him put his trousers on. He looked well peeved as he came in with his hands up, “there are soldiers all over my house, and I'm in my pants,” he grumbled.
“My whole life I've dreamed of saying that, and I miss it by being someone else,” Amy quipped, and Rose snorted while The Doctor and Rory both pulled their chins back and furrowed their brows at her.

A woman then pushed through the shoulders, huffing in exasperation.

“All these muscles, and they still don't know how to knock,” she said, straightening up and giving them a polite smile. “Sorry about the raucous entrance. Spike in Artron energy reading at this address. In the light of the last twenty-four hours, we had to check it out, and the dogs do love a run out.” She held her ID badge out, “Hello. Kate Stewart, head of scientific research at UNIT.”

Rose squinted slightly, the name sounding familiar, but she drew a blank, figuring Martha or Mickey must have mentioned her last they’d spoken about work.

“And with dress sense like that…” Kate held up a scanner to The Doctor’s chest, and after a few beeps his twin heartbeat sounded. “Two hearts, you must be The Doctor and Rose,” she shook both of their hands, “I hoped it would be you.”

The Doctor smirked, “Tell me, since when did science run the military, Kate?”

“Since me,” she answered slyly. “UNIT's been adapting. Well, I dragged them along, kicking and screaming, which made it sound like more fun than it actually was.”

“Oh right!” Rose exclaimed suddenly. “Martha’s mentioned you plenty. I think you’re her hero.”

“That wouldn’t be Dr Martha Jones, would it?”

“The one and only,” Rose nodded.

Kate seemed pleased to hear that, but The Doctor brought the conversation back around by clapping his hands together.

“What do we know about these cubes?” he asked.

Kate sighed, “far less than we need to. We've been freighting them in from around the world for testing. So far, we've subjected them to temperatures of plus and minus two hundred Celsius, simulated a water depth of five miles, dropped one out of a helicopter at ten thousand feet and rolled our best tank over it. Always intact.”

The Doctor raised his brows, “That's impressive… I don't want them to be impressive. I want them vulnerable with a nice Achilles heel.”

Kate shook her head in agreement, “we don't know how they got here, what they're made of, or why they're here.”

“And all around the world, people are picking them up and taking them home,” Rose summed up.

“Like iPads have dropped out of the sky. Taking them to work, taking pictures, making films, posting them on Flickr and YouTube,” Kate informed them, “within three hours, the cubes had a thousand separate Twitter accounts.”

The Doctor made a disgusted sort of face at that. “Twitter,” he muttered grumpily, and Amy patted his shoulder.

“I've recommended we treat this as a hostile incursion. Gather them all up and lock them in a
secure facility,” Kate said, “but that would take massive international agreement and cooperation.

The Doctor nodded in understanding. “We need evidence. The cubes arrived in plain sight, in vast quantities, as the sun rose. So, what does that tell us?” He looked to Rose for help.

“They wanted to be seen,” Rose answered, “they wanted us to notice them.”

“Or more than that, they want to be observed,” The Doctor added. “So we observe them. Stay with them round the clock. Watch the cubes, day and night. Record absolutely everything about them. Team cube, in it together,” he grinned manically at his family, and they all shot each other worrying glances in response.

…

“Four days! Nothing!” The Doctor moaned from his backwards position on the sofa between Amy and Rory. “Nothing! Not a single change in any cube anywhere in the world. Four days, and I am still in your lounge!”

“You were the one who wanted to observe them,” Amy gave him a condescending tone as her patience with her father’s lack thereof was just about near its end.

“Yes, well, I thought they’d do something, didn’t I?” He sassed her right back, “not just sit there while everyone eats endless cereal!”

(They’d had precisely one bowl of cereal in the last four days, but Rose supposed that was probably beside his point.)

“You said we had to be patient,” Rory sighed.

“Yes, you! You, not me! I hate being patient. Patience is for wimps. I can't live like this. I need to be busy,” he begged.

“Fine! Be busy!” Any shouted, “We'll watch the cubes!”

The Doctor finished vacuuming all the carpets and painting the garden fence within the first hour, and Rory looked over to Rose as she continued reading her book contentedly while her husband rummaged through the shed for another source of entertainment.

“Is he always like this?” he asked, watching The Doctor procure a football. “You can’t always be doing something exciting, can you?”

Rose shook her head, “There’s an endless amount of things to do in the TARDIS alone, on top of just having the option to visit literally anywhere in time and space whenever we want. I suppose sitting around a perfectly normal human house and watching a motionless black cube for four days straight is a bit of a jump for him.”

Rory tilted his head—he’d never really thought of it like that. “But not for you?” he asked.

Rose shrugged, “I had a boring life before The Doctor. I’m honestly feeling a little nostalgic right now.” She smirked up to them, “I think if I was still in my 50’s I’d be in a right state, but now…” she shrugged again, “it’s kind of nice being human again.”

Outside, The Doctor was doing keepie uppies, counting off his score out loud with every bounce of
the ball. “Fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty…”

Rose smirked at the boyish 1100 year old alien she was married to, “That’ll keep him busy for a while.”

A few minutes later, “ninety eight, ninety nine, one hundred. Rose!”

Rose sighed and closed her book, “I think that’s my cue to go out there and keep him company. Any bets on how long he can keep it up?”

“Five hundred?” Rory hazarded high.

Amy shook her head, “nu-uh, a million at least.”

“What?” Rory looked over to his wife incredulously, sure she must be joking, but Amy merely raised her brows and stood her ground.

“He alien fixates, and he’s surprisingly good at football. I’m telling you, he’s got a couple million in him.”

Rose laughed as Rory continued to refuse to accept that, and she went outside to join her husband.

About two hours later, “Four million nine hundred ninety nine, five million!” he kicked the ball high into the hair and bent over to catch it between his shoulder blades, grinning dorkishly up at Rose through his floppy hair as she clapped.

He collapsed back onto the sofa as Rory begrudgingly passed Amy twenty pounds.

“That's better,” he sighed, “nothing like a bit of activity to pass the time. How long was I gone?”

Rory glanced down to his watch, “about three hours.”

There was a long pause as The Doctor looked like he was wishing for a Dalek invasion just to have something to do. He jumped back up and practically ran to the TARDIS.

“I can’t do it! No!” He shouted as he pushed open the doors. Amy, Rose, and Rory shared exasperated looks before following him.

He paused at the top of the stairs as he caught sight of Brian, still watching the cubes set on the console. “Brian, you're still here.”

“You told me to watch the cubes.”

“Four days ago.”

“Ah! Doesn't time fly when you're alone with your thoughts?” He smiled up at them pleasantly, a sharp contrast from The Doctor’s manic impatient energy.

Rose furrowed her brow at the TARDIS and got the general indication that the ship had been making sure he ate. She glanced over to the corridor to see that its entrance had been replaced by the bathroom door. She wondered why the TARDIS hadn’t just alerted either one of them to Brian’s continued presence in the ship for the last four days, but she figured the TARDIS probably actually quite enjoyed taking care of the little human.

Rory shook his head, apparently deciding not to comment on yet another of his father’s oddities, and turned back to the Time Lords, “You can't just leave, Doctor.”
“Yes, of course I can. Quick jaunt, restore sanity,” The Doctor replied as if that settled it, “Come on, Rose.”

Rose had absolutely no desire to go anywhere while her daughter’s house (and the world) was covered in unexplainable likely-alien-and-probably-dangerous black cubes.

But, she conceded, a ‘quick jaunt’ into time and space would help to make him a little less unbearable.

“How about dinner?” she suggested the compromise without calling it that. “Al five of us, Masenlavie Seven, the best chips in the galaxy.”

Amy looked relieved and that in and of itself made it worth it, but Brian’s little hopeful glimmer of excitement definitely helped too.

Rory looked like he really couldn’t be bothered either way—dining on an alien planet or ordering chinese take-out, it was all the same to him—but eh, son-in-laws, what can you do?

After their little family outing, it seemed that was the exact thing The Doctor needed to ‘restore sanity’ every few days as they continued to stay in the Pond’s four-bedroom terraced.

September bled into October, and the TARDIS was moved to the back garden to make room for guests.

“Hi, Aunt Donna!” Amy exclaimed as the other ginger entered her home, carrying pudding and accompanied by her grandfather. “Where are Lee and the twins?”

“Oh they’re at his parents, I got to use this as an excuse to miss out on all those lovely little comments about how I shouldn’t be working.”

Amy laughed at her aunt’s cheeky wink, “A tragedy, I’m sure,” and she turned to her pseudo-grandfather. “Wilf! It’s so lovely to see you! Have you met Brian, Rory’s dad?” She motioned to the man in question as she guided them through to the lounge and Donna disappeared into the kitchen.

“I don’t think I’ve had the pleasure,” he said, shaking his hand and taking the seat across from him.

They fell into easy conversation, and Amy smiled to herself as she saw the budding of a new friendship.

Over her shoulder the front door opened again and the telltale sounds of Martha Jones and Mickey Smith filled the entryway as they swapped excited greetings with Rose.

Jack Harkness showed up last, fashionably late with booze and a hug that lifted Rose off her feet.

They had a huge feast for no reason other than that they could, and in the raucous laughter The Doctor thought that maybe domesticity wasn’t such a bad thing after all.

In November, Brian was still stuck on the cubes even as the rest of the world has seemed to accept them as an inexplicable part of their new normal. (You could say a lot of things about the human race, but they’re nothing if not adaptable.)
“Brian's log, day sixty seven,” he spoke into his small camera set up as Rory came round the side of the small table in Brian’s house.

“You, er, you can't call it that,” he interrupted, taking the seat adjacent from him. “Brian's log?”

He sent his son an irritated glance, before going on stubbornly towards his camera as if he hadn’t spoken. “Brian's log, day sixty seven. Cube was quiet all night, once again. Cube was quiet all day, as per previously. No movement. No change in measurements,” he wrote this down on a pad of paper he had next to the cube. “End of entry,” he concluded, and reached up to switch off the camera.

“You stay up and watch it all the time,” Rory noted incredulously.

Brian nodded, “I film it while I'm asleep. When I wake up, I watch the footage on fast forward. I e-mail the result to U.N.I.T.” he said each letter individually and held his chin up purposefully. “My middle name is diligence.”

“Wow,” Rory sipped his tea sarcastically, “I can't wait to see day sixty eight.”

“Don't mock my log,” Brian sniffed, “I’m doing what the Doctor asked.”

It occurred to Rory then that The Doctor hadn’t done much looking at the cubes himself lately despite still taking up residence in their spare bedroom.

Christmas came and The Doctor was pretty sure it had been ages since he and Rose had last celebrated.

“Come with me to Acekenadrium,” he begged Amy on the 24th of December.

“Dad, there’s going to be twenty people in my house for dinner tomorrow. I do not have time to go space-shopping with you.”

“But I still haven’t gotten anything for your mother!”

“Then go to the mall! The normal Earth mall!”

The Doctor scoffed, “There won’t be anything there—"

“Yes! Yes there will be! That is literally the point in a mall! To have stuff!”

—Which is how The Doctor ended up in Westfield London on Christmas Eve, accompanied only by Donna Noble, who was the only one who would agree to going anywhere near the place.

“Oh there should be amazing deals now,” she enthused as they entered the bustling complex full of frantic last-minute Christmas shoppers.

As they navigated the shopping centre, Donna became more and more laden down with bags while The Doctor’s hands remained infuriatingly empty.

“How about a purse?” Donna offered as they passed the Michael Kors shop.

The Doctor shook his head, “she doesn’t use them. If she needs to carry anything she’ll put it in my pocket.”
“You could make it bigger on the inside,” Donna amended, “like Mary Poppins!”

The Doctor tilted his head. It wasn’t a bad idea really, Rose did love that movie. But he wrinkled his nose at the high-end bags in front of him. Rose didn’t care about price tags; she always got most excited about the unique things they found on their travels. He filed the idea away for later and continued on, ignoring Donna’s huff as she jogged to catch up with him.

“Okay… shoes?” She tried again.

“All she wears is chucks.”

“Get her chucks then.”

The Doctor turned to throw her a derisive incredulous look at that, and Donna rolled her eyes.

“This would be so much easier if I could just leave this bloody planet,” he complained loudly, kicking a nearby cube for good measure. “This whole bloody shopping centre and there’s not a single original—”

He cut himself off suddenly as he spotted something out of the corner of his eye. “Ooo what’s that?” He took a sharp left, making Donna stumble as he crossed in front of her.

It appeared to be a little pop-up antique jewelry shop, and The Doctor was bent over a case of necklaces.

In the corner of the display, tucked away right where nobody was looking, a small circular golden locket sat open, revealing a compass on one side, and a star map on the other. It was accurate too, which was impressive considering the very minimal amount of real estate the locket provided.

“One astronomer at my best…” The Doctor mumbled to himself.

“What was that?” Donna asked.

The Doctor shook his head minutely, not taking his eyes away from the locket. “Something I said, when we married… my vows, I guess. This made me think of it.”

He bought it without looking at the price.

He spent the rest of the day in his workshop in the TARDIS, engraving the circular Gallifreyan into the locket’s blank front face.

Christmas morning saw Rose running her fingers reverently across the words. “Le astronom ce’ka belsi, tu’ren te universum jal inheslesi en,” she read the Gallifreyan out loud

“‘An astronomer at my best, you’re the universe I’m helpless in,’” he translated with a nod. “I’ve said those words to you before.”

Rose blinked up at him. “At our wedding,” she realised suddenly with breathless wonder.

“Happiest day of my life,” he agreed with a dorkish loving grin.

Rose surged forward to plant a kiss on his unsuspecting lips, squeezing the locket in her hand between them.
Winter gave way to Spring, and saw The Doctor and Rose travelling again.

But still they were just short trips out, periodic jaunts into the stars to save a few worlds—almost like a part-time job, as they always rematerialised in the Pond’s back garden no longer than few days later.

*They’d found their balance,* Rory realised suddenly one late April evening as the Time Lords reappeared, bearing gifts this time. *This was their healing.*

The 26th of June came with a cook-out celebrating the Ponds “third” wedding anniversary. Their friends shot curious glances towards the telephone box set in the corner of the garden next to shed, but it seemed they were all too British to ask questions—even if it was odd that a select few of the guests would periodically disappear into the box and reappear with more food.

“Three years,” Rory mused cheekily, grabbing his wife around the waist. “Weird, seems like it’s been longer.”

Amy laughed at that and hit him playfully. She turned back to the other members of the Team TARDIS group chat, Rory joining her now.

“Well, the UN classified the cubes as provisionally safe, whatever that means,” Jack said, taking another sip of champagne, “and Banksy and Damien Hirst put out statements saying the cubes are nothing to do with them.”

Mickey kicked distractedly at one of the stray cubes in the grass at his feet, “I’m still not convinced Banksy isn’t an alien.”

“Mickey,” Martha rolled her eyes.

“Nah you don’t know,” he defended his theory, “nobody’s ever seen ‘im. For all any of us know he’s a Slitheen or somethin.”

They all laughed heartily at that as Jack clapped Mickey on the back.

The Ponds still travelled too.

Amy accidentally married Henry VIII.

Rory stumbled onto a Zygon ship under the newly-opened Savoy Hotel in 1890.

Saved McFly from an evil alien ice-cream van.

The usual.

And then it was September again. Three hundred and sixty-two days later, according to Brian’s Log.

Rose and The Doctor sat in the center of the sofa while Amy and Rory took up the ends, all of
them squished together to watch the early-afternoon programs and nosh on fish fingers and custard—even Rose, who usually gave the dish a rather disdainful look whenever it was pulled out by her husband or Amy and Rory, who’d grown up eating the stuff for fun while making up stories about the Time Lords.

Lord Sugar was firing someone as The Doctor held a fish finger upright in order to allow the custard to flow down and coat the whole of it. “If I had a restaurant, this’d be all I’d serve,” he declared, handing the custard-slathered fried processed fish to his wife and earning an amused giggle from her as she took it from him happily.

“Yeah, right,” Amy snorted, “you running a restaurant.”

“I’ve run restaurants,” The Doctor defended, “who do you think invented the Yorkshire pudding?”

Rory laughed at that, but sobered as he saw the serious expressions on his in-laws’ faces. “You didn't.”

The Doctor raised his brows. “Pudding, yet savoury. Sound familiar?”

Rory had stood outside a box for 2000 years and saw the whole of Earth’s history played out before him, but as he sat back against his sofa now, he looked as though his entire perception of reality had just been shattered by a Yorkshire pudding.

That evening saw Rory cleaning up the kitchen, and Amy wrapped her arms around his waist, pressing a kiss between his shoulder blades. “Good job, mister. Civilisations saved, surfaces wiped. What more could a woman ask for?”

Rory snorted, “Ha, ha,” he replied dryly.

Amy chuckled, “I mean it!”

Rory hummed noncommittally and squinted around at their otherwise vacant kitchen. “Where’s the Doctor?” he asked, more concerned about what he was managing to get into than Rose.

Amy rolled her eyes, “On the Wii again.”

They could just hear the sounds of a Wii Sports tennis match.

“Oh, yes! Second set, Doctor! Ha ha!” He jumped off the sofa he’d been standing on and swung the little plastic racket casing he had the Wiimote set in as Rose giggled. “Oh, if Fred Perry could see me now, eh?” He grinned over to her.

“He’d probably ask for his shorts back,” Rose teased, and The Doctor tilted his head in concession.

He jumped from foot to foot as the next match loaded. “Third set decider, come on, then.”

A black cube floated into The Doctor’s line of sight and, mind still on the video game, he waved it away impatiently with his racket. “Out of the way, dear, I’m trying to—” he cut himself off as he finally realised what was in front of him, and his tone turned serious. “Whatever you are, this planet, these people, are precious to me. And I will defend them to my last breath.”

It just continued to hover there in mid space, and he glanced over to Rose in a mix in confusion and annoyance.
“Is that all you can do, hover?” he asked the cube. “I had a metal dog could do that—”

The front of the cube opened, and out came a little metal tube. “Oh, what’s tha—ah!”

The Doctor just barely managed to duck as the cube fired its laser directly towards his face. A vase broke instead.

Rose screamed and rolled over to take cover behind the chair while The Doctor dove behind the sofa. The cube fired two more pot shots before finally ceasing.

The Time Lords peaked over their respective furniture to see that it was now browsing the internet, random images flickering across the television screen.

“What the hell?” Rose stage whispered.

“Ooo, you really have woken up,” The Doctor muttered.

“Rose! Doctor?” Rory called suddenly from the kitchen, and they ran to meet him in the hallway. “Hi. Er, the cube in there, it just opened,” he informed them.

Amy came barrelling down the stairs then, holding her wrist in her hand. “The cube upstairs just spiked me and took my pulse!” she spoke quickly, thrusting her injured hand into her mother’s to show her the 25 small little dots of blood.

“Ha! Really?” The Doctor looked far too excited about this, “Ours fired laser bolts and now it’s surfing the net!”

Brian flung open the front door then, clearly out of breath. “You’re never going to believe this! My cube just moved! It rattled!”

The Doctor laughed giddily again, and Rory was about to catch his father up, but his mobile dinged before he could. “Text from work,” he said, “People are saying they’ve been attacked by the cubes. They’re desperate for help.”

“Let me come with you, help out,” Brian volunteered readily.

“Take your dad to work night, brilliant!” He clapped his Dad on the shoulders and turned back to the Time Lords. “Okay, are you going to be all right here?”

Amy stepped forwards and kissed him soundly, “Keep away from the cubes.”

“Right,” Rory nodded before grabbing his coat and keys and dashing out the door with his father.

The Doctor jumped suddenly and pulled the psychic paper out of his breast pocket, grinning as he read the message there.

“What are you grinning about?” Amy asked suspiciously.

The Doctor turned the paper around to show her, “We're wanted at the Tower of London.”

A car had shown up to take them to the Tower, and they were greeted by none other than Kate Stewart as they arrived.

“Every cube across the whole world activated at the same moment,” she caught them up as they
entered the base.

“Now we're in business,” The Doctor rubbed his hands together, and turned on his heel to look to Kate seriously. “You sent me a message to my psychic paper. You know what? I'm almost impressed.”

“Secret base beneath the Tower,” Amy mused, looking around her at all the high-tech alien equipment. “Hope we're not here because we know too much.”

“Yes, I've got officers trained in beheading,” Kate replied with a smirk. “Also ravens of death.”

Amy’s eyes lit up, “I like her,” she nodded to her parents.

They entered an area filled with armored cubicles, each of them containing a cube, all of them performing different random tasks including blowing fire and repeatedly doing flips.

“There are fifty being monitored, and more coming in all the time,” Kate explained. “I don't know how useful it is. Every cube is behaving individually. There's no meaningful pattern. Some respond to proximity,” she motioned to the fire-breathing one, “some create mood swings,” here she motioned to a scientist who was currently sobbing as she stared down at the cube.

Amy passed at a sound-proof cubicle in which a cube remained utterly motionless on a table. “Er, what's this one?”

Kate raised her brows, “Try the door.”

Figuring that meant it wasn’t a bomb, Amy opened the door, and instantly the room was flooded with the Birdie Song playing at eardrum-shattering volume.

“On a loop!” Kate just barely managed to throw her voice above the noise, and Amy shut the door quickly.

Kate stopped finally as she brought them over to a large set up of monitors. “This is the latest.”

“Oh dear. Systems breach at the Pentagon, China, every African nation, the Middle East…” The Doctor read off the map’s readings.

“I've got governments screaming for explanations and no idea what to tell them. I'm lost, Doctor. We all are.”

“Don't despair, Kate. Your dad never did.” The Doctor finally mentioned what he and Rose had figured out ages back, and he smirked as her mouth opened in surprise. “Kate Stewart, heading up UNIT, changing the way they work. How could you not be?” he said proudly. “Why did you drop Lethbridge?”

Kate was still staring at him in obvious wonder, “I didn't want any favours… Though he guided me, even to the end. Science leads, he always told me. Said he'd learned that from an old friend.”

The Doctor smiled sadly. “We don't let him down,” he promised her. “We don't let this planet down.”

Amy looked to Rose in a silent question, and Rose gave her the usual sign for ‘I'll explain when the world isn’t ending.’

Suddenly, all the noise that had been filling the room ceased, and all the activity monitors on the
screens leveled out to zero.

“They’ve stopped,” one of the lab coats muttered in disbelief as he smashed a few buttons. “The cubes, across the world, they’ve all just shut down.”

“Active for forty seven minutes, and then they just die?” Rose asked.

“Not dead,” The Doctor suggested, “dormant, maybe.”

“Then why shut down?” Amy asked.

“I don’t know. I don’t know. I need to think,” he spun on his heel suddenly and started towards the door. “I need some air. Who has an underground base? Terrible ventilation,” he rambled as he exited, Rose and Amy chasing after him.

They ended up sitting on a high ledge overlooking the Thames feet dangling over the black water as the city lights danced on the ripples.

“The moment they arrived, I should have made sure they were collected and burned. That is what I should have done,” The Doctor reprimanded himself.

“How?” Amy challenged, “Nobody would have listened.”

The Doctor didn’t answer that—she had a point, really, but he still should have tried at least. Rose meanwhile looked about a million miles away as her gaze fell to the night sky above them. The city was too polluted by light to make out any stars, but she watched a satellite blink by.

“I’m gonna miss this, I think,” she finally spoke.

It was coming to an end. The other shoe had dropped. The cubes were active and by the morning they would no longer have an excuse to stay.

“You could stay,” Amy found herself saying. “Even without the cubes, y’know,” she shrugged awkwardly, “just be here because you want to be.”

Rose shook her head because she knew The Doctor wouldn’t protest if she didn’t. “There aren’t any stars here,” she said by way of explanation.

“You could still travel though,” Amy pointed out, “like you have been. Run away every now and again.”

“It’s not running away,” The Doctor objected quickly, and Amy gave him a skeptical look so he went on. “This is one corner of one country in one continent on one planet that's a corner of a galaxy that's a corner of a universe that is forever growing and shrinking and creating and destroying and never remaining the same for a single millisecond,” he rhapsodised, “and there is so much, so much to see, Amy.” He gave her a meaningful look, tucking a stray hair behind her ear, “Because it goes so fast,” he whispered. “We’re not running away from things, we’re am running to them before they flare and fade forever.”

“No then this whole year has been… what?”

“Running to you,” Rose answered with a small smile.

The ‘before you fade too’ remained unsaid, but it hung heavy in the air.
Rose had never wanted a normal life. She loved the one she had. But if anything could make her second guess what she wanted—“Oh,” Rose sat up straight suddenly, “they got what they wanted.”

“What?” Amy asked, “who did?”

“The cubes! They got what they wanted!” Rose spun around in stood up all in one movement, “come on!”

“Kate?” Rose called as they entered the UNIT headquarters. “Before they shut down, they scanned everything, from your medical limits to your military response patterns. They were learning. About Earth and everyone on it.

“That's what the surge of activity was,” The Doctor caught on and Rose nodded quickly.

The lights shut off suddenly then, coupled with the sounds of generators powering down. Kate looked up to the ceiling, “That’s not possible. We've got back-ups.”

“Mum,” Amy tapped Rose’s shoulder, getting the rest of them to turn around as well. “Look,” she pointed to around the room. All the cubes were glowing now, each of them had the number 7 illuminating their sides.

“What?” The Doctor muttered to himself, “Seven. Seven, what's important about seven? Seven wonders of the world, seven streams of the River Ota, seven… sides of a cube.”

“A cube has six sides,” Amy corrected him automatically, but it was more of a prompt.

“Not if you count the inside,” The Doctor replied ominously, and then the number switched quickly down to six.

“It has to be a countdown,” Rose said as her and The Doctor started marching purposely towards the computers that were still running

“No in minutes,” Kate called as she and Amy chased after them.

“Why would it be minutes, Kate?” The Doctor snapped, and Rose distractedly hummed ‘rude’ in his head. He ignored the general message but appreciated the familiarity of it, and started barking orders. “We have to get humanity away from those cubes. God knows what they'll do if they hit zero. Get the information out any way you can. News channels, websites, radio, text messages. People have to know that the cubes are dangerous.”

“Okay, but why is this starting now? I mean, the cubes arrived months ago. Why wait this long?” Amy asked as the bespectacled computer guy started carrying out her father’s commands.

“Because they're clever,” he answered quickly. “Allow people enough time to collect them, take them into their homes, their lives. Humans, the great early adopters. And then, wham! Profile every inch of Earth's existence.”

“Discover how best to attack us,” Kate summed, looking nauseous.

The Doctor grimaced, “get that information out any way you can. Every cube was activated. There must be signals, energy fluctuations on a colossal scale, there must be some trace. There can't not be. We need to think of all the variables, all the possibilities, okay?” He clapped computer-boy on the back and instinctively pulled Rose closer to him as they began sifting through the data.
Rory pressed end on his call with Amy just as Matthew was giving the country the message he’d just received from the source. “This is a national security alert. The Government advises that members of the public dispose of all cubes. If there are cubes inside your house, remove them immediately.”

Rory grabbed six of them just as their numbers dropped from five to six and shoved them into one of the paper trays of cubes that the hospital staff was currently rushing to throw out the doors.

“We have to get them out of the building. Away from here, as far as you can, and get back here before it hits zero,” he shouted orders and then turned to Brian who was currently staring off into space. “Dad, could you go and get me a box of tape for dressings? It’s just the cupboard round the corner.”

“Yes, boss,” he saluted and then disappeared around the corner.

Rory dashed into the nearest room with a call request light on, and as he adjusted the IV drip his mobile vibrated with more updates from Amy. He exited as he replied, and looked around as still Brian had yet to have rejoined him with tape.

He grabbed the nearest person in scrubs, “Have you seen my dad?”

Anna shook her head and tossed a few more cubes at those still working to throw out the stragglers. “No, sorry.”

Rory furrowed his brow and turned the last corner he’d seen his Dad go round, and spotted two orderlies with a gurney at the far end. A gurney on which his father was laying.

“Hey!” Rory shouted, and the orderlies sped up without looking behind them. “Dad! Hey! Hey!” They dashed into the out of order lift and the doors closed just before Rory can follow. He smashed the button and it reopened far more quickly than it should have.

He glanced around but there were no options to select a floor, but there was a weird sort of energy coming off the wall. Hesitantly, he reached out a tapped it—it shimmered and fizzed sort of like how old television sets did twenty years ago.

Steeling himself, Rory walked through the portal, and onto a spaceship.

He spotted his father instantly, “Dad, Dad!” he called, trying to wake him up to no avail. The orderlies turned to him slowly, holding hypodermics. “Just get away from him,” Rory tried as he took a step back, but they grabbed him anyway, and a second later everything went black.

The cube’s counter flickered down to 2 and Rose, Amy, Kate, and The Doctor all gathered around the window that had previously been for viewing the Birdie Song cube. It sat silently on the table now behind the sound-proof (and bomb-proof) walls.

It changed to 1 and the Doctor whispered, “Geronimo.”

1… 0… the counter disappeared and a heartbeat later the top of the box slowly slid open.

“What’s happening?” Amy asked, glancing over to Kate who had a remote system in her hands and was shaking her head. “Well? What’s in there?”
Kate gestured to the security footage showing a clear view of the inside of the box. “There is nothing in there,” she answered.

“Er, well…” Amy looked between her parent’s concerned faces and was at a loss for how to react. “That’s good. It’s not—it’s not bombs, it’s not aliens.”

“Why? Why though?” The Doctor ranted, glaring daggers at the box and wishing he could just storm in there and see for himself what it was doing. “Why is there nothing inside? Why? It doesn't make any sense.” He turned on his heel to the researcher still at the computer. “Glasses, is it the same? Is it the same all around the world?” He leaned over the man’s shoulder.

Rose had taken the remote device from Kate and was scrolling through the other data available through the cubicle other than the cameras. “All along, every action has been deliberate,” she mumbled, “why draw attention to the cubes if they don't have anything in them?”

“Look,” Kate said, getting them to look up to the computer screens. CCTV footage from all across the world showed people everywhere were clutching at their chests and falling where they stood as they walked past the cubes. “People are dying,” she whispered.

“What?” The Doctor sputtered, “they can't be dying. How? How are they dying?”

Glasses started typing rapidly as he worked on trying to get information on how people were affected as The Doctor continued talking out loud to himself, “The cubes brought people close together. They opened and then—”

“Hospitals are logging a global surge in heart failures,” Glasses announced, “cardiac arrests.”

Rose flipped quickly to a different reading on the tablet in her hands. “Ten seconds after the cubes opened, the patterns in the electrical currents shifted,” she held up the screen in her hands to show them the readout—identical to that of a human heartbeat.

“Yes!” The Doctor exclaimed, jumping up as it all fell into place. “The power cut. They zapped the power and then—! They're signal boxes! People leaning in, wham! Pure electrical surge out of the cube targeted at the nearest human heart! The heart! An organ powered by electrical currents, short-circuited. How to destroy a human? Go for the heart.”

“Doctor, the scan you set running,” Kate brought their attention back to the computer. “The transmitter locations, it's found them.”

Pinging circles scattered themselves across each of the continents, “And look at them all, pulsing bold as brass. Seven of them, all across the world. Seven stations, seven minutes.”

Rose shook her head, “but why?”

“A wormhole, bridging two dimensions. Seven of them hitched onto this planet, but where's the closest one?” He tapped the guy on the shoulder, “Glasses, zoom in.”

Amy gasped as he zoomed into the signal originating in England. “It's the hospital where Rory works.”

In record time the four of them were bursting through the hospital doors, Amy frantic as Rory still wasn’t answering his phone. “How many deaths have been recorded?” The Doctor directed the question towards Kate as they stormed down the corridor.
“We don’t know,” she spoke quickly, “We think it could be a third of the population.”

The Doctor halted their progression at that in order to turn to her seriously. “Kate, I have to find the wormhole, but the attacks could still happen. Tell the world. Tell them how to deal with this. The world needs your leadership right now.”

“I’ll do my best,” she nodded solemnly, the textbook image of her father.

He gave her an encouraging smile, “Of course you will. Good luck, Kate.” He patted her on the shoulder and she spun on her heel, already pulling out her mobile and dialing furiously.

They only spared a half second to watch her go before The Doctor was pulling out his sonic, “I need to locate the wormhole portal,” he mumbled to himself as he began waving it wildly about—not unlike one would with a metal detector. It buzzed suddenly and he stopped in his tracks again, making Amy and Rose crash into him as he did an about turn. “Hello…. Hello!”

He waved the buzzing sonic at a little girl, she was just standing there, eyes staring straight forward without blinking as she held a cube in her palms.

“You are giving off some very strange signals,” he said, and her face glowed blue.

“Oh, my God,” Amy whispered.

“Outlier droid, monitoring everything. If I shut her down, I can…” he sonicked a spot on her neck and caught her as she slumped backwards. “Now we can trace the signal too…” he rotated slightly as if the sonic was a compass and then dashed down an adjacent corridor, Amy and Rose on his heels.

They came to a stop in front of a goods lift, and the bell dinged pleasantly as the doors slid open.

“Portal to another dimension in a goods lift?” Amy asked incredulously.

“The energy signals converge here,” The Doctor shrugged and stepped inside, the girls following suit.

“Does seem a bit cramped, though,” Rose glanced around the small space as they all stood shoulder to shoulder. She reached her hand out, and the back wall… wibbled. She pulled back at the weird static shock and glanced over to the excited faces of her husband and daughter.

She tried and failed not to roll her eyes as they giggled identically when stepping through the portal.

“Where are we?” Amy asked as soon as their feet landed on a smooth black floor.

“We’re in orbit,” The Doctor answered, already scanning the ship, “One dimension to the left.”

“Rory!” Amy shouted suddenly, running as she spotted her husband laid on one of the metal slabs along with a row of other bodies, including Brian who was laid on a gurney.

Her parents chased after her, and were relieved to find their son-in-law still breathing. The Doctor patted his pockets until he produced a small vial and handed it over to her. “Soborian smelling salts. Outlawed in seven galaxies,” he said by way of her questioning look.

She shrugged, assuming he probably wouldn’t have given it to her if it was going to kill him, and waved it under Rory’s nose. A quarter of a second he was sitting bolt upright just as someone
began shooting at them.

The Doctor ducked, pulling Rose down with him. “Whoa! Whoa! What kind of a welcome do you call that?” He shouted as more shots were fired.

Rose motioned for Amy and Rory to get the gurney. “Get him out of here,” she ordered, “You too. Now!”

“What are you going to do?” Amy yelled just as another energy blast just barely grazed her ear.

“Absolutely no idea,” The Doctor answered honestly and then pointed to where the lift had spit them out, “Get him to the portal!”

Brian woke up just as they began running for the exit, looking confused and startled at the alien that had come around the corner.

The alien had cracking skin, like it was made of too many layers of paper-mache and painted a watery blue, his red irises deep set into dark sockets. “So many of them crawling the planet, seeping into every corner,” he spoke just as the Ponds disappeared.

He stepped calmly to a futuristic set of monitors, apparently content to allow the Time Lords to continue standing there.

The Doctor took a small step forward. “It's not possible…” he said barely above a whisper, “I thought the Shakri were a myth. A myth to keep the young of Gallifrey in their place.”

The Shakri didn’t turn to look at him, even as he let out a weird sort of amused chuckle. “The Shakri exist in all of time, and none! We travel alone and together! The Seven!”

“The Shakri craft, connected to Earth, through seven portals and seven minutes,” The Doctor realised. “Ah, but why?”

“Serving the word of the Tally!” the Shakri answered. Everything he said sounded like a proclamation.

Rose shook her head at that, “Why the cubes though? Why Earth?”

“Not Earth, humanity! The Shakri will halt the human plague before the spread!”

“Erase humanity before it colonises space,” The Doctor breathed, mind racing. “We thought the cubes were an invasion, the start of war—!”

“The human contagion only must be eliminated,” the Shakri corrected.

Amy and Rory returned at that, coming to Rose and The Doctor’s sides. “Who are you calling a contagion?” Rory challenged offensively.

“Oi!” The Doctor shouted at them, “Didn't I tell you two to go?”

Rory shrugged noncommittally, raising his brows at him. “You should have learned by now.”

“Yeah,” Amy agreed, and then crossed her arms at the Shakri, “and what is this Tally anyway?”

“Some people call it Judgment Day…” The Doctor answered, “or the Reckoning.”

Amy squinted at him, “Don't you know?”
He shook his head, “I've never wanted to find out.”

“Before the Closure, there is the Tally,” the Shakri said like he was reciting some ancient verse no one else could see, “The Shakri serves the Tally!”

“The pest controllers of the universe,” The Doctor said, “that's how the tales went, isn't it?”

“Wow,” Amy mumbled, “That's some seriously messed up bedtime story.”

The Doctor turned around at that to wrinkle his nose at his daughter and squint at her incredulously. “You can talk. Wolf in your grandmother's nightdress?” He said pointedly.

(Rose pressed her lips together. They both knew the story behind the tales of the ‘big bad wolf’ — but perhaps that’s a story for another time.)

“So, here you are,” The Doctor went on, ignoring his wife’s wandering thoughts, “depositing slug pellets all over the Earth, made attractive so humans will collect them, hoping to find something beautiful inside… Because that's what they are. Not pests or plague. They are creatures of hope, forever building and reaching. Making mistakes, of course, every life form does. But they learn. And they strive for greater, and they achieve it,” he rhapsodised easily about his favourite species in the universe. “You want a tally? Put their achievements against their failings through the whole of time, I will back humanity against the Shakri every time.”

“The Tally must be met!” The Shakri ignored his challenge, “The second wave will be released!”

“What does that mean?” Amy asked frantically, reaching forward in order to grab her mother’s arm and feel the urgency running through her telepathic frequency.

“It's going to release more cubes to kill more people,” Rose answered darkly.

“The human plague breeding and fighting,” the Shakri said, still issuing commands into his computer terminal. “And when cornered, their rage to destroy! You're too late, Time Lords! The Tally shall be met!”

And with that he vanished with a flicker of light.

“He's gone?” Amy’s asked.

“He was never really here,” The Doctor answered quickly as he stepped to the front of the terminal. “Just the ship's automated interface—like a talking propaganda poster.” He ran his screwdriver across the screen, “I can stop the second wave. I can disconnect all the Shakri craft from their portals, leave them drifting in the void.”

“But all those people,” Rose reminded him, “they will have died.”

“You'd need mass defibrillation,” Rory spoke up, sounding hopeful.

“Of course!” The Doctor exclaimed, thankfully refraining from kissing his son-in-law this time around as he sonicked the computer some more. “Ah, beautiful! But, we are going to go one better than that! The Shakri used the cubes to turn people's hearts off. Bingo! We're going to use them to turn them back on again.”

Amy’s brow furrowed, “Will that work?”

“Well,” The Doctor tilted his head, “Creatures of hope. Has to,” he said determinedly, and finished
sonicking the computer. “Thirty seconds. Don't let me down, cubes, you're working for me now.”

The ship started shaking then, “Oh dear… All these cubes… There's going to be a terrible wave of energy ricocheting around here any second.” Above them the ceiling started crumbling. “Run,” he let out and none of them needed twice before they were sprinting for the lift, throwing the full force of their body weight through the veil and landing back on Earth just as the ship exploded behind them.

BBC World News was on as they entered the Ponds home that evening, all of them looking worse for wear, but triumphant nonetheless.

“Emergency hospitals and field units are working at full capacity around the world, as millions of survivors of cardiac arrests are nursed back to health after an unprecedented night across the globe.”

Rory switched off the telly as Rose, Amy, and Brian set down the multiple bags of Chinese take-out, and The Doctor took their momentary distraction as opportunity to slip quietly out the back door, making his way across the garden and into the TARDIS.

“Fish fingers and custard,” he mumbled to himself as he pulled around the monitor, tapping his fingers on the console nervously as he waited for his task to complete.

He sucked in a breath as the scan confirmed his suspicion.

Rose was pregnant.

Chapter End Notes

❤❤ (I'm so excited, yo.)

In need of comments and ready and willing to answer questions! ❤❤
Rory let out a startled noise as he was suddenly yanked backwards by his shirt collar into the galley.

“Doctor—what—” he began shouting at his father-in-law as he pulled his shirt back into place.

“Shhhh!” The Doctor hushed him frantically, glancing out the door way “Wouldn’t want them to hear.”

“Who? Hear what?” Rory asked incredulously, staring at the alien like he’d actually properly gone mad (well, even more so than normal anyway).

The Doctor shut the door and leaned back against it heavily, fixing Rory with a terrified gaze that made him take a step back.

“What’s going on?” Rory asked hesitantly, not really sure he wanted to know the answer.

“Rose is pregnant,” The Doctor blurted out, eyes wide.

Rory shook his head, sure he must have heard that wrong. “Sorry? Come again?”

The Doctor made a frustrated noise and pushed himself off the door in order to begin pacing frantically. “Rose is pregnant and I don’t know how to tell her.”

Rory’s brain short-circuited at that. “Wait. She doesn’t know?”

“No, of course not, Rory!” The Doctor looked at him like this was obvious in a stupid way, and Rory had to bite the inside of cheek and clench his fists to keep from shouting at him. The Doctor huffed. “I had the TARDIS run a scan after she was eating fish fingers and custard.”

Rory closed his eyes as the reality of the situation he’d just been literally dragged into settled on him. “A week ago??” He just barely managed to keep from shouting at him by the shoulders and shaking him senseless—except for that he was apparently already senseless. “You’ve known your wife is pregnant—before her—for a week, and you still haven’t told her?”

“Well it’s complicated isn’t it!”

“Not really!”

“She kept it from me last time!”

“...She has that right, you don’t!”

The Doctor huffed at that, running his hands through his hair in that way he hadn’t done in quite a long time, and collapsed heavily into a chair, holding his head in his hands. “She’s gonna be
upset.”

Rory allowed his righteous incredulity to wash away and be replaced again with sympathy and nursing training as he sat down across from the Time Lord.

“When did things get so messed up?” The Doctor spoke to the table tiredly.

That was a hard question to answer even in a linear timeline, so Rory focused on his first statement. “She won’t be upset,” he said, and The Doctor’s head snapped up to look at him like he’d just said Cybermen give great hugs. Rory set him with a serious look, “She’ll be scared—two traumatic births in a row, it’s to be expected—but she’s not going to be angry.”

The Doctor hung his head.

Rose pulled her knees to her chest, staring unseeingly at the time rotor as she sat on the jumpseat, her mind a million miles away.

She knew, obviously.

The fish fingers and custard had been her first hint, but it wasn’t until later that same night when she was suddenly craving a banana that she stopped being able to pretend that maybe those fish fingers were better than the normal kind.

She hated bananas.

Except of course for when she was pregnant with Alina… and Amy for those few weeks that she was aware she was pregnant.

Rose sighed. She’d checked the scan, obviously, but she couldn’t even feign surprise at the positive.

That now familiar sense of fear settled heavy in her stomach, but at the same time… she felt hopeful. They hadn’t seen hide nor tail of the Silence in years, after all. And they’d just spent an entire year safe on Earth, if they just did that—

Is that even what The Doctor would want though? Or Amy and Rory for that matter? Maybe it would be better on the TARDIS just staying in the vortex and trusting her to keep them safe.

Maybe that’s why The Doctor hadn’t told her he knew yet? Because he was worried she was going to insist they buy the house next to Amy and Rory and never step foot in the TARDIS again?

Rose rolled her eyes at herself and her overactive hormones. Even The Doctor wasn’t that daft. She shook her head at that train of thought and settled on the more probable assumption that he was just daft enough to think she herself didn’t know she’s pregnant.

He’d put up some faded version of a telepathic barrier a few moments ago, and Rose could just feel through it his mounting panic on her behalf.

She smiled to herself and stood up, making her was to the galley.

She knocked on the closed door and heard male voices cut themselves off. Apparently he’d dragged Rory into it—the poor dear. She slid the door back and looked at Rory’s terrified expression first.
“Could you give me and my husband a moment?” She asked him with a knowing smirk.

Rory nodded gratefully, practically flying from his seat and vacating the room in record time.

The Doctor looked up to her guiltily and Rose’s eyes softened at his puppy-dog features. She walked forward to push his floppy hair out of his eyes. “Love, I know,” she whispered.

Instantly all the tension left his shoulders and his face fell forward in her stomach. “Oh, thank God,” he mumbled into her shirt, sounding like she’d just told him the Daleks had finally been completely eradicated.

Rose giggled as his arms wrapped around her legs and he peeked up at her. “You’re okay?” he asked quietly.

She nodded reassuringly. “I’m scared,” she admitted, and felt his arms tighten protectively, “but I’m also kind of excited?”

A goofy grin played at the corner of his mouth at that. “Yeah?” he asked, eyes glowing.

“Yeah,” Rose agreed, and gave a surprised squeal as The Doctor suddenly let out a whoop of joy, standing to haul her off her feet and spin her around in a bone-crushing hug.

When he finally set her back down with rushed apologies given to their unborn child, Rose sucked in a sudden breath and started giggled.

“What? What is it?”

Rose smirked up at him. “You told Rory,” she said matter of factly.

The Doctor was slow to catch on, “... Yes?”

“You told Rory before you told Amy,” she bit her lip in a failed attempt to hide her amusement at his suddenly terrified features.

“She’ll have my kidneys,” he squeaked.

Rose shrugged and patted his chest. “Well, you’ve had better anyway.”

Amy was ecstatic to learn she’d be getting a new sibling (even she was a little peeved that her husband had found out first.)

She bounced excitedly on her toes, “So how do Time Lord pregnancies work then? When can you find out if I’m getting a little brother or a little sister?”

The Doctor laughed at that. “Oh it’s a girl,” he said confidently.

Amy tilted her head, “You already know?”

“With almost 100% certainty,” he nodded, and went on at the furrowed brows from both the Ponds. “Rose’s DNA is only female. My DNA has equal potential to present as either male of female upon regeneration,” he started.

“But eleven regenerations in and you’ve never been a girl?” Rory interrupted quizzically.
The Doctor shrugged, “A certain allele codes for probability of switching after the first regeneration cycle. Some Time Lords will swap genders periodically, or every single time, and some only do rarely, or never at all.”

Amy and Rory nodded slowly.

“As well as that any child of Rose’s is also part TARDIS——”

“You’ve mentioned that before!” Amy interjected excitedly, and The Doctor smirked.

“When Rose merged with the heart of the TARDIS in order to become Bad Wolf, she kept part of that with her. It became a part of her DNA that can in part be passed on,” he explained.

“That’s how you have your precognitive abilities,” Rose added and Amy nodded cos she was pretty sure they might have said that in passing once.

“Yes,” The Doctor agreed, “and TARDIS’s can only be female, therefore that’s another tick for the females. On top of that it just makes sense from an evolutionary standpoint as well,” he went on. “There’s a reason Time Lords stopped having womb-born children. Any other species couldn’t carry a Time Lord to term, therefore a male couldn’t carry on the lineage.”

Rory squinted at that. “How long is a Time Lord pregnancy?” he asked curiously.

Rose wrinkled her nose and gave a resigned sort of sigh, “12 months.”

At two months they still hadn’t told any of their friends—for obvious reasons—but Rose was clearly starting to struggle with the inability to gain comfort from Martha and Donna who had been through multiple pregnancies before and had had (again obviously) better experiences than her.

Which meant scrolling endlessly through Mummy YouTubers and a rather impressive search history on variations of the phrase “positive birth story.”

Of course none of these women were giving birth to aliens or had evil religious organizations with vendettas against them, but Rose was trying not to focus on that.

She glanced up from the 16th hour-long video in the last four days as she sensed The Doctor prodding her telepathically. She pulled her headphones down to her shoulders when she spotted him watching her knowingly from the library entryway.

“What is it this time?” he asked, pushing off from the door jam to make his was over to her.

“Another water birth?”

Rose smirked and steadfastly refused to feel any sort of embarrassment at being caught out. “Hypnobirth, actually,” she answered casually.

The Doctor raised his brows at that, half way to asking what that was before deciding he’d really rather not know.

“This woman had a really terrible birth experience her first go around. She had therapy and everything and then decided she wasn’t going to have another baby again to avoid further trauma.”

The Doctor squinted down at her. He’d asked, obviously, if she had wanted to get pregnant again. Rose’s response then had been that she wasn’t ready yet, and he imagined she still wasn’t feeling
quite all that ready now but… “What happened to only watching the positive ones?”

Rose shrugged. “She started with the negative one. She had another child and did everything while she was pregnant to make sure what happened the first time wouldn’t happen again.”

The Doctor nodded. They still hadn’t left the Pond’s back garden since landing there six weeks ago. He’d spent the last few days searching for weaknesses in their shields and fixing them. He let out a heavy breath and took the empty space next to her, pulling her close with one arm while taking her laptop away from her with the other, ignoring her indignant protest as he did.

Rose huffed but eventually leant back so that she was using his chest as a pillow, her hand falling absently to her still very flat stomach.

“Everything will be okay,” he promised her quietly.

“How can you know that?”

“I’m an optimist,” he answered simply, and Rose sighed before burrowing more firmly into his side, turning so that she could wrap an arm around his waist.

At four months Donna’s new hobby was to buy baby clothes, and Rose (while steadfastly ignoring the mounting pile of onesies) had moved on from YouTube videos (probably because she had run out), and onto Googling things every few minutes whenever she didn’t believe whatever answer The Doctor or the nurse had given her.

“Okay it does say that it’s okay if I eat fish,” she nodded shortly, clicking her mobile off and picking up yet another custard covered fish stick.

“Yeah, I just said that,” Rory mumbled to himself and Rose pointedly ignored his grumbling.

Rory left for work (where he was now full time instead of part) just as Rose was asking about the growth rate of Time Lords in utero.

“Be honest,” his coworker said as they leaned against the reception desk, “did you only take this position to get away from your in-laws living in your house?”

Rory squinted that, and it took him a moment to realise that most blokes would probably be opposed to their wife's parents moving in. (They hadn’t actually ‘moved in’ but that would be a hard thing to explain.) “What? No, uh I really don’t mind,” he answered honestly—probably so honestly that he sounded like he was overcompensating, as he got quizzical eyebrows in response. “It’s complicated,” he sighed, “but I was friends with them before they were my in-laws. I genuinely don’t mind.”

His coworker pulled his chin back. “Really?”

Rory shrugged. “Yeah, I mean, they’re fun.”

He arrived home that evening just in time to see Rose dash out of the kitchen and into the lounge, wooden spoon held out in from of her.
“Rose Tyler!” The Doctor came chasing after her a few moments later, “That is for the cupcakes!”

“I’m pregnant!” Rose defended with a giggle as he came in, and a second later she shrieked when he grabbed her by the hips and hauled her over his shoulder, apparently unaffected by the added baby weight.

Rose waved and licked her icing spoon as they passed Rory again on the way back to the kitchen.

At six months Rose was showing enough that people wouldn’t just pass it off as weight gain. Not that they could either way, seeing as now she would begin crying just as soon as they said hello.

The Doctor felt absolutely helpless at all times.

“Rose!” he exclaimed frantically running to her side, as he could never be sure if she was having a panic attack about the Silence taking away their baby, or if the toaster had scared her. “What’s wrong?”

Rose sniffed and accepted the hug gratefully, burying her face in his shirt and unabashedly using him as a tissue.

He wouldn’t find out until later that it was because they’d run out of peanut butter.

It was at the nine months mark during Alina’s pregnancy that things had started to go wrong in terms of her growth and heart rate and vitals, and Rose’s health as well. She had basically been put on bed rest for the last three months of it.

She couldn’t know what those months had been like with Amy. There was hardly a Meet the Matron service for Demon’s Run. Though Rose did manage to amuse herself with the mental image of calling up one of the clerics and asking if perhaps they had anything on file.

Things appeared to be okay this time around so far, as far as the baby’s health went, but Rose could feel her mental strength waning as her due date drew nearer.

The Doctor leaned against the doorway of their bedroom holding a tub of mint chip ice cream. “The TARDIS seemed keen that I deliver this to you,” he said by way of greeting.

Rose smiled and set her book down, patting the empty space next to her. “I was wondering why two spoons appeared on the nightstand.”

The Doctor chuckled at that as he scooted in next to her and opened the self-freezing ice cream. “How are you feeling?” he asked as she scooped some out.

Rose shrugged. “Worried that everything is about to fall apart again,” she answered sheepishly, glancing up at him through her lashes. She let out a long breath. “I just feel like there’s this big huge wall in the way of all of my thoughts. I can’t think about the future past giving birth because I’m convinced I won’t make it through. I just keep running through every horrible thing that could go wrong.”

The Doctor pulled her closer at that, placing a kiss to the top of her head. “I know,” he whispered. “All of this is really scary. For me too, but you more so, I’m sure. And I just wish there was something I could do—”
“You’ve been perfect,” Rose interrupted him, tilting her head up so she could give him a look. “I mean it, Doctor. I couldn’t do this without you.”

He gave her a soft smile and bent down to kiss her. He pulled back though when he felt how warm she was. “You have a fever,” he started worriedly.

Rose stopped him before he could move to go grab medicine or cooling blankets though. “I know,” she said, nodding to the bottle of acetaminophen on the table. “The TARDIS told me; she doesn’t seem worried.”

He relaxed back into the pillows with a heavy sigh, trusting their ship to let him know if her temperature became anything dangerous. “Do you feel okay though? Do you need anything?” he asked, pressing his much cooler hand against her cheek.

Rose giggled and nuzzled his hand. “I could do with a cuddle,” she answered honestly.

The Doctor chuckled at that and moved to set the ice cream tub on the nightstand. “Well that I can do.”

At eleven months Rose had somehow managed to find herself in her husband’s workshop/lab/god-knows-what.

Abstractly she knew it was a mess in there. She even knew that there were plenty of other rooms on the TARDIS that were clusterfucks of random junk. But nonetheless she found herself in this clusterfuck while she was feeling the overwhelming urge to clean everything.

“Who needs fourteen toolboxes?” she asked out loud as she pulled out yet bother metal box from underneath the workbench. She shook her head and set it with the others, and picked up the sixth variation of a saw she’d found in the last five minutes.

This was how The Doctor found her. Eleven months pregnant and holding a rotary saw. “What on Gallifrey are you doing?” he asked incredulously.

Rose spun around at his voice, still wielding the saw. “How many different kinds of screws can one person have?” she demanded, making a rather dangerous sweeping motion with the saw towards the literal wall of small bins, each carrying a different kind of screw, nut, bolt, washer, or spring, and absolutely none of them were labeled.

He took hesitant steps forward and gently removed the power tool from her grasp. “Around 200,” he answered hesitantly as he set the saw back down.

Rose put her hand on her hips. “Do you need that many screws?”

“Yes,” he answered firmly, earning a disbelieving scoff in return.

She marched over to his desk where a number of star charts set scattered bout along with about a dozen pencils, a few protractors, and at least four different compasses. “And what about all this?”

The Doctor stared at her, truly at a loss for what was happening. Two hundred years they’ve been married and never once has she questioned this room. “I was… mapping… stars…” he answered slowly.

“Don’t you have all those memorised by now?”
His brow furrowed impossibly further. “It’s a big universe…”

Rose grumbled something sarcastic, and he honestly couldn’t tell if it was in English or not, as she moved over to a bubbling chemistry set. “And what is this? Is this safe for children?”

“Um…” Actually, it definitely wasn’t. And it wasn’t safe for pregnant women either. So he gently grabbed her hand and pulled her back towards the other side of the room.

Rose crossed her arms and arched a brow as she looked up to him, daring him to ask her what she was doing.

The Doctor was not going near that question with a ten foot pole however. “I’m making dinner!” he exclaimed instead, taking her off guard just long enough to push her out the door. “Come join me!”

As they set down the corridor he sent a silent request to the TARDIS to hide that door from Rose indefinitely.

A week before Rose was due and it felt like they were all just waiting for the other shoe to drop. And then it did.

Amy gasped for air, feeling her heart beating rapidly in her chest as she pried her eyes open to stare up at her bedroom ceiling.

The dream was mostly just noise and flashes of images that didn’t seem to fit together. Screaming and alarms drowned out whatever her father had been frantically shouting. A flash of a silver eyepatch. Rory falling to a cold metal floor. Everything turning white and then—

Nothing.

Amy squeezed her eyes shut and tried to pull the timelines into a focus, but as soon as she reached whatever her dream had been predicting her ears started ringing and everything turned to static.

She huffed out a frustrated breath and reached out to find her mobile. A second later though a loud crash came from outside and both she and Rory were sitting bolt upright, flinging themselves out of bed to throw on clothes, and sprinting to the back garden. Something they had got well quick at a while back, and apparently was like riding a bike.

The TARDIS had wrecked the garden shed, like it had dropped out of the sky instead of materialised, and The Doctor flung open the doors.

“Rose has gone into labor!” he shouted, sounding excited despite the fact that they’d apparently lost control of the police box.

“Then why have you landed?” Rory shouted back. “I thought the plan was to stay in the time vortex?”

Amy winced and prayed that their neighbors hadn’t woken up, but she seriously doubted they could have slept through this.

The Doctor shook his head and motioned them into the ship as he started spinning around the console, pulling levers and adjusting knobs with progressively more frustrated noises. “She just
took control,” he grumbled, clearly meaning the TARDIS as he glared at the unresponsive monitor and banged his palm against the side of it for good measure.

Amy ran her hand along cloister bell and she felt the TARDIS assert herself rather pointedly in her mind. She was sending a clear message: it was them who knew what the future held. The TARDIS was doing her best to avoid it.

“That never works,” Amy whispered, feeling her throat constrict as she did.

“What?” The Doctor’s head snapped up and Amy gave him wide watery eyes, but he didn’t have time to question her further before Rose appeared at the top of the stairs.

“You should be in bed,” The Doctor reprimanded her even as he helped her into the console room.

Rose waved him off easily. “Oh we’ve got loads of time,” she sighed, rubbing her hand down her stomach.

As if in protest to that statement though, The TARDIS suddenly dinged frantically in warning and The Doctor has just enough time to grab hold of Rose before they were rocking violently to the side as they flung back into the time vortex.

“What—” he started, and then alarms were blaring as the ship was crashing her way through time and space.

Rose took the jumpseat while Amy, Rory, and The Doctor kept death grips on the console.

“What is happening?” Rory shouted over the noise.

The monitor was right in front of Amy, so the TARDIS helpfully switched the Gallifreyan radar systems to the exterior security cameras. She swallowed at the sight in front of her. “We’ve got company,” she answered darkly.

“Oh God,” Rose whimpered, the panic written clearly across her features. “Its them, isn’t it? They’ve found us again. I knew they would. What have I done? Please can someone just explain to me why this keeps happening?” She looked up to the ceiling as she started mumbling to herself in Gallifreyan, begging the universe for mercy.

The TARDIS was materialising randomly and dematerialising again halfway through as she attempted to evade the military ship. The console sparked with the effort of it, and smoke was starting to fill the room as the lights flickered.

“It’s following us,” The Doctor announced, his voice somehow both hollow and frantic. “Right across the universe. Everywhere we go.” He swallowed back his horror. “Our only choice is to run and keep running.”

Rose choked on a sob. There was no escape. She couldn’t keep her baby safe.

“Hey, hey,” The Doctor kneeled down so that he was in her line of vision. “The assembled hordes of Genghis Khan can’t get through those doors, remember? We’re safe here.”

“For how long? We can’t live like this forever!” The ship jerked violently again in emphasis, and Rose yelped as she struggled to keep herself upright. “When’s the last time we even refueled—” The TARDIS spun out of control and the alarms changed pitch, cutting Rose off.

“The shield are down,” Amy read off the screen.
The meaning behind those words didn’t have time to set in before it was in front of them. Madame Kovarian appeared at the bottom of the stairs, flanked by armed clerics and Silence behind her.

Rose stood up, her tears replaced by a powerful sort of rage. “How dare you,” she growled. Already she was glowing golden, the TARDIS replacing the alarms with singing as its light surrounded her.

Kovarian only raised a brow in mild amusement though. She opened her mouth to order one of the clerics to shoot one of them, but Amy stepped forward before she could.

“Tell us,” she said, somehow managing to keep voice from wavering. “Just tell us why you’re doing this.”

Madame Kovarian smirked and Amy suddenly felt like a little girl again, but she didn’t allow herself to back down. “AuzwintechéAuzwalquezuesu,” the woman recited the Gallifreyan phrase. “Do you know what it means, Amelia?”

Amy pressed her lips together. “Friends of gods,” she repeated what her mother had told her more than two years ago now on that Silurian ark, “divine power.”

“‘Friends?’” Kovarian challenged, tilting her head in a mocking sort of way. “I do believe Mummy has lied to you my dear child.”

“That’s the official translation,” The Doctor interrupted the berating of his daughter sternly. “Some more radical sects preferred a different one.”

“Children.” The word slipped from her tongue like poison. “The children of time, you killed them all, didn’t you, Doctor? Slaughtered as means to an end.”

“I didn’t—”

“You didn’t have a choice,” she spoke over him condescendingly. “Oh I completely understand that.” She smirked evilly and glanced to her right. “Kill the human,” she ordered.

The gun aimed at Rory fired, and time slowed down.

Actually, literally it came to a screeching halt.

Rory peeked one eye open to see the bullet frozen in midair. He turned slowly along with Amy and The Doctor.

Rose had her hands held out in front of her, holding time at a stand still. Only the four of them able to move in the entire universe. “I can’t do it,” she whispered miserably, “not again.”

She blinked and suddenly the energy swirling around her started moving in earnest, like a tornado of time all centered around her, filling the room until it spilled out of the open doors, reaching out into the stars. “Not ever,” she declared, speaking now with the dual tones of Bad Wolf.

“Rose, what are you—” The Doctor started.

“I can fix this,” she said. “All of it.”

The Doctor shook his head desperately. “No, Rose, that’s a paradox even you can’t contain. You’ll kill yourself!”

Her head snapped around to meet his eyes. “I am the Bad Wolf,” she told him.
And then the walls started shaking, the universe rang out in protest, and everything turned to dust.

Chapter End Notes

...Part two on Friday!

Oh and credit where credit is due: thanks to a discussion I had in the comments with @fire_and_a_rose for the inspiration for the bit about the DNA and what not ;)

--

I've been really struggling writing lately because I've managed to convince myself that it's all garbage. But y'all's comments help so much in getting me through that. Thank you so much for everything ❤️❤️
“Amelia!” The Doctor called after his daughter as he chased her down the TARDIS corridor, seeing a flash of red hair as she turned yet another corner, and hearing her giggle happily as she continued to evade him.

He huffed and took a sharp left, running his hand along the wall and willing the corridor to shift until he was standing right in front of her.

Amelia’s eyes widened and she spun on her heel, but it was too late, The Doctor grabbed her by the waist and hauled her up until she was hanging upside down off his shoulder. She screeched with delight, and he held her more tightly as she attempted to squirm.

“It is bedtime, young lady,” he reprimanded her even as he was smiling, and then shifted so that he could carry her less like a sack of potatoes and more like a child.

Her face was nearly as red as her hair as she pouted at him, crossing her arms in front of her like the stubborn little four year old she was. “Don’t wanna,” she said firmly.

He pouted right back at her, squinting his eyes and jutting out his lips in an overly comic impression of her. “Well that’s too bad,” he said, imitating her tone and earning a huff for all his effort. He rolled his eyes and ruffled her hair until she was laughing again.

Rose appeared at the end of the corridor holding their other daughter in her arms, and Amelia brightened instantly at the sight. “Mummy!” she shouted excitedly.

“Ah, Amelia,” her father brought her attention back to him as he pressed a finger to his lips. “Baby is sleeping, remember?”

She nodded seriously, eyes widening as she repeated the gesture. “Baby sleeping,” she whispered loudly.

The Doctor nodded and set her back on her feet so she could run to her mum and baby sister. “Daddy says it’s time for bed,” she told her, tugging on her shirt and clearly expecting Rose to inform her that The Doctor was mistaken.

“Mm I think Daddy might be right about that. He’s usually pretty good with time you know,” Rose said instead, earning another pout from her eldest daughter.

Amelia sighed in defeat. “All right, but we have to have a bedtime story.”

“See, now why is it dashing down corridors when I say it, but as soon as you do she’s accepted it?” The Doctor complained, pulling much the same face Amelia was earlier.

“Because Mummy’s in charge,” Amelia answered matter of factly, looking at her father like he
should have already known that.

Rose let out a surprised laugh at that. “Okay well, if Mummy’s in charge then she’s requesting you get off to bed. We’ll be in in a minute.”

Amelia nodded as though this was suddenly a more reasonable request coming from her mother than it was her father five minutes ago, and she skipped happily down the adjacent hall towards her bedroom.

The Doctor shook his head as they watched her go with mild amusement, and then turned to his wife and baby. “Is she asleep already?”

Rose nodded, rocking their newborn lightly as she did. “For now,” she sighed, sending him a knowing look. “I think we’re destined to have sleepless daughters no matter how old they are.”

The Doctor chuckled and stepped forward to run his hands along her arms. “How are you feeling?”

She gave him a tired smile. It had only been three days since she gave birth, but she was already feeling more like herself. She went up on her toes to give him a soft kiss. “I’m perfect.”

He tilted his head. “Perfect, really? That’s high praise.”

Rose didn’t feel the need to elaborate however as she simply shrugged, gave him another kiss, and grabbed his hand to lead him into Amelia’s room where she was already in her jim jams, sitting up in bed holding her favourite bedtime story.

“The Pandorica?” The Doctor asked, sliding into one side of her bed while Rose took the other, careful not to jostle the baby as she did. “How many times will we read this before you get tired of it, eh?”

Amelia shook her head passionately. “Never ever ever.”

“Oh never say never ever,” The Doctor replied easily, sending Rose a wink as he did. “What about the Legend of the Shakri? You don’t want to hear about them?”

Amelia scrunched up her face at that. “Nu uh, Daddy. Pandorica,” she said stubbornly, shoving the book into his hands.

He sighed like he was actually anywhere near disappointed, but the smile playing at the corner of his lips gave him away as he started reading the Gallifreyan book. Amelia curled into his side and pulled at her mum’s free hand so that she would run her fingers through her hair.

Rose smiled down at the picture they made, telling herself she was going to paint it next time she could, and settled in to hear about the Pandorica for what was likely the thousandth time.

Later, they carefully untangled themselves from Amelia’s bed and crept silently out of her room and up the stairs to their own. Rose placed the blessedly still sleeping newborn into her cot, and The Doctor wound his arms around his wife’s waist as they stared down at their daughter.

Rose ran her fingers across the soft hairs at the crown of her head “She’s beautiful,” she whispered reverently.

The Doctor hummed in agreement and placed a kiss to her cheek before pushing her gently towards their bed. “I love you,” he said as she scooted closer to him under the sheets so that she could use his chest as a pillow. “Thank you for giving me this.”
Rose smiled into his shirt. “I love you too.”

And with that she drifted off, thinking of her mad, beautiful, fantastic, perfect life.

She dreamed of the Pandorica opening, of her daughter dying, of the world ending. Of her daughter, shoved in a spacesuit and made to kill. Of aliens that she forgot about as soon as she turned away, of armies, and headless monks. Of a woman in an eyepatch, taking her babies from her.

One horrible scene after another.

Rose woke up with her heart in her throat, chest heaving and her shirt plastered to her body from sweat. She flung herself out of bed, fighting the sheets as she went.

“Rose, what—”

“Where is she?” she demanded frantically, spinning in circles in the place where the cot had been before she’d gone to sleep. “Doctor, where is our daughter?”

“Amelia? She’s—”

“No, our baby! Where is our baby?”

The Doctor stared up at her confusedly. “Rose… we don’t have a baby, dear.”

Rose shook her head frantically, running her hands through her hair as she continued to look desperately around the room. “How could you say that? We do! She was here! She was right here!”

“Rose,” The Doctor climbed out of bed in order to stand in front of her, “It was a dream. We only have one daughter.”

She screwed her eyes shut. No, she’d had nightmares. She hadn’t dreamed up last night. She hadn’t made up her newborn little girl. “No, she…” she trailed off desperately searching for words to convince her husband she wasn’t crazy.

He ran his hands down her arms. “Did you dream of Alina again?” he asked softly.

No, no this baby hadn’t been Alina. She was younger than Amelia. She was a new baby. Her name was— her name was… She shook her head. “But I remember, I remember.” She had tears streaming down her face. Why had she felt so real?

“Shhh, shhh, it’s okay,” he whispered, pulling her into his arms, “you’re okay.”

Rose sobbed freely into his chest.

After Rose had calmed down enough to not terrify her daughter, she came into Amelia’s doorway to find her sitting cross legged on the floor, playing with the doll set they’d got her from Barcelona (‘the dogs have no noses!’), and a little cardboard box she’d painted blue and written TARDIS down the side of in crayon.

“Look, Mummy!” Amelia exclaimed as she spotted her mother watching her. “They’re going on an adventure!” She shoved all her dolls inside the box and furrowed her brow as they stuck out the
top. “This box isn’t bigger on the inside,” she said as if that was unusual for boxes. “Do you think Daddy could fix it?”

Rose chuckled lightly, still feeling shaken but better now that she could see her daughter in front of her. “I think he might could if you ask him very nicely.”

Amelia nodded. “Yeah, I think you’re right. Daddy’s good at fixing things.”

And with that she stood up and ran off to go find her father, cardboard box in hand.

Rose followed more slowly, taking the long way around to the console room. She crossed her arms protectively over her stomach and tried to convince herself she hadn’t lost anything. It was a dream. It had to have been a dream. She wouldn’t forget her daughter’s name. The Doctor wouldn’t forget their daughter all together.

When she walked into the control room she was surprised to find her husband alone, tinkering by himself under the console, back against the creeper as he pulled out wires.

She glanced around the room confusedly. “Where’s Amelia?”

“Who?” he replied distractedly.

Rose’s blood ran cold. “Doctor, that’s not funny.”

He glanced up at her at that, brow furrowing as he took in her expression. “Sorry,” he said, rolling out and standing up. “Was I trying to be funny?”

“Where’s Amelia?” she repeated seriously, feeling on edge.

The Doctor squinted at her. “Rose…” he started slowly, “I really have no idea who you’re talking about.”

“Amelia!” Rose shouted, but it came out as more of a plea. “Amelia! Amelia, our daughter, Amelia!”

“Or daughter? Rose, we don’t have a daughter.”

“Don’t you dare!” Rose found herself crying again as she shook her head vehemently. “Don’t you dare say that! We do! Amelia! Amelia is our daughter! She’s four years old and has red hair! She hates bedtime but she loves bedtime stories! Her favorite book is The Pandorica, but she’ll listen to us tell her about travelling just as happily! She prefers making her toys over buying them! She can speak Gallifreyan but she’s still learning to read it! She—” Rose cut herself off as she realised her list was dwindling. She should know more about her daughter. She should know more about her daughter.

She looked up as The Doctor placed his hand against her forehead. “Are you feeling all right?”

“Where are our daughters, Doctor?” she sobbed.

“Rose… Rose, you know you can’t get pregnant,” he told her quietly, looking pained.

She pulled herself away from him at that, stepping backwards. “No. No, don’t say that. You don’t get to take that away from me too.”

“Too?” he repeated confusedly, looking hurt. He tried to follow her, but Rose only continued to keep the distance between them. “What have I taken from you?”
She shook her head and spun away from him, burying her face in her hands. She expected to feel his hand on her shoulder, but when minutes passed filled with nothing but the sound of her crying, she turned back around to find herself standing alone in the console room.

“Doctor?” she called out, but the word echoed in the empty time machine.

“Doctor!” she screamed, running down the corridors, making frantic random turns, footsteps loud and heavy. “Doctor!” She sobbed, slamming her fist against the wall.

She turned again back into the console room. She sprinted to the doors and flung them open.

Outside there was nothing. No galaxies, no stars, no planets. Just darkness. Emptiness. A whole big empty universe with nothing left but her alone in the TARDIS.

“Please, no.” She fell to her knees.

Behind her the TARDIS wheezed, and she turned around to see the time rotor moving sluggishly up and down, the monitor pinging uselessly as the planes of existence disappeared. “No, wait—”

But it was too late. The box disappeared and Rose was left drifting through the void. She closed her eyes, and allowed it to swallow her as well.

Rose gasped as she crumpled to the ground, arms curling protectively around her pregnant stomach as distantly she heard her family’s shouts and felt their hands land on her.

A gunshot rang out, zooming through the space where Rory had been earlier and ricocheting off the the stair rail before colliding with the far wall.

“What—” the cleric started, but Rose didn’t allow him to finish, flinging her hand out and sending them backwards out the doors, and slamming them shut. As soon as they were gone the TARDIS started spinning wildly again and Rose groaned in pain.


“No time,” The Doctor interrupted. “They’re still following us and Rose—”

Rose yelled as another contraction came. “I need to push now!”

Rory turned between the sparking TARDIS and the pregnant woman on the floor. These were hardly ideal circumstances for labor. “Can’t you, I don’t know, turn their ship to dust? Divide their atoms or whatever?”

Rose shook her head, face still screwed in pain. “They have barriers against it. Hypertonic structure making it impossible for me to undo. If I had time maybe but—agh! —I’m a little busy at the moment!”

“Right,” Rory nodded. “Can you get to the med bay?”

Rose winced, but nodded anyway, allowing The Doctor to help her stand.

“Amy, Rory,” The Doctor spoke quickly as Rose fell back into the jumpseat. “I need you two to help the TARDIS. She should be fine on her own, but you’ve got to maintain the shields. They’re
waiting for them to fall again.” He set Amy in front of the monitor. “If you see this character,” he pointed to one of the Gallifreyan symbols along the border, “flash here,” he pointed to one of the screen’s panels, “hold down this button, pull this lever, and spin this knob twice to the left.”

Right on cue, the character flashed and Amy did as he instructed.

“Good,” he said and then strode over to Rory. “Keep these two scanners in the green,” he ordered, pointing to two of the small window readouts set in one of the panels. “If they move, adjust the dials until they’re back. You’ll only have ten seconds to get them back in place so you’ll have to be quick.”

Rory nodded, not getting to practise with him there like Amy had, but squaring his shoulders confidently nonetheless.

Rose was screaming again, hunched over in pain, so The Doctor simply picked her up and ran down the corridor instead of attempting to make her stand or walk again.

Amy and Rory continued to work in tandem as the ship rocked violently, occasionally sending each other frantic glances whenever the alarm changed tones, or when they had to stop what they were doing to hold onto the edge of the the console to keep from falling over. Rory had a lot of near misses that way. Periodically they could hear Rose screaming over the noise of their crashing, but they used that as their motivation to keep going.

An hour passed like this, and not a single one of them wasn’t drenched in sweat by the time a baby’s wails added to the commotion.

Amy and Rory let out twin sighs of relief at the sound, laughing breathlessly in happy disbelief even as they continued with their tasks.

The Doctor came careening around the corner a few minutes later. “She’s here!” he shouted, “She’s here, she’s really here! We have a baby on board!”

The Ponds both managed to cheer without taking their eyes away from the controls as the ship shuddered violently and began screeching in earnest now.

“Now what?” Amy shouted over the ever-increasing volume of the alarms.

The Doctor searched his mind for something—anything—resembling a plan. He hit the side of his head when nothing came and started pacing around the console, muttering to himself angrily.

They all shouted as the stabilisers gave out and they swung sideways. The Doctor pulled out his sonic and aimed it at the other side of the console, sending sparks flying, but putting them back into an upright position. Rory spun dials frantically, listening to the mental timer in his head.

Rose appeared in the doorway then, barely seeming to be able to hold herself up if it wasn’t for the faint golden glow that surrounded her.

She held her baby in her hands.

“Rose,” The Doctor started, “what are you—”

The time energy swirled around her again. Tears marked golden streaks across her cheeks as she looked down at her newborn child. “I’ll keep you safe,” she promised her, and a second later the baby was gone.
“Rose!” The Doctor shouted, “Where—”

“She is hidden. Scattered in the timelines,” Rose rasped, sounding hollow even as Bad Wolf. “She is safe.”

And with that the golden light faded, Rose’s eyes rolled back, and she collapsed to the floor.

…

The Doctor screamed as the bond severed, falling to his knees beside her and shaking her shoulders desperately, begging her to come back.

Rory jumped into action, instincts taking over as he abandoned the dials to slide to a halt beside Rose and begin doing chest compressions.

Amy stood motionless at the top of the stairs, staring down at her mother’s lifeless body. The tears on her face felt like they were a million miles away.

None of them heard the alarms stop over the ringing in their ears, or noticed that the ship was sailing smoothly once more.

A defibrillation kit appeared at Rory’s side and he didn’t even question it before charging the pads and placing them at her sides.

It took three tries and a shock that would have killed a human before she was breathing again.

The Doctor let out a sob of relief, pressing his head against hers and pulling her still motionless body into his arms.

Rory finally managed to speak, “Are her brain waves…?”

“Yes,” The Doctor choked out. “Yes, yes normal. She’s alive. Just in a coma.” He laid her back down carefully and pressed a kiss to her forehead before standing up and turning to Amy. “Come here,” he said quietly, holding out his arms.

Amy ran to him, flinging her arms around his waist and burying her face in his shoulder as she cried in earnest now. “I thought she was—she was—”

The Doctor held her tightly. “Shh, shh, I know. I know, I did too. It’s okay. She’s here. She’s alive. It’s over.” He sounded like he was comforting himself with the words as much as her.

Amy let out another muffled sob. “I remember it though, I remember the world she created—”

“I know, me too, I’m sorry.”

“My sister! She’s gone! Where is she? She should be here! She should—” Amy choked on her words and her father continued to comfort her even as his own tears were still falling.

Quietly, Rory checked Rose’s vitals and picked her up off the floor, leaving the father and daughter to calm down as he carried her back into the med bay.

He was relieved to find the TARDIS had already cleaned and sterilised the room again, leaving it devoid of any evidence that anyone had given birth in there not twenty minutes prior. He laid her out on the bed and carefully adjusted the monitoring equipment before collapsing heavily into one
of the chairs.

It was experience that kept him from dissolving like the two out there, he knew that, but even still his head felt like static as he looked at his mother-in-law and closest friend. “Please,” he said quietly, “don’t ever do that to us again.”

A few moments later Rory stood up as his wife and her father came in, both of them still sniffing and wiping their tears, but seemingly with much more composure than before. He went immediately to Amy as The Doctor rushed back to Rose’s side.

“You okay?” Rory asked, and Amy nodded, pulling him into a hug and keeping an arm around him and her head on his shoulder even after they pulled apart.

The Doctor took Rose’s hand and held it in both of his, bringing it to his lips. He closed his eyes and allowed her pulse to calm him. “Please don’t leave me,” he begged.

Later that night Amy came back into the med bay. She and Rory has retreated to the galley to make dinner an hour ago, and as he turned in for bed Amy went to go check on her father.

“How are you?” she asked quietly.

The Doctor nodded because that was the best answer he could give. Rose was alive. Amy was alive. Rory was alive. The baby was alive. He was alive.

“Are you going to tell me what happened?”

He looked up at to see Amy sitting down across from him on the other side of the bed. “Yeah,” he rasped, speaking for the first time in hours, and cleared his throat. “Yeah, um, which part?”

“Well I mostly get the other world thing… she created another timeline, yeah? One where the Silence had never gotten involved.”

“She created a paradox,” he corrected gently, looking down at Rose reverently as he did. “To have been able to keep you when you born, a number of things couldn’t have happened, most of them things that we did centuries before you born. She undid half the universe to create that.”

“That’s why… why the baby disappeared. And me.”

He nodded. “Me as well. She couldn’t sustain it. Too many conflicting timelines.”

Amy let that hang in the air for a moment, reaching out to take her mum’s hand as she did. “And what about in this world? What did she do?”

“Like she said, she hid her. Took her timeline and scattered it into the universe.”

“But you can find her, right?”

The Doctor shook his head, looking anguished. “She knew that the only way to keep her safe was to hide her completely—even from us.”

Amy held her breath for a few seconds, and then let it out slowly. “Is that why they left?”

“Theyir trackers were on Rose specific signal. When she—When she—”
“Yeah,” Amy interrupted him kindly, not making him say it, and he nodded gratefully. “So what now?”

The Doctor sighed and rubbed his fingers into his eyes. “The Silence won’t be able to track her, but that doesn’t mean they won’t try. They’ve used most of their energy for now, following us like that for that long. They’re weakened. We have to stop them before they can regain their strength. We have to make sure they’re gone before we can even think about looking for our daughter.”

Amy nodded slowly, pressing her lips together, and she reached out to rest her hand against her father’s arm. “Creatures of hope, yeah?”

He finally smiled at that, just a small quirk of lips, but it was something. “Hope,” he repeated quietly, the word giving him a sense of clarity amongst all the chaos, and he squeezed his daughter’s hand. “Yeah, creatures of hope.”

Rose remained comatose for three days.

When she woke up the first thing she realised was that she was alone. Her head was empty.

Her eyes flung open and she sat bolt upright in bed, terrified that everyone had died, she started searching the room frantically, chest heaving as the panic overcame every nerve ending, every atom—

“Hey, hey,” The Doctor’s voice broke through the ringing in her ears and she felt his hand close around hers. “Hey, everything’s okay. You’re all right.”

Oh. Rose felt her heart begin to slow down as she finally managed to get her eyes to focus on him. They were in the zero room.

Then the events came rushing back to her. “I should be dead,” she said, voice hollow, unable to put words to everything else that had happened.

“Don’t say that.”

“I should be though. I did. I was.”

“Please, stop,” he begged her quietly, and finally Rose registered the pain written across his features. Right, that would be a traumatic event for her to be reminding him of. It was weird, not being able to sense his emotions. It was like she’d lost an arm.

“Why are we in here? Can we leave?” she asked but didn’t wait for a reply before she stood up.

The Doctor immediately jumped up to help her, and was thankful he did as she stumbled as soon as her feet had his the ground and leaned him to heavily. “You should rest,” he admonished.

Rose shook her head stubbornly though, even as she allowed him to support the majority of her weight. “Nu-uh, not in here. Doesn’t feel right.”

“Please, stop,” he begged her quietly, and finally Rose registered the pain written across his features. Right, that would be a traumatic event for her to be reminding him of. It was weird, not being able to sense his emotions. It was like she’d lost an arm.

“Why are we in here? Can we leave?” she asked but didn’t wait for a reply before she stood up.

The Doctor immediately jumped up to help her, and was thankful he did as she stumbled as soon as her feet had his the ground and leaned him to heavily. “You should rest,” he admonished.

Rose shook her head stubbornly though, even as she allowed him to support the majority of her weight. “Nu-uh, not in here. Doesn’t feel right.”

“Please, stop,” he begged her quietly, and finally Rose registered the pain written across his features. Right, that would be a traumatic event for her to be reminding him of. It was weird, not being able to sense his emotions. It was like she’d lost an arm.

“Why are we in here? Can we leave?” she asked but didn’t wait for a reply before she stood up.

The Doctor immediately jumped up to help her, and was thankful he did as she stumbled as soon as her feet had his the ground and leaned him to heavily. “You should rest,” he admonished.

Rose shook her head stubbornly though, even as she allowed him to support the majority of her weight. “Nu-uh, not in here. Doesn’t feel right.”

“Please, stop,” he begged her quietly, and finally Rose registered the pain written across his features. Right, that would be a traumatic event for her to be reminding him of. It was weird, not being able to sense his emotions. It was like she’d lost an arm.

“Why are we in here? Can we leave?” she asked but didn’t wait for a reply before she stood up.

The Doctor immediately jumped up to help her, and was thankful he did as she stumbled as soon as her feet had his the ground and leaned him to heavily. “You should rest,” he admonished.
have caught the thought too because he stopped arguing after that.

They made their way down the corridor. “Three days?” she asked suddenly, staring up at him with wide eyes. “What have you been doing?”

The Doctor realised with a start that she was paying more attention to his thoughts than normal—desperate for information as she was. “We’ve been looking for the Silence,” he answered slowly, hesitant to bombard her still fragile mind with too much at once.

“Our baby, is she—”

“They don’t have her,” The Doctor cut off that thought process before it could develop further. “They don’t have her. You saved her.”

“She’s lost to us though,” Rose said miserably, hearing the unspoken rest.

“Lost things can be found,” he whispered, squeezing her shoulders and placing a kiss to the top of her head.

Amy and Rory were already in the console room when they arrived. Amy’s head snapped up as they came in, “Oh my god,” she let out, and in an instant she was flinging herself at her mother.

Rose winced as she saw stars. Her head felt like jello, and the full force of her adult daughter slamming into her unsteady bones didn’t help.

“Careful,” The Doctor admonished.

But Rose waved him off telepathically as she tightened her arms around her daughter, and Amy tucked her head into her shoulder in turn. “I’m so glad you’re okay,” she said quietly.

Rose grimaced at that, unsure if ‘okay’ was exactly the word she would use to describe herself at the moment. But she was alive. And she supposed alive was better than dead.

Amy pulled back, and Rose wobbled slightly, reaching out for the Doctor and taking his outstretched arm gratefully. Rory and Amy both sent her concerned looks, but she pointedly ignored them.

“So…” Rory started slowly as the Doctor gave him a surreptitious nod that meant he should speak. “Uh, we’ve been tracking the Silence. We think we have an idea of their base, but we haven’t exactly decided on a plan yet. In terms of calling UNIT or Torchwood or just…”

He continued talking, but to Rose he began sounding muddled and distant, like she was standing behind thick glass. She shook her head to try and clear it, but the room tilted sideways and she caught herself on the arm the Doctor was still using to support her.

“We—” Rory cut himself off at her stumble.

“Sorry,” she breathed, not looking any of them in the eye. “I think I just need to… I need a shower.” She glanced to the stairs that lead to their room and knew instantly that she wouldn’t be able to climb them. She turned to the corridor instead, trusting the TARDIS to move the door to a more accessible location.

Amy and Rory made noises of understanding, and Rose only allowed the Doctor to continue helping her walk because she wasn’t positive she’d make it otherwise.
She retreated into their bathroom without another word, closing it shut behind her as he said he’d wait out there in case she needed help.

*Needed help*. The words echoed around in Rose’s head until they settled deep down inside like a heavy weight. *She needed help.*

She caught her reflection in the mirror and stepped forward carefully, not recognising the person that stood in it. She looked like a imitation. An unsteady and hollowed our version of who she was supposed to be.

Her hair hadn’t been washed in days. Dark circles looked permanently etched into the space under her distant-looking eyes. Bruises marked the inside of her arms and wrists—like they’d had to put her on an IV, but her veins had been too dehydrated.

The Doctor had put her into pajamas, but they were her maternity ones and they hung off of her at odd angles. She poked at her stomach. It should have returned to it’s usual flat self by now, as it had with Alina and Amy, but it seemed that her body couldn’t keep up with its usual standard for quick healing. Time Lord or not, she’d worn herself to death—literally—and her immune system appeared to be fighting a losing battle in keeping her in even this sorry state.

Rose reached a shaking hand out towards the mirror version of herself, just barely suppressing a shudder as her movements were reflected by the thing that wasn’t her.

She turned her back on it and stepped into the shower, turning the heat up as far as it would go. She stood there for a while, letting the water pound into her aching muscles as she attempted to gather enough energy to reach for her shampoo bottle.

Every little movement felt like an egregious amount of effort, and Rose kept finding herself having to lean against the tiles to catch her breath and regain enough strength to keep going. She wanted desperately to call on her husband for help, but she wanted even more to prove that she could do something herself.

When finally she finished and stepped out to wrap the towel around herself with shaking sore arms, she felt like she could sleep for another three days.

The Doctor knocked on the door and peeked his head in to find her just standing there, looking lost. “Come on,” he said quietly, holding his hand out.

Rose tried not to cry as she took it.

He helped her get dressed in just a pair of knickers and an old t-shirt. His hearts broke every time her face screwed up in pain for moving. Once dressed, she took slow steps to their bed, his hand on the small of her back, and slid under the covers gratefully.

The Doctor handed her some painkillers and she took them with the entire oversized glass of water. “I feel like I’ve been hit by a truck,” she whimpered and curled up on her side.

“When you’re feeling this way maybe you should cut yourself off from the world, Rose,” he advised.

“Get some rest,” he told her, placing a kiss to the top of her head.

“I’m gonna go out on a limb here and say the plan to just have Rose attomise the entire fleet is out?” Rory said as The Doctor rejoined them in the console room.

“That was a bad plan, anyway,” Amy sighed, sitting down heavily in the jump seat. “The majority
of those clerics aren’t there because they actually believe anything the Silence is telling them. It was their parents, their churches, their governments; their situations lead them there. They’re just following orders.”

“It’s also not something she can just do,” The Doctor added tiredly, taking the space next to Amy. “One of us would have to be in serious immediate danger from the entire army.” It was a nice idea, being able to just dissolve the enemy to dust without having to get anywhere near them, but it was completely unrealistic—whether Rose was unwell or not.

“If we called UNIT we’d be starting a full-scale war.” Rory leaned against the console and rubbed his hands down his face.

“No, this has to be done elegantly.” The Doctor held his hands out in front of him. “We need a small task force that can infiltrate them from the inside.”

“Jack and his team at Torchwood could—”

“But they already know Jack from Demons Run,” The Doctor shook his head, “and as far as I know none of them have any formal military training. They’d stick out like sore thumbs.”

“What about that girl?” Rory straightened up suddenly. “Melody’s friend, the one who tried to warn us about the plan.”

“I don’t remember her name,” Amy answered worriedly, looking to her father. “But I feel like I remember seeing her when I was a little girl. I think she might have stayed after—at least for while I was there.”

“We could call Melody…” The Doctor offered. “I suppose it is up to our future selves if we tell her she helps. That’s only if her friend is even still in the army.”

Amy put her hand on his shoulder. “It’s something though, right?”

Melody Pond was watching a film alone in her dorm room with a brand new pack of Oreos to keep her company when her mobile rang right in the middle of the suspenseful bit just before the hot girl was about to get brutally murdered.

She screamed in surprise, jumping enough to fling her Oreo across the room and send her laptop crashing to the floor. She growled as she glanced over to see the TARDIS’s number lighting up the screen.

On the other side of the wall the angry chemistry major pounded his fist and told her to “shut the fuck up,” to which she promptly called him the worst insult she could think of in Gallifreyan, earning only confused silence in return. She gave a smug look in the direction of her neighbor and answered the phone, “What?”

“Oh well you sound cheery,” Amy replied mildly. “Is that how I teach you to answer the telephone?”

“Sorry, usually when it’s the TARDIS calling it’s Aunt—wait, sorry, what year is it for you?”

“Three days ago Rose gave birth to your aunt who I’m hoping you know incredibly well but that I’m assuming you can’t tell me anything about,” Amy explained quickly, sounding resigned.
Melody stayed quiet because she had no idea how to reply to that without giving anything away.

Amy sighed, “We need your help.”

“Right,” Melody nodded shortly, glancing at her clock. “Yeah I can do that… where are you?”

“We’re in the TARDIS.”

Melody rolled her eyes at her mother. “Yeah no obviously, Mum, I meant where in time and space. I need coordinates.”

“Oh yeah right,” Amy sounded flustered all of the sudden. There were some muffled voices and then a lot of shuffling as the phone changed hands.

“Where are you?” The Doctor’s voice came through, and she sighed as she pulled it away from her ear to put him on speaker and open her messaging app.

“I’m sending you my exact coordinates,” she said as she copied-and-pasted a line of code into the ‘To:’ line. “Don’t mess them up or you might land in angry-Jim’s room.”

“Jim? Who’s Jim?”

Melody pressed send. “I don’t know his real name, but I’m thinking of getting him a bath bomb for Christmas.”

A second later the TARDIS materialised in between her desk and bookcase, right in front of her door, and The Doctor’s head peeked out, still speaking into the receiver. “How did you send a message directly to the TARDIS’s operating system?” his voice echoed through her mobile as well and she ended the call.

She shrugged noncommittally, “A computer is a computer is a computer,” and walked past him into the control room.

“No, it really isn’t,” he mumbled, and Melody pretended not to hear him as she jogged easily over to the console and began pushing buttons to fly them back into space.

“So you want to recruit Lorna, yeah?”

“You know,” The Doctor said as he chased her around the console. “It’s really annoying when you just know everything.”

“Yeah but,” she pulled a lever, “I really only know everything because you lot told me it all. So really, whose fault is it?” She glanced up from whatever she was typing into the terminal to give them all a wry smile.

The TARDIS landed before any of them could reply, and Melody skipped down the stairs and opened the door part way. “Hey, come on, it’s that thing I told you about,” she said to whoever was out there (presumably Lorna) and Amy snorted in amusement at her tone.

“She sounds like you.” She nudged The Doctor.

Lorna peeked around the edge of the door, eyes wide as she glanced around nervously. “Um, hi,” she said, sounding unsure, and then let out a yelp of surprise as Melody dragged her further into the time machine.
When Rose woke up her time senses were working enough again to let her know it had been another twenty-four hours. She scrunched her face up at the loss of consciousness and the stiffness in her joints, as well as how dry her mouth felt, and rolled over to find painkillers and water already waiting for her.

As she took the medicine she noticed the subtle changes since yesterday. The Doctor had apparently plaited her hair while she slept—a fact for which she was grateful as otherwise it would just be a nest on the top of her head by now.

Her head was the one thing that felt better, at least compared to when she first woke up. Things were less fuzzy, and she felt like she had more control over her thoughts than before.

The door opened to reveal her husband. “Hey,” he started, “I felt you wake up. Everyone else is asleep though. Well, I think Melody and Lorna might still be awake. They were baking brownies in preparation for a film last I checked.”

Rose’s brow furrowed. A lot had changed in 24 hours. “Lorna as in the cleric from Demons Run?”

The Doctor nodded, and slid into his side of the bed to sit next to her as he explained their plan slowly and avoiding delving into the details too much so as to not overwhelm her.

“That’s risky,” Rose said as he finished.

“It’s the best option though,” he argued.

And there wasn’t any arguing that. It brought risk to civilian life down to zero. Because there was no war, it didn’t require a battleground. It did, however, put Lorna in a vulnerable position.

“And she’s just… okay with that? Even though she barely knows us?”

“She knows Melody, and she trusts her. And I don’t think Melody would be going along with this either if she thought there was any significant probability of losing her.”

“Significant meaning…?”

“Oh, anything higher than 3% and she’d be finding another way,” he answered easily. “They seem… close.” He gave Rose a significant look and her brows shot into her hairline.

“Really now?” she asked with a smile, sitting back against the pillows.

The next morning (or whatever that meant on the TARDIS) The Doctor helped Rose down the stairs to where they had all gathered in the console room. She sat down in the jumpseat as they began speaking. She felt better that she had when she’d first woken up, but standing was still airing on the side of painful and dizzying.

“We’ll be with you the entire time,” Rory said as he handed Lorna a pair of glasses. “These will allow us to see and hear everything you do.”

Lorna slipped them over her ears and clicked the button on the side, all around them the windows and monitors turned into her point of view. She spun in a circle and they all whizzed by in the screens. “And I’ll be able to hear you as well?”

Melody picked up the speakerphone. “Yep,” she answered and Lorna winced as the word echoed
loudly from the microscopic earpiece they’d given her earlier.

“All right then,” she squared her shoulders, “wish me luck.”

Melody pulled her best friend into a fierce hug. “You’ll be perfect,” she whispered, sounding like she was assuring the both of them. When they broke apart she pushed her gently towards the doors. “Now go, be brilliant.”

They’d landed at the loading bay on the dwarf planet closest to Lorna’s base, the day she’s been scheduled to deploy. She stepped out onto the grey powdery dirt, and took a deep breath of the artificial atmosphere, promising herself (again) that this would be the last time she ever had to see this place.

Behind her, the TARDIS dematerialised back into the time vortex and she looked over her shoulder to watch it go before she stepped around the corner and out of the little alcove and into the looming shadow of the largest battleship in the Order of the Silence.

Her bishop spotted at her as she headed over to her troop and gave a curt nod of approval. She couldn’t be exactly sure what it was he was approving, but she nodded in return nonetheless as she joined ranks, doing her best to keep her eyes forward and her mind away from what she was about to do.

“Glasses, Bucket?” cleric Ryan Agganis said by way of greeting, a sly sort of smirk playing at the corner of his lips. He was one of the ones who believed in the Order.

She adjusted the frames slightly and picked her chin up. “Yep,” she answered curtly, not leaving any room for further comment on his part.

She boarded the ship, handing over her papers, and retreating immediately to her sleeping quarters in lieu of sticking around to socialise with the clerics she only barely knew. Once there she shoved her duffel bag under the cot and dug through her pocket until her fist closed around the one small item she needed to fulfill this mission: a USB drive.

The ship took off just as her roommate came through, and she shoved the device back into her pocket quickly, turning her back towards her cot to try and look busy. She glanced out the small port window they were afforded, and saw the rest of the fleet join ranks around the mothership. It was now or never.

Lorna slipped out the door and Melody’s voice came through the earpiece, sounding almost as if she was speaking directly into her mind. “Okay, all the higher ups will be wearing the eyepatches—the Eye Drives—they are our only target in this.”

*What about the Silence?* Lorna thought, wishing she could speak out loud.

Apparently Melody knew her well enough to sense the direction of her thoughts. “And to answer your question from last night: yes, you are literally surrounded by Silence. I tallied forty and then gave up, apparently…” There was some muffled talking that sounded like her parents that followed, and then she spoke to her again. “Hacking into their systems told us that the Silence have been using the Order just as much as the other way around. They’ve been waiting for their opportunity to go rogue, and you’re going to give it to them.”

Lorna caught sight of one of the Silence and flinched slightly, but remembered that she’d become accustomed to seeing them and regained her composure. She turned her head and immediately forgot it had happened, but started taking note of the occasional flinches she caught from the other
clerics.

“Find the security bay. You said your credentials will get you in, right?”

Lorna nodded.

“I’ll take that quite frankly dizzying movement as a nod, then,” Melody replied dryly.

Lorna pressed her lips together to keep from laughing and took a left towards security, holding her ID up to the door and breathing out a sigh of relief as it pulled back.

“Cleric,” the bishop said as she entered, and Lorna pulled herself to attention, giving him a salute. “What are your orders?”

“Transferring to security, sir,” she lied easily.

The bishop squinted at her. “Replacing Griffiths, are you?”

“Sir, yes, sir,” she replied, doing her best not to look relieved that the files The Doctor had obtained hadn’t been horrifically out of date.

“Hm, at ease,” he allowed, and Lorna brought her hand down and her eyes up from his chest. “It’s about time they sent another pair of boots down here.” He started walking towards one of the empty computer terminals, waving at her to follow. “We’ve been up to our knees in paperwork since he took leave.”

“I’ve heard, sir.”

He set her up at the monitor, using his own credentials when hers wouldn’t allow access. “Figures,” he grumbled. “They never update privileges up there without a complaint. You and half a dozen other clerics in here are having to use mine.”

Lorna nodded, but kept her mouth shut. Knowing well enough not to make any comments about higher authorities.

“Good job, babe,” Melody said as the bishop finally finished giving her her duties. “Now just plug the USB in and the virus will do the rest. There’s a Silence stood next to the colonel up there. It will notice the breach before anyone else does, and give you the chance to run. As soon as it does, don’t hesitate. Get out of there. I’ll be waiting for you.”

Lorna waited for the Bishop to pass her in his rounds about the room, and then surreptitiously pulled out the device and plugged it in.

At first, nothing happened, and then everyone looked up as the Silence in the corner of the room started making a horrible rasping noise.

“Move, now,” Melody ordered, and Lorna stood up just as the Silence extended its arm, and the colonel’s Eye Drive turned blue with electricity. He was screaming out in pain when Lorna turned and sprinted from the room, the rest of the clerics following suit as the bishop sputtered incredulously, attempting to bark orders to his retreating troops.

Out in the corridors, Eye Drives were malfunctioning left and right. Clerics and bishops were running around in a panic as the higher ranking officers fell to the floor, and Silence were screeching victoriously.
Rory appeared at the top of the mezzanine. “Everybody to Cargo Ship 4211 in the loading bay!” he shouted above the noise, his voice commanding in the chaos. Immediately the mob turned in the direction of cargo, jumping over their dead officers and dodging the Silence as they continued to shoot lasers off haphazardly into the crowd.

Lorna turned around as someone grabbed her arm, and she came face to face with Melody. “Come with me,” she said quietly, and the two of them battled their way through the sea of people.

“Where are we going?” Lorna shouted.

“Madame Kovarian,” Melody answered quickly, still pulling her towards the center of the ship, “she took off her Eye Drive.”

“Did she get away?”

Melody shook her head. “No, but my grandparents had to move the TARDIS in order to catch her before she could. There’s been a slight change in plans.”

As they made their way forwards, having to stop every time they reached another hydraulic door to sonic through the security, the mob slowly dwindled, and eventually Amy and Rory caught up to them.

“4211 was boarded and launching now,” Amy panted. “Jack and his team are making sure there aren’t any members of the Order on board.”

“What about the Silence?” Lorna asked.

Amy shook her head. “They all disappeared, but we knew that would happened. They aren’t interested in Rose and The Doctor though. That’s all Kovarian.”

“Speaking of which…” Melody finished sonicking the final door, and it slid up to reveal the woman in question, tied to a chair and Eye Drive hanging uselessly off her cheekbone. The Doctor and Rose stood in front of her.

“You took my baby from me,” Rose was saying as they entered, voice hard. “You took my baby away from me and you hurt her. And now she’s all grown up and she’s perfect, but I’ll never see my baby again.” She took slow, calculating steps forward, and Madame Kovarian shrinked back in her chair. “And then you did it again, and another baby is lost to me.”


“That’s who I used to be,” Rose whispered dangerously. “But you killed that girl.”

And with that she pressed the Eye Drive back into the woman’s skin and watched as she screamed.

She didn’t look at her family before she turned on her heel and retreated into the TARDIS. And when they followed her in, she was nowhere to be seen.

It was Melody who finally found her hours later, sitting by herself in what would have been the baby’s nursery. She tilted her head and sat down next to her on the plush carpet, remaining silent.

Rose shook her head sadly after a few moments. “Your future seems further away from me
everyday,” she said quietly.

Melody let out a long breath. “I know this sounds cliche,” she started, “but I’m hoping since I am actually literally from your future it might mean something… It does get better. I promise.”

“I can’t see how,” Rose replied miserably.

“I know.”

“What do I do?” she asked the much younger girl helplessly.

Melody froze at the look Rose was giving her. Here was this literal goddess, the strongest person she’s ever known—the reason she and the rest of the universe even existed, asking her for answers. “Exactly what you always do,” she whispered.

Rose hung her head, “I can’t keep doing this, Melody. I’m so tired.”

“Gran,” Melody shook her head. “What you always do is what is best.”

Rose snorted mirthlessly at that, but Melody persisted.

“It’s true,” she insisted, and then more slowly, “and I think you already know what you have to do now.”

“I don’t want to.” Rose squeezed her eyes tight and shook her head vehemently.

“I know,” Melody whispered, “I know.”

…

Rose had tears running down her face as she spoke to him in the doorway of the Pond’s home.

“I’m—I’m going to stay here. With our daughter. The one that hasn’t been taken again. The one I can still—” She cut herself off. “And you—you—you’re gonna go find our other one.” She sobbed, breath catching in her throat as she patted his chest determinedly not meeting his eye.

“Rose…” He started, and it was broken and miserable. Begging. “Please—”

But she was already shaking her head. “No, I can’t. I can’t do it again. I can’t keep losing—I—” She took a deep breath and finally looked up to him. “I love you. I love you so much it hurts, Doctor.” She sniffed and reached up to wipe the tear that escaped him at that. “You have to be stronger than me now. Please. You have to find her. And then you have to come back to me.”

“Just come with me!” he begged her, tears making his voice rough. “We’ll find her! We’ll find her together, Rose.” He grabbed at her hands and held them in his own between them. “Please, please don’t leave me.”

“I’m not leaving you,” she sobbed, “I’m not. I’m not. I couldn’t. I can’t.” Her breathing was becoming labored now. “Please just don’t ask me to go through this again, Doctor, please. That’s three times now and I can’t do it again.” She choked on her own air and The Doctor pulled her to his chest, holding her tightly to him.

“I’m sorry.” He whispered, voice breaking. He looked up to the stars in silent question of how perfect things could fall apart so thoroughly.
She shook her head and pressed her face into his jacket. “It’s not your fault. I don’t blame you. I just need you to fix this, please. I’m too broken now… They did it. They got what they wanted and I’m sorry I’m not strong enough—”

“Rose Tyler you are the strongest person in the universe,” he cut her off, pulling her back so he could look at her firmly as he said it, with so much conviction in his voice that even she couldn’t argue with him. “Don’t you dare apologize for what they did to you—to us.”

She took a deep, shuddering breath and nodded.

He pressed his lips against her forehead, closing his eyes against the pain. “I promise you,” he whispered, “I promise you I’m going to fix this.”

Chapter End Notes

It's still Friday on the west coast, yeah? Sorry! My flight got changed due to weather, and I ended up having to finish and edit this in the airport, and then wait until I got back to my dorm to post. But it is here!

This chapter is dedicated to the anon who sent me that really long and beautiful message on tumblr this week. Thank you so much for reading, and thank you so much for telling me all that. The majority of this was written after getting that because it was so encouraging. You're amazing, thank you ❤️

Reminder that things will get better soon! ❤️ Leave comments and questions you wonderful beauties!
Though Time Is Ruthless,

Chapter Summary

It showed us kindness in the end.

The Bells of Saint John

Chapter Notes

Chapter title from Sleeping At Last song Mars

There is a man who lives on a cloud.

He’s often seen wandering through the rose bushes that line the park square, but if you try to speak to him, he won’t say a word. Though you can catch him muttering to himself from time to time, almost as if there’s someone else in his head, talking back.

The children tell stories of him. Some have even claimed to have heard his stories. To have followed him up the invisible staircase leading to a magic blue box that’s bigger on the inside.

“But why’s it blue?” one of them will ask.

“It’s because he’s very sad,” the other will reply.

“Well what’s he got to be sad about?” they’ll go on.

“He’s lost his rose,” they’ll answer. “That’s why he’s always looking in the garden.”

“But what’s his name?” another will insist.

“The Doctor,” they’ll say mysteriously.

“Doctor? Doctor who?”

Victorian England was as good a place as any to park the TARDIS as he waited for something — anything — that could be a sign for where his daughter was. 19th Century London was the only place that had ever given any sort of indication that a young Time Lord had been there, and The Doctor was refusing to leave until he was sure.

That unfortunately meant dealing with the lizard woman, her human wife, and their potato manservant (potato servant?) as they insisted on playing detective throughout Londontown.

“There’s a murderer on Holywell street!” Jenny exclaimed, as her and Vastra bustled through the
The Doctor barely glanced up from where he was morosely staring out the window. “It’s none of my business,” he replied boredly.

Jenny scoffed and followed Vastra back into her study, while Strax glared at The Doctor in much the same way he always did whenever the Time Lord happened to be about the house. “Sir, permission to express my opposition to your current apathy?”

The Doctor sighed. “Permission granted.”

“Sir, I am opposed to your current apathy,” Strax repeated, not adding anymore to it. And really, one had to appreciate the efficiency.

“Thank you, Strax,” The Doctor marched over to lean down to eye level with the Sontaran. “And if ever I’m in need of advice from a psychotic potato dwarf, you’ll certainly be the first to know.”

‘Rude,’ Rose chided softly in his head, to which he promptly ignored her.

“It’s not my problem,” he repeated stubbornly. “Over a thousand years of saving the universe, Strax, you know the one thing I learned? The universe doesn't care.”

And with that he stormed out of the house, slamming the door behind him for good measure.

The wives had reappeared in the entryway. “To think he was once considered kind,” Jenny lamented.

“He was different once, a long time ago,” Vastra admitted. “Kind, yes. A hero, even. A saver of worlds. But he suffered losses which hurt him. Now he prefers isolation to the possibility of pain's return.” She squared her shoulders. “We are the Doctor's friends. We assist him in his isolation, but that does not mean we approve of it.”

“Why won’t he help though?” Jenny persisted. “Shouldn’t he think maybe if he saved the universe, it might save him in return? After all this time, and everything he’s done?”

Vastra gave her wife a stern look at that, “The universe doesn’t make bargains.”

It had been two years Earth time (though much longer for The Doctor) since Rose had moved into the Pond’s residence permanently, and in that time Amy had fallen pregnant and given birth to baby Melody. Melodeiamkel the stars had called her. The song of the universe. The Doctor had been there of course, and even stuck around for a while; but holding his granddaughter, whispering to her Gallifreyan, telling her the stories of the stars, it only proved to make him wish he could find his own daughter more, and he set out again to do exactly that.

Rose was watching after Melody at home while Amy ran out to the computer shop. Her laptop needed a new battery, and this particular shop was further than she would have liked to have travelled with a not-yet-one-year-old, but the timelines had pushed her there anyway. She assumed because there was a good deal or something.

The bell over her head rang as she entered the shop, and was immediately greeted by the frustrated grumbles of a young girl of about eleven standing opposite the tired-looking employee. “Let me go look in the back,” the teenaged boy said, looking like he’d say anything to get away from the little
girl in front of him.

As he scrambled away, the girl flipped her computer over, grabbed a small screwdriver from the other side of the counter, and began dismantling it. Amy watched in wonder as before long she had pulled out every circuit board and wire the thing had held, and had them lined up in front of her.

“You must be good with technology,” Amy commented mildly, finally making her presence known.

“I’m usually much better,” the girl huffed, “but this piece of junk is the only thing I could afford. I try not to use it, but the internet at school hasn’t been working all Summer and now I’m behind.”

Amy leaned against the counter, squinting as she watched her continue rewiring the entire device. “What school is that?”

“Saint John’s Preparatory School,” she replied distractedly.

Amy pulled her chin back at that. Saint John’s was the girl’s boarding school for the academically gifted on the other side of Kensington—not far from where she lived. “How did you end up on this side of town?”

Her eyes flickered up to meet hers finally, squinting at the older woman suspiciously. “Are you always this nosy?”

Amy let out a surprised laugh at that. “Yeah, actually. Drives my husband mad. I get it from my parents though. They’re always getting into other people’s business… or well, they used to anyway.”

“Getting old?”

Amy snorted, “Yeah I guess you could say that.”

The girl smirked and started screwing something back into place again. “To answer your question: I came here on a bus. It’s cheaper here than the one that side of town. But also apparently useless!” She shouted the last word towards the direction of the back room, and didn’t get a response.

Amy laughed at her moxy, feeling very drawn to this girl and wanting to know more about her. “So if it’s a boarding school, where are you actually from then?”

She pressed her lips together at that, like she found the question amusing. “Don’t know,” she finally answered, “I’m an orphan. What about you though? Scotland? I’ve lived in Scotland.”

Amy wondered how an orphan “had lived in Scotland”, or had gotten into such an elite prep school, but both of those seemed like rather rude questions to ask. “Yeah, uh, sort of. I don’t really know where I was born, either. I was also an orphan as a kid, sort of.”

The girl squinted at her. “‘Sort of an orphan?’ Weren’t you just talking about your parents?”

“It’s complicated.” Amy smiled awkwardly. “And I’ve just realised I never asked your name.”

She rolled her eyes. “Clara,” she answered, “Clara Oswin Oswald. Don’t ask where it came from cos I couldn’t tell you.”

*Auzwinteche’Auzwalquezesu,* Amy’s brain supplied suddenly, and she sucked in a sharp breath. She coughed to hide her reaction, and hastily grabbed one of the business cards sitting on the
It was a risk, but it was one worth taking.

“Here,” she said, as she scribbled down the TARDIS’s phone number and passed it over to Clara. “Call this number, it’s the best helpline out there. The best in the universe.” She tapped the card for emphasis.

Clara eyed it and her warily. “Er… okay. Thanks?”

Amy felt she was suddenly on the brink of tears, and had the overwhelming urge to hug the perfect stranger in front of her. Which would be incredibly inappropriate considering she was eleven. “Right, um,” she cleared her throat, blinking rapidly, and turned on her heel to rush out of the shop before she could do anything too rash.

“Wait!” Clara called after her. “I never got your name!”

But the door had already shut behind her.

Clara Oswin Oswald didn’t really think too much about the logistics of her life.

Whenever she tried she always just ended up giving herself a headache, and at some point she’d written the whole thing off as a bad job. It was just easier that she accepted that this was her life. Maybe she’d get answers one day, and maybe she wouldn’t. She didn’t really mind either way.

She must have been two years old when she first noticed.

“Clara!” A nun that Clara was sure she’d never met or even seen before called her name. She startled as she realised she wasn’t in the same bed she’d gone to sleep in.

She squinted down at her lap. She knew the nun talking to her was Sister Angie, and that the girl in the cot beside her was Bridget. She knew that when she looked out the window she wouldn’t see the Reading church orphanage yard, but rather the outside of this smaller orphanage in Lavenham.

Clara shrugged, figuring they must have traded her in the middle of the night (maybe that’s how orphanages worked?), and told her about it all while she was sleeping.

She was only in Lavenham for a year though.

A bit after her third birthday, Clara was hopping across the stones in the creek near the school when suddenly she wasn’t. Her feet his hard pavement instead, and she blinked confusedly as the weather suddenly changed from sunny to overcast.

“Clara! Don’t doddle!” A nun with a thick Scottish accent admonished as she paused in keeping up with the queue of girls in front of her. They were all wearing navy school dresses—just like the one she’d appeared in.

A horse and buggy trotted past, and Clara furrowed her brow, tapping the shoulder of the girl in front of her. “Eleanor,” she started, the name coming to her naturally, “what’s the date?”

“The third of September.”

Clara pressed her lips together. That was correct but… “And… what year is it again?” she asked hesitantly, pulling at the old-fashioned dress.
Eleanor squinted at her like she’d gone mad. “1902…”


It had been 1992 last she’d checked.

——

And thus her odd life began. She skipped around between cities and countries and centuries, usually to spend some time in a church orphanage, other times just to walk around for a bit. She spent a decent amount of time in Canterbury of 2002, which was very pretty, and in Victorian London, which was less pretty than the paintings would have you believe.

She saw a lot of America as well. The largest amount of time was a two and a half weeks in Boston of 2022 living in an old brownstone mansion with only a fat grey cat and a nanny to call company (she never actually met who her supposed adopted parents were—as they were on holiday). But she found ways to entertain herself, often by hanging out the windows and calling to the random tourists on the trolley tours who’d paused to gawk at the house.

She was in a small western town called Mercy for a while as well. But she didn’t remember it all that much. Just that the people there would often mention aliens as if that were common knowledge. She wrote it off as a quirk of western America.

She spent random periods of time in small southern towns, and in the mountains of the pacific northwest. She got to spend two weeks in Hawaii, but only one in Alaska.

She saw most of Europe, spending a considerable amount of time in the United Kingdom particularly. Anything longer than a week was almost exclusively in Britain. Except for that one orphanage in France that she’d been at for months.

She’d seen the whole of Europe though. Everything from all the touristy bits of Italy, to the lesser known beautiful townships in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the small farming communities of Latvia.

She ventured around all corners of Asia, Africa, and South America as well, spending a few hours in almost any city you could name.

She’s pretty sure she was even in Antarctica for like thirty seconds one time. There were penguins everywhere. That was probably the shortest one.

By the time she was seven years old she’d already seen the majority of the world.

The problem, Clara found, was that in only being places for a few months (or weeks or minutes) at a time, she never really found anyone with whom she felt she could tell that she randomly traveled through time without warning. She was pretty sure everyone forgot about her as soon as she was gone, which was sort of a bummer really, but also probably for the best.

There were two people she met that actually seemed interesting. That was probably the only time she was truly annoyed when she was suddenly transported through time and space.

She was six years old when she started blinking in Brazil and finished in England. She was wearing a school uniform, but no one called her name as an indicator that she would be there long, so she sighed, glancing around for anything interesting to do for the next thirty seconds to twelve hours.

A sign to her left informed her that she was standing outside Leadworth Primary School. Next to it, a girl with bright red hair was sitting cross legged next to a rather scrawny looking boy, who was
looking at her like she had all the answers in the universe (or maybe just the ones to tomorrow’s spelling test).

“They travel in time and space, Rory,” she told him, sounding exasperated.

Clara tilted her head, interested now, and she hurried over to them, praying she wouldn’t disappear before she got a chance to talk. “Who travels in time and space now?” she asked by way of greeting, plopping down across from them in the grass.

The ginger squinted at her. “The Doctor and Rose…” she answered hesitantly. “Are you new here?”

“Sure.” Clara shrugged noncommittally and hastened her point, sitting forward. “Tell me more about these time travellers.”

The girl opened her mouth to go on in her explanation, but the boy wouldn’t drop the subject of her. “When did you get here?” he asked curiously. “Who are your parents?”

Clara let out an annoyed huff. “Haven’t got any parents,” she answered quickly. “Now—”

“Yeah, me neither,” the girl interrupted, sounding downtrodden.

Clara bit the inside of her cheek. She figured this girl must have been one of those orphans with dead parents. She’d met plenty of those—she’d met all sorts of orphans. She couldn’t decide if it was more or less sad than the ones who got abandoned.

She shrugged. “My parents just lost me,” she told the perfect strangers matter of factly. “I think I just wandered off when they weren’t looking. I do that a lot.”

The older kids both stared at her incredulously. “Are you not looking for them?” Rory asked, sounding worried for her general sanity.

Clara shrugged again. “I don’t know. I might be.” She looked over her shoulder on impulse, and when she looked back she was in a church pew.

“Dang it,” she whispered loudly, earning a scandalised look from the nun in front of her.

“Clara Oswald!” she scolded her, and Clara apologised quickly, crossing herself dutifully, and bowing her head in pretend prayer.

That had been the first time she’d said out loud to anyone that she figured her parents had lost her.

——

Shortly after turning nine years old Clara found herself for the first time not in an orphanage, but rather in a boarding school.

It was the first day of classes in the year 2014, and it was an old mansion turned girls school for the academically gifted in London.

She loved it.

She knew as soon as she stepped through the doors that she would hate leaving. Everyone was so smart and the library was so big. She made friends within the first day of classes, and not once at any of the meals did a nun show up to make sure she prayed before eating.
For a while, Clara lived in constant fear that she would sneeze in English class and look up to find herself at a Shakespearean play (again), or that she’d just wake up in the year 3000. But then a year passed… and then another… and then she was eleven years old in the same place she’d been when she was nine and it felt like a miracle. She could almost convince herself that the first half of her life had been a fever dream.

But then the bells of Saint John started ringing.

The Doctor had moved on to sitting in a cave in Cumbria, 1207.

Above ground, roses had grown up the side of the TARDIS, leaving her stationary as a sort of temple at the top of the highest peak in the land, while the Doctor sat below surrounded by ancient tombs and scriptures, grasping at anything now to find his daughter. Any mention of a mysterious little girl. Anywhere.

But there was nothing.

He heard voices outside. “They call him the mad monk, don't they?” a man was saying.

“They shouldn't,” another replied. “He's definitely not a monk.”

And then they entered the room and the first man cleared his throat, “Ahem. I'm sorry to intrude,” he spoke hesitantly, “but the bells of Saint John are ringing.”

The Doctor’s eyes widened. “I'm going to need a horse.”

The phone had been ringing for at least thirty minutes, Clara was sure. She was ready to call it off as a bad joke, when finally, finally another voice greeted her.

“Hello?” the man said, sounding confused.

“Ah, hello!” she exclaimed, jumping off her bed to rush over to her desk. “I can't find the internet.”

“Sorry?”

“It's gone, the internet.” Clara knew full well that she wasn’t making any useful sense, but she was really just hoping he might take pity on her and show up, or give her an address she could get to. “Can't find it anywhere. Where is it?”

“The internet?” he repeated incredulously.

Clara raised her brows. “Yes, the internet. Why don't I have the internet?”

“It's twelve oh seven,” the man said, and Clara squinted at the clock.

“I've got a quarter till five… Am I phoning a different time zone?”

“Yeah, you really sort of are.”

“Will it show up on the bill?”

“Oh, I dread to think. Listen, where did you get this number?”
Clara leaned back in her desk chair and spun around. “The woman in the shop wrote it down. It’s a help line, isn’t it? She said it’s the best help line out there. In the universe, she said.”

“What woman? Who was she?”

“I don’t know. The woman in the shop,” she answered flippantly, hoping maybe they could get back to the problem at hand. She’d reassembled her computer so that it would turn on, but now the school’s wifi network was refusing to show up. “So, why isn’t there internet? Shouldn’t it just sort of be there?”

“Look, listen, I’m not actually—it isn’t—” the man sighed and Clara could smell his defeat. “You have clicked on the wifi button, yeah?”

Clara rolled her eyes, wondering if playing dumb was really worth it. “Yeah I did. All there is is a bunch of alien-looking symbols.”

“Alien?” the man repeated.

“Yeah, alien. Do you think it could be aliens? Aliens in the wifi? That could be interesting. I lived in a town once that believed in aliens. Mercy, it was called. They were all mad if you ask me, but who am I to talk?”

There was silence on the other end.

“...Hello?”


“Yeah! Do you know it?”

The Doctor left the phone hanging off the side of the TARDIS as he flew through time and space, tracing the call to a boarding school in south Kensington in the Summer of 2016. He knocked rapidly on the door, and could hear the girl speaking through the phone that still hung limply off of the police box which now had silhouettes of roses burned into the paneling.

A young girl of about eleven years old answered the door, staring at him quizzically. “Hello?”

It was the same voice from the phone. The Doctor grinned madly. “Hello!”

“Sorry, do I know you?” She looked him up and down, taking in his monk get-up. “Are you selling some sort of religion, cos I hate to break it to you buddy, but this school’s already got one.” She pointed to the massive cathedral across the street that was likewise called ‘St. John’s.’ The bells were now tolling 5 o’clock.

“What? Oh, no. No, I’m not a monk. I’m the Doctor, what’s your name?”

She furrowed her brows at him. “Clara…” she started hesitantly.

“Clara!” he enthused merrily, unable to help himself as his eyes twinkled. “That’s a beautiful name!”

She squinted impossibly further. “You… sound familiar…”

“You just rang!”
“What?” Clara’s brows shot into her hairline as she looked around for the hidden camera. “How did you get here so fast?”

The Doctor shrugged. “I just happened to be in the neighborhood on my mobile phone.” He gestured behind him to the TARDIS on impulse.

“When you say mobile phone, why do you point at that blue box?”

The Doctor didn’t miss a beat. “Because it’s a surprisingly accurate description.”

Clara stared at the strange man in front of her for a few seconds, bouncing excitedly on his toes. Absolutely nothing about him screamed dangerous, but every single inch of him screamed mad.

“Yeah… we’re done,” she said, and slammed the door in his face.

“Oi!” The Doctor shouted through the wood. “Clara!”

Clara spun around to face the stairs as she heard creaking coming from above her. She was the only one there last she’d checked. All the other girls had gone home for Summer holidays, and wouldn’t be returning for another week. “Hello?” she called, taking a hesitant step forward. “Hello, is someone there?”

A young girl she’d never seen before appeared at the top of the stairs and just stared at her silently.

“What were you doing upstairs?”

“I was upstairs,” she said monotonously.

Something about her looked familiar. “Hang on, I know you, don't I?”

“You know me, don't you.”

“Do you go to school here?”

“I go to school here.”

The girl took a step forward and it hit Clara then how she knew her. The drawing on the cover of her book. She was the girl from the drawing. Clara took a step back as she came down another step.

She paused, and her head turned all the way around, to reveal it was all hollowed out on the other side, a silver satellite dish in place with numbers running across it.

The blue light hit her before she could scream.

The Doctor had run back into the TARDIS to toss the monk robes down the corridor and change into his normal tweed jacket and braces. He hesitated as he pulled out the box that held his red bow tie, but smiled brightly as he flicked the latch open.

He shouted as he ran back to the door, “Ah ha! Clara! Clara?”

“Hello?” she answered after a second.

“Ah, see? Look, it's me!” He spun around showily despite standing opposite her through an opaque door. “De-monked! Sensible clothes! Can I come in now?”
“I don’t understand,” she said.

The Doctor squinted at that. “You just open the door.”

“I don’t know—”

“Of course you can.”

“—Where I am. I don’t know where I am.” She sounded panicked and frightened all of the sudden and The Doctor’s blood ran cold. “Where am I? Please tell me where I am. I don’t know where I am.”

He sonicked the lock open to find Clara passed out on the floor, unmoving, but still he could hear her voice. “I don’t know where I am. I don’t know where I am!”

“Clara? Clara?” He kneeled down at her side, tapping on her cheek and checking for a pulse that was only barely there.

He looked to the stairs finally to see the spoonhead. Clara’s face was visible in a screen behind a download progress bar that was already at 62%. “I don’t know where I am. I don’t know where I am. I don’t understand. I don’t know where I am! I don’t understand. I don’t know where I am!” she kept shouting, likely not able to see anything at all on her end. “Where am I? I don’t know where I am!”

The Doctor raised his sonic to the thing and the little girl facade melted away into a standard bipedal metal robot.

“Walking base station,” he mumbled to himself as he grabbed Clara’s discarded laptop from the floor. “Walking wifi base station. Hoovering up data. Hoovering up people. Oh no, you don’t.” He began typing in rapid fire commands, hacking faster than he ever had in his more than 1000 years of life.

Whoever was controlling the robot tried fighting back.

“Oh, no, no, no, no, no.” he said as he overrode the commands written in the alien language. “Not this time, Clara, I promise.”

It continued like that, The Doctor ignoring the pain in his fingers as slowly the progress bar dwindled back down to zero, and Clara’s soul was reestablished into her body. A stream of energy flowed from the mobile station back into her head.

She gasped, her body flinging itself upwards, but her eyes remained closed.

“Okay,” the Doctor said as he caught her and laid her back down carefully. “It’s okay, it’s okay. You’re fine. You’re back.” He tried and failed to keep his tears at bay as he pressed his forehead to hers and felt the telepathic signature of his daughter reassert itself in his mind. “Yes, you are. Oh yes, you are.” He kissed her hairline before picking her up and carrying her up the stairs back to her room.

‘Doctor, is that…’ Rose started hesitantly as The Doctor was tucking Clara into bed.

‘I found her, Rose.’
Rose was running in the the direction of St. John’s.

She’d been so close this whole time. This whole time she’d been walking distance away from her daughter and she’d had no idea.

Her husband met her on the pavement outside the school gates, catching her in his arms and hauling her into a spinning hug.

“I can’t believe it!” she exclaimed as he finally put her back on her feet.

“She’s not a baby anymore but she’s—”

“I don’t care,” Rose cut him off, shaking her head vehemently. “She could be 97 years old and I’d still be happy you found her.” She grabbed him by the lapels and kissed the daylights out of him.

The Doctor laughed against her lips, melting into it and allowing the feeling of being with his wife again (really properly truly with her) fill his hearts once more. “Come on,” he said as they finally broke apart, taking her hand and leading her towards where he’d left the TARDIS.

“How did you do it?” she asked breathlessly.

“She called.”

“She what?”

“She called the TARDIS,” The Doctor repeated, shaking his head in indication that he didn’t know what to make of it either. “It wasn’t rerouted. She just… dialed the TARDIS’s number.”

“How did she get it?”

“She said a woman in a shop gave it to her.”

“A woman in a shop?”

“Said it was a helpline.”

“Well, that’s sort of true,” Rose tilted her head in consideration. “For Melody at least.”

The Doctor’s eyes softened. “How is she?”

“She’s wonderful. Just a normal, happy baby. No wars, no evil religious cults, no headless monks, or American aliens. Just… Melody.” Rose squeezed his hand as they came to the police box. “It’s quite refreshing, actually.”

The Doctor swallowed thickly at that. “Does that mean you want to… you want to stay here? On Earth?”

Rose shook her head quickly. “No, no. God, no. I’ve missed you so much, Doctor.” She wrapped her arms around his middle and pressed her ear again his chest. “I never want to leave you again.”

The Doctor held her tightly, sniffing as he fought back tears again. “Please don’t.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I know.”
“I had to.”

“I know.”

Eventually they pulled apart again, and The Doctor turned to open the doors. Rose sucked in a sharp breath as she walked inside. There was a ramp again, but it was metal this time. Everything was metal. A cold dark cobalt blue. “You’ve redecorated,” she noted quietly.

“It didn’t feel right,” he answered. “All those bright colors and lights. I couldn’t…”

Rose nodded in understanding. She’d been able to feel it the entire time they were apart. Their mutual sadness had been an overwhelming weight to bear day in and day out. Bond mates weren’t meant to be apart for so long—even if it was for the best.

All around them though the TARDIS sang as her Wolf was back, and in a second the console room snapped back to its usual orange-y, bubbly self, the ramp beneath their feet dissolving back into flat smooth flooring.

“Yeah,” Rose nodded, brightening up again along with the room. She ran up the stairs and did a few spins about the console. “That’s more you.” She gave The Doctor a tongue touched smile and he felt his knees go weak at the look he hadn’t seen in years.

“You’re so beautiful,” he breathed, hauling her into another passionate kiss.

Clara furrowed her brow as she woke up in bed, hauling herself to sitting as the day’s events came rushing back to her via a plate of jammie dodgers that had not been there previously.

She ran to the window and leaned out it. The blue box was still out there. And The Doctor sat outside it, typing away on her computer. And now a woman sat beside him.

“Hello?” she called hesitantly, and watched as they both jumped to standing and grinned up at her.

“Hello!” The Doctor exclaimed. “Are you all right?”

“I’m in bed,” she said instead of answering such a complicated question.

“Yes,” he nodded.

“I don't remember going,” she went on.

“No,” he agreed.

Clara’s eyes flickered over to the woman who was staring at her like she was the best thing she’s seen all day. “What did I miss?” she asked.

The Doctor rocked back on his heels. “Oh, quite a lot, actually.”

When he didn’t go on, Clara tried rewording the question. “What happened to me?”

“Don’t you remember?”

She looked down to her hands, pulling at the few strands of memory she could scrounge up. “I was scared… really scared. I didn't know where I was.”
“Do you know now?”

She looked around. “Yes.”

“Well then, you should go to sleep. Because you're safe now, I promise. Goodnight, Clara.”

She squinted down at the two of them. “Are you guarding me?”

They both shared a look instead of answering, so Clara huffed and pushed herself away from the window. A second later she was pulling open the door to stand in front of them on the school lawn. She squinted at the woman. “You… do I—do I know you?” she asked quietly, suddenly noticing at the odd sensation in the back of her head.

“I’m—Rose,” she answered stuntedly, sounding like she’d stopped herself from saying something else.

“Wait, The Doctor and Rose, I’ve heard that before.” Clara bit her lip and looked down to her feet. “It was some old story kids used to tell. In…” she racked her brain as she tried to remember which of the many places she’s lived that she’d heard that story. “Victorian England,” she finally settled on, though she was sure she must have heard it somewhere else as well.

“Victorian England?” The Doctor repeated.

Her head snapped back up. “Sorry, I sound mad.”

“No, you don’t,” Rose told her, sounding so sincere Clara was almost inclined to believe her.

She shook her head confusedly. “What?”

Rose took a small step forward. “You don’t sound mad. You sound perfectly sane to me,” she assured her and then gave a shy smile. “Children like to tell stories about us from time to time.”

“So… you’re telling me you’re characters from a children’s story?”

Rose shrugged slightly and turned to The Doctor for support. “Klariztelme,” he said, and Clara stiffened as the word echoed through her mind, sending shivers down her spine and raising goose flesh down her arms. “It means clarity amongst chaos.”

“I don’t—” she started, she had tears in her eyes, but she wasn’t sure why.

“We’re your parents, Clara,” Rose whispered, and Clara knew intrinsically that it was true despite it being impossible.

She shook her head vehemently. “You, you can’t be,” she argued on impulse, and then changed her mind. It was useless, arguing about something that she was already convinced of. It shouldn’t have felt right, but it did. “Where have you been?” she asked instead, not meaning for it to sound like she was begging.

“We had to hide you,” The Doctor answered, using the plural before Rose could try to take the blame.

“When you were born. There were… people who wanted to take you. I had to scatter your timeline and keep it hidden—even from us,” Rose went on.

“We’ve been looking for you for years, Clara,” he finished.
Clara sniffed and was mad at herself as she felt the tears rolling down her cheeks. “I was so confused! I never had any idea why—” she cut herself off on a sob, losing her fight almost instantly, and instead ran into their arms.

The three of them cried as they held each other, until eventually Clara pulled back. “What—I mean, I still don’t—”

“Sit down,” The Doctor said, pulling around a chair. “We’ll explain everything.”

“So I’m not human?” Clara asked as they finished what appeared to be a very truncated version of their life story that still somehow managed to take half an hour.

“You’re a little human,” The Doctor corrected.

“Okay…” Clara was surprised with herself at how well she was taking this. “What I don’t understand is why I stopped. If I was supposed to be hidden or whatever, why did I stay here for so long?”

“That’s a good question,” The Doctor praised her. “My best guess is Rose. It was Bad Wolf that kept shifting you, it likely sensed that Rose was near, and therefore deemed this the safest place it could find.”

He started glancing back to the laptop again, and Clara caught the movement. “All right so, life altering moment aside, what just happened? What was that… thing?”

The Doctor took a deep breath and clicked on the wifi button. A whole list of alien characters promising password-free wifi appeared. “You said it earlier. There’s something in the wifi.”

“Oh…”

“This whole world is swimming in wifi. We’re living in a wifi soup.” He sat forward. “Suppose something got inside it. Suppose there was something living in the wifi, harvesting human minds. Extracting them. Imagine that. Human souls trapped like flies in the world wide web. Stuck forever, crying out for help.”

Clara leaned forward so that her chin rested in her palm. “Isn’t that basically Twitter?” she quipped, earning laughs from both her parents.

“A child after my own heart,” The Doctor gushed.

Rose rolled her eyes, and caught something in her peripheral. “A computer can hack another computer…” she started slowly. “So maybe a living sentient computer… maybe that could hack people. Edit them… Rewrite them.”

“Why would you say that?” Clara asked.

“Clara,” Rose stood up slowly. “I’m going to need you to come here, quickly.” She held her hand out, and it must have been the urgency in her voice that made Clara listen.

She rushed over to her mother’s side and allowed her to stand in front of her. All around them the lights from nearby houses were switching on. “What is it? What’s happening. Is the wifi switching on all the lights?”
“No, the people are switching on the lights,” The Doctor answered. “The wifi is switching on the people.”

In the distance a man stood very still near the lamp post. His head turned around just as the fake girl’s had, revealing its hollowed out back.

Clara watched, peeking out from around her mother’s hip. “What is that thing?”

“A walking base station,” her father answered, backing up so that he was shielding her further. “You saw one earlier.”

“I saw a little girl. The one from my book.”

“It must have taken an image from your subconscious, and thrown it back at you,” he spoke very quickly, like he was coming up with the explanations as he was saying them, and waiting until something clicked. “Ah! Active camouflage. They could be everywhere.”

Clara tugged on his jacket and pulled on the hand that still held hers to make them turn. All the lights on the rest of the street were turning off, while the ones immediately surrounding them continued to flip on. “What’s going on? Our lights are on and everyone else’s off. Why?”

The Doctor swallowed. “We must be one hell of a target right now,” he muttered before grabbing both of their hands and shoving them into the TARDIS.

Clara’s feet ground to a halt only a few steps inside, letting her hands slip from theirs as they ran up the stairs and she stood frozen in place, staring wide-eyed at the interior of the police box. “It’s…” she breathed out.

“Oh, did we forget to mention…?” Rose asked, glancing over to her as the both of them spun around each other in a weird sort of dance about the center console.

“It’s bigger on the inside,” Clara finally managed to get out, locking eyes with her mother. “Bigger on the inside… actually bigger…”

“We said the box was a spaceship!” The Doctor called in defense from around the cloister bell.

“You didn’t say it was another dimension!” Clara argued back.

The Doctor scoffed. “It was implied!”

“Okay,” Clara started, finally managing to unstick her feet and join her parents on the glass floor a few steps above her. ‘Rule of thumb, in case you ever have to explain your life to someone again: ‘bigger on the inside’ is never implied. It’s not a thing. Not to humans.”

“You’re not human,” he shot back, smirking as he raised his brows in a cheeky sort of way before pulling another lever and running to another side of the console to spin a dial. Then there was a large thump and they all jerked forward slightly in order to catch their balance.

“What was that?”

Rose grinned brightly at her. “We’ve landed.”

“Where?”

“Breakfast.”
“Sorry?”

Rose tilted her head. “We mentioned the time travel part, surely?”

*Oh yeah.* Clara blinked slowly as she attempted to process the onslaught of information she’d received in the last 45 minutes since she’d woken up from her impromptu kip. “Why breakfast?”

“I’m starved, aren’t you?” Rose grinned and pulled her by the hand out the door with The Doctor following close behind. Nearby a random tourist took photo of the three of them coming out of the police box, and Clara distantly wondered what the TARDIS looked like when it landed, and if she looked like that when she landed too.

“I want chips,” Rose went on, pulling her out of her thoughts.

“Chips aren’t breakfast,” Clara protested as she followed them through the streets of South Bank.

The Doctor laughed at that. “What about beans, are beans breakfast?”

“Well sure,” she answered, squinting up at him.

“Americans would disagree.” He winked down at her mischievously, and beside her Rose giggled as she laced her fingers through her husband’s, skipping for a few paces even as she kept both their hands firmly in hers.

They passed an old lady who enthused, “Oh, what a lovely family!” to her husband beside her, and Rose and The Doctor grinned even more brilliantly than before as they nodded to the couple.

It hit Clara then that she should be freaking out. That she should be pulling her hand away and standing her ground, demanding more thorough answers and making them work for her forgiveness. And for a few seconds she tried very hard to will herself to do just that but… it didn’t feel right.

Well actually, it *did* feel right. This. Flouncing through the streets of London with her parents who she only met less than an hour ago, chasing after evil alien wifi. It was all absolutely completely mad, but it… made sense?

Her whole life hadn’t made sense and now suddenly… *it did.*

Clara processed all this as they led her up to a little roof top cafe (the chippies were shut apparently) and claimed a small table out on a terrace overlooking Saint Paul’s Cathedral dome, and the busy London streets below them. The Doctor immediately pulled out her old dingey laptop and started typing rapidly, Rose looking over his shoulder and occasionally muttering suggestions.

“So,” the eleven-year-old finally found her voice again. “if we can travel anywhere in time and space, why did we travel to the morning. What’s the point in that?”

“Whoever's after us spent the whole night looking for us,” her father answered. “Are you tired?”

“Yes,” Clara answered honestly.

The Doctor did a double take. “What?” then, “Well, then imagine how they feel. They came the long way round…” He said all this while still typing, and he glanced back to the monitor. “They’ve got to be close. Definitely London going by the signal distribution. I can hack the lowest level of their operating system but I can't establish a physical location. The security's too good.” He sat back with an exaggerated huff, closing the laptop.
She contemplated them for a moment, screwing her face to the side as she did, trying to remember the stories she’d heard about them so long ago (centuries ago, really). “So, what happens if you do find them? What happens then?”

The Doctor shrugged. “I don't know. I can't tell the future; I just work there.”

“You don’t have a plan?” She asked, though it didn’t actually surprise her all that much. They seemed like the type to just impulsively do—the last eleven years of her life was proof enough of that, and they weren’t even there for it.

“Oh, you know what I always say about plans,” he replied flippantly.

“What?”

He smirked, “I don't have one.”

Clara sat back in her chair and folded her arms. “People always have plans.”

Rose tilted her head at that. “What people?”

“I don’t know… people. People-people.” Her parents both gave her bemused smirks and she pursed her lips at the twin looks. She sat forward suddenly and pulled her laptop towards her. “Gimme.”

The Doctor grabbed it back. “Sorry, what?”

“You need to know where they physically are. Their exact location.”

“Yes.”

She nodded determinedly and pulled the computer out of his grasp. “I can do it.”

“Oi, hang on! I need that!”

But Clara was already getting to work. “You’ve hacked the lower operating system, yeah? I'll have their physical location in under five minutes. I have insane hacking skills.”

“You couldn’t find the internet a few hours ago,” he sputtered as he watched her.

Clara snorted. “That was a front. I just wanted someone to take pity on me and come fix the thing, which…” she pulled her chin back and lifted her hands up slowly as she suddenly realised it had been a full five minutes and her laptop hadn’t crashed. “You did. When did you do that? What did you do?”

“I sonicked it.”

“You what now?”

“Nevermind that.” Rose interrupted. “How are you so good with computers? Didn’t you say you spent a lot of time in the 20th century?”

Clara shrugged noncommittally. “Also in the 30th. I pick things up quickly. I built this.” She patted the top of her laptop’s screen.

“You built it?” The Doctor repeated.
“Well, I broke it. But then fixed it better.”

Her father grinned brightly—proudly—at that while her mother shook her head in mock-disdain. “Oh no, there’s two of them now. I’ll never have a proper toaster again.”

Clara’s eyes lit up. “Oh you should see my toaster!” she exclaimed happily. “I built it out of my roommate’s hair dryer, some spoons, and a toothbrush!”

“Wasn’t she upset?” Rose asked incredulously.

“Who?”

“Your roommate?”

“Oh well… yeah, I guess at first. But now she has toast.”

Rose rolled her eyes as The Doctor laughed merrily again. She had a smile on her lips though as she muttered something about needing coffee and disappeared back through the doors leading to the register.

The Doctor watched her for a few moments as her fingers continued on in a blur across the keyboard. “The security is absolute,” he warned her.

“It's never about the security, it's about the people,” she replied easily, like she’d said that before. He chewed on that for a while, wondering at what she’s been through. Wondering how he could ask. She glanced back up to him. “Why do you keep looking at me like that?”

“Sorry,” he shook his head, looking back down to the table. “No, it's nothing… It’s just…” he looked back up to her. “I'm glad. That you’re here. And safe. That we found you.”

She felt her face go warm. “Yeah?”

He nodded.

“Me too.”

“Three more cappuccinos over there, please.” Rose smiled brightly at the barista as she ordered.

“One moment, madam,” he said in a thick Italian accent, pulling down the cups as he did.

Rose nodded and turned her attention to the array of bake goods lined out in front of her, and didn’t notice the slight flicker of light and zap of energy just out of her line of sight.

“You realise you haven't the slightest chance of saving your little friend,” the barista said suddenly in a fine british accent, his posture rigid.

Rose squinted at him. “Sorry?” she asked, as he went back to preparing the coffees.

“I said one moment, madam,” the Italian accent was back, and then, it was gone again with another flicker of light. “I said, there's not the slightest chance of saving your little friend. And don't annoy the old man. He isn't, in fact, speaking.”

The man snapped back and Rose heard a small zap behind her. She turned to see the waitress looking at her intently now. “I'm speaking. Just using whatever's to hand… Oh, she's rather pretty,
isn't she? Do you like her? I can make her like you too if you want.”

The light flickered just as Rose was leaning into the woman, and she pulled her chin back with a startled look. “You all right, ma’am?” she asked, her accent now cockney.

Rose took a step back. “Er, yes. Yes. Fine,” she stuttered out before turning on her heel and running out to where The Doctor and Clara were still sitting.

“You okay?” her husband asked, furrowing his brow worriedly.

She cleared her throat. “Yeah… um, yes. Fine. How are… things?”

“Setting up stuff,” Clara replied, still typing quickly. “Need a username…”

The Doctor smirked, “Learning fast.”

Rose turned away from them as she was asking how to spell her Gallifreyan name, and the waitress approached her again.

“Now I want you to take a look around. Go on, have a little stroll, and see how impossible your situation is. Go on, take a look. I do love showing off.”

She flickered as Rose took a step forward, and then in front of her a little girl holding a tablet spoke well beyond her years.

“Just let me show you what control of the wifi can do for you. Stop!”

Everyone in the coffee shop froze, and the computer codes that were controlling them flashed around their persons.

Rose squinted at the girl. “I saw what you can do last night.”

“And clear!” she ordered, and everyone left the shop, including the little girl.

The telly flickered on and the newswoman spoke directly to Rose. “We can hack anyone in the wifi once they've been exposed long enough.”

Rose bit her lip. “So there's one of your walking base stations here, somewhere close…”

“There's always someone close. We've released thousands into the world,” the television woman replied. “They home in on the wifi like rats sniffing cheese.”

Rose took a step forward, allowing her eyes to glow golden. “I don't know who you are or why you're doing this, but the people of this world will not be harmed. They will not be—”

“The people of this world are in no danger whatsoever,” the woman cut her off, apparently unaffected by Rose’s apparent power. “My client requires a steady diet of living human minds. Healthy, free-range, human minds. He loves and cares for humanity. In fact, he can't get enough of it.”


“It's life,” she corrected mildly. “The farmer tends his flock like a loving parent. The abattoir is not a contradiction. No one loves cattle more than Burger King.”
“This ends,” Rose told her more so than she threatened. “I'm going to end this today.”

The woman smirked. “How? You don't even know where we are.”

“Who's doing this? Who is your client? Huh? Answer me!” Rose shouted at the telly, but it turned off. She ran back out to her family.

But they were both laid unmoving across the table, a spoon-head version of herself standing over them.

Their bodies were clearly empty, but Rose could still feel them in her head. For Clara it was a faint but insistent feeling or terror, but from The Doctor she received a clear message: ‘Save her.’

On Clara’s laptop the location of her target sat open on a Google Maps tab: the Shard.

Rose ran back to the TARDIS, and a minute later was zipping down the A3 on a Triumph Bonneville Scrambler motorbike.

She came to a halt on St. Thomas Street as a man holding a bag of chips stepped directly into her bike’s path. “Really, dear. A motorbike? Hardly seems like you,” he commented in a tone and accent that definitely wasn’t his own.

Rose pulled at the handles. “I rode this in the antigrav Olympics, 2074. I got the bronze.”

“The building is in lock-down. I'm afraid you're not coming in.”

She smirked. “Did you even hear the word antigrav?” she quipped, and then kicked back into gear, driving straight for the Shard and not slowing down as she came within a few metres of it.

She pressed the big run button on the engine and felt gravity bend around her. She drove the bike up the side of the building.

She yanked the screwdriver she’d nicked from her husband’s pocket before leaving and aimed it at the window to the 65th floor, shattering it in one fell swoop and flipping into the office, the bike landing on top of her—though she didn’t feel it.

A woman walked rather calmly into the destroyed room—Ms Kizlet, presumably, as that was what the nameplate on the desk read—and addressed Rose with raised brows. “Do come in,” she said dryly.

Rose clenched her jaw. “Download them.”

Ms Kinzlet smiled slightly as she glanced towards the broken window. “Sorry about the draught.”

“Download them back into their bodies right now,” she demanded.

She shook her head amusedly. “I can’t.”

“Yes, you can.”

“They’re a fully integrated part of the data cloud, now.” She shrugged noncommittally. “They can’t be separated.”

Rose didn’t miss a beat. “Then download the entire cloud. Everyone you've trapped in there.”
She raised her brows. “You realise what would happen?”

“Yes, those with bodies to go home to would be free.”

“A tiny number,” Ms Kizlet scoffed. “Most would simply die.”

Rose took a step forward. “They'd be released from a living hell,” she corrected. “It's the best you can do for them, so give the order.”

She wasn’t backing down, however. “And why would I do that?”

Rose started reaching for the strap around the bike helmet she still had. “Because I'm going to motivate you,” she said cleverly.

“You silly little girl,” Ms Kizlet laughed. “Why did you even come here? Whatever for?”

“I didn't.”

She paused. “What?”

Rose smirked. “I'm still in the cafe,” she told her, beginning to remove the helmet. “I'm finishing my coffee. Lovely spot. You hack people, but me? I'm old-fashioned. I hack technology.”

Back on the rooftop terrace Rose typed another command into her daughter’s laptop as she spoke. “Here's your motivation,” she said, and on the 65th floor of the Shard the walking base-station of herself removed her helmet, turned its head, and downloaded Ms Kizlet into the cloud.

Outside the office she could here the screen now housing the image of Ms Kizlet screaming orders at her employees. “Put me back. Put me back! Download me at once! That is an order. That is an order!”

One of the men shook his head. “But she's fully integrated now. We'll have to download the entire cloud. We can't do that…”

“No, we can't,” another agreed, clearly his superior.

Rose, hearing this, ordered the base station to pick up Ms Kizlet’s discarded tablet and find the second man’s data profile. She turned his ‘obedience’ level all the way up and…

“Do what she says,” he ordered the younger man.

Clara woke up in her bed.

She ran to the window and saw the box, still sitting there on the front lawn. She pressed her lips together and rocked back on her heels, glancing to the card that the woman at the shop had given her. She picked it up curiously. Below the number there was an address.

She squinted as she tapped the card contemplatively against her palm, and a second later she made up her mind. Shoving on her trainers, she tiptoed quietly down the stairs, out the door, past the TARDIS, and towards the direction of the mysterious address.

Clara took a deep breath before knocking on the police-box-blue door in front of her, and her knee shook anxiously as she heard the voices and shuffling coming from the other side. “Coming!” a Scottish accent called, and then in a flash of red the ginger woman from the shop was standing in
front of her.

She had to strain her neck slightly to look up at her. She was hardly even 140cm after all, and this woman was nothing but legs. “You—” she stuttered out, unsure of where to start.

“Ah,” she said, grinning brightly down at her. “I was right wasn’t I? I knew I was, of course I was.”

“How did you know?” Clara asked. “Who I am, I mean. I didn’t even know.”

She stuck her hand out. “My name’s Amy,” she finally answered Clara’s question from this morning. “I’m a Time Lord, and I’m your sister.”

Clara’s eyes widened at that. “How…”?

Amy smirked and opened the door wider, gesturing her inside with a tip of her head. “Come on, I’ll explain. I know Mum and Dad have a tendency to skip over things.”

“They forgot it was bigger on the inside,” Clara informed her dryly as she stepped inside, earning a laugh from her older sister.

Chapter End Notes

I think this chapter might have read a little weird, but I didn't want Clara's introduction as their daughter to be a plot twist or a reveal like it was for Amy. Because technically if this story existed in a vacuum, she's just a new character. It's not a twist that they found their daughter, y'know?

That being said: a lot of you guessed that this is what I was gonna do! I'm hoping maybe my execution was still a bit of a surprise, but OH MY GOODNESS it was so hard to keep my mouth shut when so many comments were like "Clara's gonna be their daughter isn't she?" Like YES, OBVIOUSLY. What else would I do with her? We gotta stick with that family motif y'know.

ALSO, a number of you have reached out to me this last month, and I want you to know that that it totally okay and I love it and you're completely justified in asking me what is going on! I'm really sorry I haven't had much time this semester! If you're ever really missing MBF feel free to message me! I'm always down for discussion of this universe, and odds are you'll inspire me to write a little something for Between the Madness, if not also to neglect my school work in order to finish the next chapter.

Good news though: Spring break is coming up and airplanes and my tiny boring town means writing time! ;)

Anyway, as always your comments mean the world to me ❤️❤️
Rose and The Doctor sat together in the library, the TARDIS now parked outside the Pond’s residence as Clara acquainted herself with her newly found sister, brother-in-law, and niece before flying off into time and space with her newly found parents. The rest of their family didn’t know they were out there yet, and they were taking the time to talk.

It wasn’t like they hadn’t spoken in the last two years, tied as they were to one another. They were one. Forever. Even with light years between them, they were never far from one another. Rose was a constant presence in The Doctor’s mind and hearts, and he in hers. They hadn’t been separated, they’d just led different lives for a bit. For both of their sakes. It was for the best, and they knew that.

“I’d stay here on Earth, y’know,” The Doctor started suddenly, looking at her out of the corner of his eye. “If that’s what you wanted. I’d get a house with a garden and a mortgage and a proper job and all of it.”

Rose squinted at him. It wasn’t like it was the first time he had offered that. Admittedly, the idea was quaint—nice in a weird sort of way. Like a dream she’d had when she was little but not anymore. “That’s not what I want,” she told him honestly. “I love our life, Doctor, you know that. I wouldn’t change it or you or any of it for anything.”

“It’s dangerous,” he said, shaking his head. “We’ve lost so much, Rose...”

She adjusted herself so that she could look at him more fully. He wouldn’t meet her eye though, so gently she prodded him telepathically, placing a hand on his cheek until he looked at her. “Is that what you want?” she asked quietly. “To stay on Earth? With a house and a mortgage and a proper job?”

“Would that not be better? For you and Clara—and even Amy and Rory and little Melody... A safe life. Away from all the bad in the universe.”

“Doctor,” Rose admonished. “You can’t escape all the bad. Bad things just happen; they do to everybody. There’s women who have 3 stillbirths in a row and mum’s who’ve had their children cruelly taken from them. Terrible people with evil schemes exist everywhere—even Earth.”

“We’d be less likely though,” he argued.

“I think you and I both know that’s not true. Jeopardy friendly, remember? Even in the last two years I ran into more than a few alien invasions—“ Rose broke herself off as she remembered the encounter with Craig and the Cybermen. “And even just shite human beings,” she added, recalling a particularly harrowing experience late one night with a crying woman outside a Tesco’s.
She sighed as he remained silent. “Besides, I happen to quite like our home.” She glanced up the high ceilings of the library as the TARDIS dinged appreciatively, sending her love to both of them—like a warm blanket being draped across their shoulders. “And maybe we don’t technically have a back garden, but we’ve got the whole of time and space at our doorstep... And a room with a grass and a garden and artificial sky if it really starts to bother you.”

The Doctor huffed out a laugh at that and she prodded him in the ribs playfully. “You don’t really wanna give this up. I know you don’t.” She tapped the side of his head for emphasis.

“I want to keep you safe,” he said quietly. “I hate that I’ve hurt you, Rose. This life with me. I selfishly took you and your light and I—“

“Stop,” Rose cut him off. Suddenly she felt twenty-three again, convincing him that the weight of the universe was not his alone to bare. That everything bad that ever happened was not on him. That she loved him. That he hadn’t tricked her with stars and planets. That she loved him—and everything that meant.

She took his hand and projected the full force of her love for him, and their life, across their bond. He sucked in a breath as he felt the true raw extensive power of it. Unbidden, flashes of their life played before him. Every smile, every laugh, every victory, every time her heart squeezed with joy, seized with the love and happiness she felt.

Grateful. She was grateful (of all things) for him, and for the life that he’s given her.

“I know,” Rose spoke quietly, drawing Gallifreyan characters on the back of his hand that he couldn’t quite make out through the fog in his brain. “I know it’s been difficult. Losing three babies in a row is something that I wouldn’t wish on our worst enemies. But... we still have two of them. Two beautiful brilliant daughters, Doctor, and that’s amazing. There have been parents who weren’t so lucky. Who don’t get their children back after they were taken.”

Lucky. The Doctor turned the word over in his head, scoffing at first, but reconsidering as he looked at her again, taking in her soft profile, and the dim golden glow that always seemed to surround her.

Her eyes flickered up to meet his again, and he was taken aback slightly by beautiful she was. Truly, no memory or photograph, or telepathic connection could really compare to the breathtaking sight of her, really in front of him, in his arms.

“If you really want to take an extended break from traveling, we can,” she said, being sure to project her sincerity as she did. “We’re a team in this. We’ll do whatever’s best.”

The TARDIS nudged then softly, a gentle reminder that she would keep them safe, though there’s was perhaps a bit of offense there as well.

Finally, he conceded. “You’re happy?”

“Doctor, my happiness is you.”

He leaned down to kiss her at that, flooding the bond with his agreement, Rose had been his light in the darkness for so long. His whole world. His everything. His better half. The person who made him better. For centuries he’s been constantly breath taken by her, and that she chose him—loved him. That he got to spend every second of his very long life with her.

Rose gasped against his mouth and let out a small giggle as they pulled apart and he tried to chase her lips.
“Oi!” he complained, jutting his lip out in a pout before suddenly lunging forward to press her into the sofa.

Rose let out a small squeak in surprise that quickly turned in a hum of pleasure as he began peppering her with kisses, his fingers toying with the edge of her shirt before slowly inching upwards, fingers dancing gracefully across her skin.

He whispered Gallifreyan in between kisses and in her mind. Rose returned the words instinctively.

‘Ja taimlaov’e`te.’

…

Clara curled into her mother’s side as they laid in her new bedroom aboard the TARDIS. Already the ship was starting to feel like home. She fit so naturally into her parents lives—like she was always meant to be there (she was), and since her sister had explained (most) everything to her, Clara now loved asking them for more at every chance she could get.

“Which of Dad’s faces do I look most like?”

Rose smirked and pulled back slightly, putting on a show of examining her daughter’s face carefully, to which Clara played along happily, turning her face from side to side and making silly faces.

“His last one,” she finally settled on.

“Do you have a picture?”

She sighed and pulled out of her mobile with its infinite range and infinite photo storage. It took her a while, but eventually she found his photograph and showed it to her.

Clara giggled at the image. “That’s a big coat.”

“Janis Joplin gave him that coat!” Rose defended her husband’s last regeneration’s fashion sense (not like the current one had much better—but that was beside the point), though she was laughing along with Clara as she did.

Their giggles died down eventually and Clara twisted her hand in her mum’s shirt as she thought. “I’m scared,” she finally admitted.

Rose pulled her closer, her brow furrowing and lip sticking out just slightly. “Of what, dear?”

“Of getting lost.”

She squeezed her arm. “How do you mean?”

Clara sighed and shifted so that she was looking up to her from her place on her stomach. “I was lost for so long. I’m afraid… I’m afraid it’s gonna happen again. That I’ll wake up in Papua New Guinea or whatever and all of this will be gone again. That you won’t be able to find me.”

“Oh Klariztelme,” she ran her hand down Clara’s cheek, pushing the stray hairs out of her face and tucking them behind her small ear. “It doesn't matter where you are,” she told her, “in the jungle or the desert or on the moon. However lost you may feel, you'll never truly be lost. Not really. Because I will always be here, and I will always come and find you. Every single time.”
Clara twisted her mouth to the side, still unsure, so Rose sat up, adjusting them so that they were facing one another, and held out her hand. Clara took it.

A second later she felt a warm feeling envelop her, almost as if someone were laying a blanket across her shoulders. She gasped slightly and her mother smiled.

“Open your mind,” she instructed, and Clara screwed her eyes shut in concentration, holding her breath as she attempted to do so without really knowing how. “Breathe,” Rose went on guiding her once she realised. “Find that light right on the edge of your consciousness and focus on it.”

It took the young telepath a few minutes to do it, but eventually she felt her mother enter her mind, trailing golden dust in her wake. She projected the image of them standing hand-in-hand in her mindscape, and Clara let out a small breath as she could feel it. As if it was all really happening.

“That's because it is really happening,' Rose spoke in her mind, and despite her words Clara still found herself amazed that she could hear it.

In front of them the timelines exploded into brilliant colour. Rose’s pink and yellow lines twisted tightly together with The Doctor’s dark blue and burnt orange. Dancing around them Amy’s fiery red and orange mingled with with softer greens and silvers that were Rory’s. Melody as well flowed along with lavender and copper. And among them was Clara’s timeline, light blue and bright cherry red, shining brilliantly.

‘We are infinite,’ Rose whispered. ‘And we are connected. You can never be lost, my little star, for you are never truly alone.’

Clara threw herself into her mother’s arms and her bedroom came back into focus. “Thank you,” she said.

“Don’t be afraid,” Rose said as she held her tightly. “I promise you I’ll keep you safe.”

A few weeks had passed since her sister had explained everything (and more) to her, but still Clara seemed to always be bursting with questions.

“So what's it made of, time?” she asked suddenly, her feet dangling off the jump start nearly a foot off the ground as they drifted through the time vortex. “I mean, if we can just rotor through it, it's got to be made of stuff, like jam's made of strawberries. So what's it made of?”

The Doctor squinted at her. “Well, not strawberries… No. No, no, no. That would be unacceptable.”

Clara grinned, seemingly unphased by the fact that she hadn’t actually gotten an answer—a product, Rose assumed, of having a curious life. “Let’s have an adventure then! We can go anywhere!”

The Doctor squinted at her. “Well, not strawberries… No. No, no, no. That would be unacceptable.”

Clara grinned, seemingly unphased by the fact that she hadn’t actually gotten an answer—a product, Rose assumed, of having a curious life. “Let’s have an adventure then! We can go anywhere!”

“Within reason,” he cut in, and then tilted his head as Rose pulled a face at him. “Well, I say reason…”

Rose pushed herself off the railing to let her hands hover over the controls. “So, where do you want to go, eh? What do you want to see?”

Clara’s eyes widened. “You know when someone asks you what's your favourite book and straight away you forget every single book you've ever read”
“Yes, definitely,” Rose answered at the same time The Doctor replied, “No, totally not.”

She giggled at her ridiculous parents. “Let’s just go, y’know? Hasn’t this thing got a randomiser?”

The lights flashed weirdly at that and Clara looked to her mum for answers. “She’s not a thing, dear, do apologise.”

“Sorry,” Clara said sheepishly, looking up to the ceiling, and received what sounded like rather begrudging acceptance from the ship. She furrowed her brow, but her parents didn’t seem to notice as they were apparently caught up in their own conversation.

‘Are you sure?’ The Doctor asked her, unbeknownst to Clara.

Rose shrugged. ‘I really think I’m okay. The break and that whole saving-the-world bit kinda put me back on track, like I said.’

‘But with Clara—’

‘I trust us, Doctor.’ She tilted her head. ‘Do you?’

He smirked, because it was impossible for him not to believe in her. ‘Of course.’

Rose gave him that brilliant tongue touched smile and The Doctor was amazed that he found himself still standing when it was gone. “Let’s go then!” she said out loud, and The Doctor grinned as he pulled the dematerialisation lever.

When they landed Clara ran to the door, but Rose caught her last second before she could open it. “Hold on,” she said, winking to The Doctor as she did, and moved to cover their daughter’s eyes with her hands. “It’s better this way I promise.”

The Doctor laughed at their twin smiles and pushed open the door, speaking as they stepped carefully out. “Can you feel the light on your eyelids? That is the light of an alien sun.”

Clara rolled her eyes even though they couldn’t see them. “Yeah, I figured. Not the first trip out.”

Rose giggled. “It’s your first time seeing this,” she assured her. “Okay. Are you ready?”

“Yes,” she answered quickly, restlessly, and a second later Rose removed her hands, and she was blinking in the light of a red sun as the stood on one of the many asteroids circling it.

“Welcome to the Rings of Akhaten,” her father said.

“t’s…” she let out breathlessly, finding herself rather unusually lost for words. She glanced down at her feet, adrift in space, and out into the fantastical image surrounding her. Her life was like a fairy tale.

“It is,” her dad nodded in agreement to her unfinished exclamation of wonder and amazement. “It so completely is.” He held up his finger, “But wait, there’s more.”

She bounced on her toes excitedly. “More what?”

“Wait, wait, wait.” He consulted his wrist watch. “In about five, four, three, two…”

The asteroids in front of them shifted to reveal a golden pyramid, glinting in the light of the sun it revolved around.
“What is it?”


Clara raised a suspicious brow. “The who of what now?”

He put his arm around her. “Seven worlds orbiting the same star. All of them sharing a belief that life in the universe originated here, on that planet,” he nodded to it.

“All life?”

“In the universe.”

She looked between her parents, small brow furrowed. “Did it?”

“Well,” The Doctor winked at Rose, making her blush. “It's what they believe. It's a nice story. Clara filed that away in her ‘To Ask Amy About Later’ file. “Can we see it?” she asked instead excitedly as her eyes lit up in anticipation. “Up close?”

They pulled her back into the ship and after only a short bump later she opened the doors to find herself in the middle of a bustling marketplace. Aliens of all sorts wandered in between the kiosks of distinctly non-earth-like wares. People of all different hues, with four arms and six eyes; aliens with no hair and aliens that were nothing but hair. Clara could count on one hand the number of humanoids she spotted, and three of them were her and her parents.

“Where are they all from?” she asked breathlessly, spinning in a small circle.

“Oh, you know, the local system, mostly,” her father answered vaguely, already distracted by the vendors.

“But what do I call them?” she pressed, tugging on her mum’s shirt as he was already in conversation with a greyish creature selling exotic fruits.

“Well, let's see…” Rose took her hand as she guided her through the crowded bazaar, using her other to point out the different species as they passed them. “There go some Panbabylonians. A Lugal-Irra-Kush. Some Lucanians. A Hoolooovoo. Qom VoTivig—”

“You’re making this all up aren’t you?” Clara interrupted, looking up to her suspiciously.

Rose laughed in surprise at that and shook her head. “I’m not! Cross my heart!”

The Doctor rejoined them then, tossing an arm around his wife (fruitless, apparently a poor haggler), grinning happily. “Do you know, I forget how much I like it here!” he told them. “We should come here more often.”

Clara stared up at them as Rose agreed. “You've been here before?”

Her father raised a brow at her. “Centuries old, remember?”

“Right,” she rocked back on her heels as she was forced to reprocess that information. Before she could think of another response, however, he was hauling them towards yet another fruit vendor, this one appearing much friendlier than the last.

He hands over some random coins he apparently just had handy in his pockets, and pulled out the
sonic screwdriver to scan the blue-glowing kiwi-esque food. “Right, non-toxic, non-hallucinogenic. High in free radicals and low in other stuff, I shouldn't wonder…” he took a bite, tilted his head, considering, and handed it over to his daughter to try.

Clara does, but wrinkles her nose at the sour juices, shaking her head.

“No?” He shrugs and takes another bite.

“So, why is everyone here?” Clara asked as they continued on, assuming the market couldn’t always be this busy.

“For the Festival of Offerings!” The Doctor answered excitedly, practically bouncing up and down as he explained. “Takes place every thousand years or so, when the rings align. It's quite a big thing, locally, like Pancake Tuesday.”

Clara giggled and let her hand fall from her mother’s as she got distracted by a dog-like woman renting out futuristic mopeds, wondering distantly how anyone could manage to drive one through a crowd this size.

They continue standing next to her, their attention elsewhere, and Clara turned just in time to see a blonde girl about her age crash into her shoulder, not taking the time to apologise before rushing off. She looked terrified. Clara squinted after her curiously.

Two men and robes appeared quickly after, looking around as if in search of something, and Clara leaned in to hear them asking the random people in low voices, “Have you seen her, the Queen of Years?”

Her brow furrowed, and she spared only a second to glance up to her parents before impulsively deciding to run after the scared little girl.

She turned a corner into a storeroom, her pace slowing in the quiet dark space so unlike the bazaar just the other side of the cold metal walls. “Hello?” she called cautiously into the dark, her voice echoing.

Something banged loudly from the opposite corner she was squinting into, and Clara was ashamed to admit she jumped. Then the girl appeared.

“Hey,” she softened her voice as she willed her heart rate to go down, stepping forward cautiously. “Are you okay? … Are you lost?”

She pressed her lips, eyes still wide with fear, and she shook her head. “Hiding,” she corrected her quietly.

“Oh,” Clara nodded in understand and then seemed to realised she still actually didn’t. “Why?”

The blonde girl stared back at her. A light from a high up window fell upon her features, and Clara finally saw that while she looked human, her species was actually one that had thin raised pink lines—not unlike scars—that created a unique birthmark on her skin. “You don't know me?” she asked.

Clara shook her head. “Sorry. Actually not.”

“So why did you follow me then?”

The small Time Lord shrugged, not actually sure of the answer herself. Instinct, maybe? “To help,”
she finally settled on. “You looked lost.”

She looked at her as though the idea of a stranger wanting nothing but to help her was ludicrous. “I don’t believe you,” she said bluntly.

Clara shrugged, shaking her head and taking a small step forward. “I’ve got no idea who you might be. I’ve never been here before. I’ve never been anywhere like here before. You just looked like you needed help.”

“Really?”

“Really really.”

“Can you help me?”

Clara held her hands out to the side in a gesture she wasn’t sure was meant to convey anything in particular. Really, she was hoping she could find her parents again and that they’d know what to do. “That’s why I’m still here,” she settled on.

“I need to hide,” the girl whispered desperately.

Clara smirked because that she could do, but before she could answer three robed figures appeared in a cloud of black smoke behind them, and both the girls ran around the corner.

A rasping metallic voice called out menacingly, “Merry. Where are you, Merry?”

The little girl tensed and Clara put together that she’s Merry and they are what she is hiding from.

“I know the perfect box,” Clara whispered, taking Merry by the hand and leading them through the clutter of the storeroom, away from the horrible things making slow progress toward them.

They burst back out into the bazaar and Clara weaved them in and out of the much taller species until they reached the TARDIS.

“What’s this?” Merry asked as they came to a halt outside of the police box.

“A space-shippy thing,” Clara stumbled as she had no idea how to explain. “Timey, spacey.”

Merry curled her lip at it, looking completely unimpressed. “It’s teeny.”

“You wait.” Clara smirked, and then yanked on the doors, but tilted her head as they didn’t budge. She rattled the handle a few more times in frustration. “Oh, come on,” she muttered.

“What’s wrong?”

Clara fell back on her heels. “I don’t know,” she answered and then felt a weird sort of stubborn… aversion radiating from the ship. She crossed her arms and stared up at the TARDIS incredulously. “I don’t think it likes me!” she scoffed, and then beat against the door again. “Come on, let me in!”

The ship dinged angrily and Clara was about to shout back, but was kept from doing so as Merry ran around the other side of the TARDIS, disappearing just in time for the robed men from earlier to stalk past without spotting her. Clara went after her and found her sitting in the dirt with her back against the police box. She sat down next to her.

“So, what’s happening?” she started. “Is someone trying to hurt you?”
Merry shook her head immediately. “No. I'm just scared.”

“Of what?”

“Getting it wrong.”

“Okay…” Clara bit the inside of her cheek, trying to guess at what that was supposed to mean, but giving it up almost immediately. “Can you pretend like I'm totally a space alien and explain?”

“I'm Merry Gejelh,” she said as if that was an answer.

“Really not local. Sorry.”

Merry stared at her incredulously. “The Queen of Years?” Clara shook her head and Merry sighed before turning away and going on. “They chose me when I was a baby, the day the last Queen of Years died.”

“Okay…”

“I'm the vessel of our history. I know every chronicle, every poem, every legend, every song…”

“Every single one?” Clara interrupted, unable to help herself commenting. “Blimey. I hated history—and I lived through most of it.”

Merry was too caught up in her own distress to notice that that was actually an odd statement for an eleven year old child to make. “And now I have to sing a song in front of everyone. A special song. I have to sing it to a god. And I'm really scared.”

“It's like stage fright, but biblical,” Clara’s brain supplied rather unhelpfully. She looked down to her bent knees for a moment before starting slowly, “Well… everyone gets scared sometimes. But that doesn't mean we should let it stop us doing things.”

Merry just continued looking at her, so she went on. “Like… I was lost for a really long time. And now that I’m not lost I get really scared that I will be again. That I’m just gonna disappear and my parents won’t be able to find me again.”

“Where are they now?” Merry asked.

“Oh, they’ll find me in a bit,” Clara answered confidently, and Merry squinted at her curiously, asking silently how she could be so sure. “My mum, she showed me that I can’t get lost—not really. Not when she’ll always be with me, in here.” Clara tapped her heart even though it was a bit less accurate than if she’s tapped her temple, but she figured the sentiment was nicer.

“So you're not scared anymore?”

Clara snorted. “Oh I’m scared loads. Just the other day, I really thought my Aunt Donna was gonna flip after I spilled tea all over her carpet. Me and Ian and Mason tried to hide it for at least an hour before she caught sight of it. But I’m not scared of being lost anymore.” She turned so that she could face her more fully. “So, this special song. What are you scared of, exactly?”

Merry spoke quietly to her lap. “Getting it wrong. Making Grandfather angry…”

“And do you think you'll get it wrong?” Clara challenged. “Because I don't. I don't think you'll get it wrong. I think you, Merry Gejelh, will get it very very right.”

Merry flung her arms around Clara at that, and she let out a surprised laugh as she returned the
unexpected hug. It occurred to her that Merry must not have gotten much in the way of encouragement if that was all it took to boost her confidence.

“So,” Clara pulled back and held her hand out to her new friend. “What do you say? We do things even though they’re scary?”

Merry nodded, and hand-in-hand they walked out from behind the TARDIS. The red-robed men spotted their queen instantly, and rushed over to collect her, draping a white-flowered robe over her shoulders and leading her away. She glanced over her shoulder at Clara as they did, and Clara gave a little encouraging wave and smile.

Then her flustered parents ran up to her. “Clara!” Rose exclaimed, “Where have you been?”

“Just here,” Clara answered nonchalantly, not reading her parents expressions properly as she craned her neck around them to watch her friend disappear into the crowd. She looked back up to him once she was gone. “The TARDIS wouldn’t let me in.”

“She what?” The Doctor asked, perplexed.

“I don’t think she likes me.”

He scoffed. “That’s ridiculous. Of course she likes you—”

He was cut off as the TARDIS informed him that no, actually she was upset with the little girl.

“See!” Clara exclaimed, turning to glare at the ship. “It’s crazy.”

“ She, ” Rose corrected as she squinted at the police box. She didn’t look hurt or righteously angry like Clara would have expected—just confused. “She seemed fine with you up until now.”

“No she didn’t.” Clara crossed her arms in front of her. “It’s always dinging angrily at me.”

“ She,” The Doctor and Rose corrected again together, and Clara rolled her eyes.

“We’ll deal with this later,” her father eventually sighed, glancing down to his wristwatch and perking back up almost immediately. “It’s about to start!”

He grabbed their hands and lead them through the now mostly-empty bazaar as everyone was gathering in the amphitheatre set into the side of the the asteroid. The small family apologised quickly and profusely as they had to shuffle through a number of rows to find seats.

Merry was standing on a dias in the middle of the stage, facing out towards the pyramid they were orbiting around. She turned around and spotted Clara quickly, smiling slightly and laughing as Clara gave her a thumbs up. The Doctor and Rose both furrowed their brows at their daughter, and shared a curious look, but otherwise didn’t comment on the strange interaction.

The little queen turned around just in time for the sun to glint off golden tip of the monument, bathing her and light, and she began to sing along with the chorister in the temple.

Akhaten

Lay down my king

Sleep now eternal. Sleep, my precious king. Lay down

O god of Akhaten
“They’re singing to the Mummy in the Temple,” the Doctor explained at a whisper as he skimmed through the tourist’s pamphlet neither one of them had seen him pick up. “They call it the Old God. Sometimes Grandfather.”

“What are they singing?” Clara asked, unable to tear her eyes away from the queen.

“The Long Song. A lullaby without end to feed the Old God. Keep him asleep… It’s been going for millions of years, chorister handing over to chorister, generation after generation after generation.

O god of, O god of, O god of Akhaten
Sleep, my precious king.

All around them the congregation held up their hands in offering, each of them holding different objects in the palms of their hands. “What are they doing?” Clara asked.

“Those are offerings,” he answered. “Gifts of value. Mementoes to feed the Old God.”

Rings and papers, cups and vases, old shoes and hundreds of other memories all dissolved into sparkles. They all began singing with the chorister’s melody as Merry carried on with the harmony.

Then, the pyramid rumbled, and the music came to an abrupt stop.

The sun’s light fell through a jewel in the pyramid and suddenly Merry was being lifted off the ground in a sort of energy beam. Clara watched on in terror as she kicked uselessly at the light entrapping her.

“Okay, Okay, what's happening?” Clara asked frantically. “Is that supposed to happen?”

“Help!” Merry screamed, answering her question, but no one moved to save their queen, as the congregation all started either running away or praying.

“Is somebody going to do something?” Clara shouted, and turned to the nearest alien who was mumbling ancient prophecies. “Excuse me, is somebody going to help her?”

Then her mum and dad were taking her by the hand, pulling her out of the amphitheatre. “Hey!” Clara yanked her hand out of her mother’s grasp. “Why are we walking away? We can't just walk away. This is my fault! I talked her into doing this!”

Her father leaned down to eye level. “Listen carefully to this Clara, because it’s very important that you understand,” he said, taking her shoulders. “We don’t walk away. We never walk away. That’s not what we do.”

She stiffened slightly in his grasp as those words hit her, resonating somewhere deep inside her bones. ‘We,’ he said—meaning her and them and Amy. The last of the Time Lords. She’s inherited the heavy heirloom of a legacy that spanned across all of time of space—from the very beginning of time and up until the very end of it.

Her stomach twisted as she swallowed thickly and nodded, eyes wide as she reached up to squeeze his hand.

He gave her a regretful look before standing up and pulling her once more through the bazaar, back towards the dog-like alien woman renting out mopeds.
The Doctor growled angrily as he dug through his bigger-on-the-inside pockets but still came up empty in his search for the coins he’d used earlier. He whirled around to face the girls. “I need something precious, something important” he told them frantically, reverting to their second form of currency.

“Well you must have something!” Clara complained.

Both him and Rose glanced between their wedding rings, but shook their heads just as quickly.

Rose unclasped the necklace from around her throat. It was the locket he’d given her for Christmas, nearly a year before everything had gotten so messed up. Their wedding vows were still inscribed in circular Gallifreyan on its face, the copper worn shiney by the thousands of times she’d run her fingers across the words.

“Rose…” he protested weakly, already knowing they didn’t have any other choice.

She walked past him to place the pendant in the woman’s hands. She seemed to examine it and Rose for a moment before nodding shortly and stepping aside to let them take the moped.

The three of them squeezed onto it with The Doctor driving, Rose in the back, and Clara safely between them, the bike seeming to expand to accommodate them, and flew it towards the little queen who was being slowly pulled towards the temple.

“Merry!” Clara screamed, reaching around her father in a desperate attempt to close the gap between them. Rose grabbed her waist before she could lose her balance.

They were getting closer to the pyramid now, and Clara’s fingers tips were but a hair’s length from Merry’s, but suddenly it was too late. Merry was dragged backwards into the pyramid screaming, the door slamming shut behind her.

“Brakes!” Rose shouted as they were still heading full speed towards the solid rock. “Brakes!”

The Doctor slammed on the brakes, but they still crash landed, falling head over heel until they were but a pile of Time Lords beside (a perfectly unscathed) space moped.

Groaning, they managed to untangle their limbs, The Doctor freeing himself first and sprinting to the door while Rose helped Clara to her feet. He scanned the stone with the sonic.

“Oh, that's interesting,” he mumbled to himself, and then looked over as his wife and daughter came beside him. “A frequency modulated acoustic lock. The key changes ten million zillion squillion times a second.”

“That’s not a number,” Clara argued on impulse.

“Says who?”

“Says math.”

The Doctor raised his brows. “Math is not the boss of me. I am the boss of it.”

“All right then Math Lord,” Rose quipped. “Can you open it?”

He tilted his head. “Technically, no. In reality… also no, but still, let's give it a stab.”

Clara turned to look back towards the asteroid where the people were now gathered. “How can they just stand there and watch?” she asked incredulously.
Rose wrapped an arm around her. “Because this is sacred ground.”

They both spun on their heels as they heard Merry scream from inside the temple.

Clara banged on the door. “Merry! Merry, hold on! We'll be there soon!” She turned to her father pleadingly.

“Yes, yes, yes, yes—Oh, hello.” He brought the sonic very close to his face, eyes brightening at the reading.

“Hello what?” Rose asked, looking over his shoulder.

“The sonic's locked on to the acoustic tumblers.”

“Meaning?” Clara asked, her leg bouncing anxiously now.

“Meaning I get to do this!” he aimed the screwdriver at the bottom of the door, and slowly raised it, bringing the stone up with him and granting them access to the pyramid. He remained underneath it, however, using all his strength to keep it open as they run in ahead of him.

Merry was staring at him incredulously, so he grinned despite the fact that he couldn’t breathe very well at the moment. “Hello there. I'm The Doctor, this is my wife, Rose, and you've met our daughter. We were supposed to be having a nice day out. Still, it's early yet. Are you coming, then?”

Merry hesitated, looking between the three of them warily.

The door fell a few inches and The Doctor brought both hands up to hold the screwdriver in place, his arms shaking now with the weight of it. “Did I mention that this door is immensely heavy?”

Merry shook her head determinedly. “Leave! You'll wake him!”

Rose finally looked past the young queen and the chorister who was still singing; behind them was a thick glass case where a robed mummy sat upon a throne. She furrowed her brow, unconvinced.

Before she could dwell on it though, The Doctor was pushed to his knees, the door falling down with him. “Really quite extraordinarily heavy,” he sputtered. “Rose?”

It was Clara who stepped forward though, grabbing Merry’s hand. “Merry, we need to leave.”

Merry yanked her hand back. “No! Go away!”

“She shook her head vehemently, properly screaming at her now. “You said I wouldn't get it wrong and then I got it wrong! And now this has happened! Look what happened!”

“You didn't get it wrong,” Clara argued.

“How do you know? You don't know anything! You have to go! Go now, or he'll eat us all!”

Clara wrinkled her nose at the thing in the glass. “Well, he's ugly. But you know, to be honest, I don't think he looks big enough.”

She shook her head again. “Not our meat, our souls.”
And with that terrifying prophecy she touched her fingers to her temples. A purple energy went out around her, flinging Clara into the glass and keeping her there, feet hovering above the ground.

“CLARA!” Rose screamed, immediately running to her daughter.

“He doesn't want you!” Merry spoke to both of them. “He wants me! If you don't leave, he'll eat you all up too.”

“Yes, and you don't want that, do you?” The Doctor struggled to speak over his respiratory bypass kicking in and restricting his lungs. “You want us to walk out of this really quite astonishingly heavy door and never come back.”

“Yes,” Merry answered.

“I see… Right. Clara's right. Absolutely never going to happen.”

And with that he let go of the door, rolling out from under it just in time before it could slice him in two.

Rose’s eyes widened. “Did you just lock us in with the soul eating monster?”

He nodded. “Yep.”

Rose shook her head, but there was a small smirk playing at her lips that The Doctor never would have imagined he’d ever see again as a result of his impulsive decisions—especially not with their daughter in the mix. But there it was. Maybe things were getting back to normal.

“Clara, you need to focus on me,” Rose spoke calmly, getting her to look into her eyes rather than frantically trying to see over her shoulder. “You’re a telepath. You can fight this.”

“That's it, then? Song's over?” he continued as if she hadn’t spoken at all.

The Doctor raised his brow as the chorister stood. “That's it, then? Song's over?”

“The song is over,” he agreed solemnly. “My name is Chorister Rezh Baphix, and the Long Song ended with me.” And then he touched a button on the bracelet beneath his robes, and he was gone.

The mummy roared as it woke from its centuries long slumber, making the Doctor and Rose step forward on instinct.
Clara’s eyes widened. “What's it doing?” she asked frantically, unable to turn her head.

“Oh, you know,” the Doctor’s voice was just an octave too high. “Having a nice stretch….”

It started hammering on the glass, making Clara whimper as it shook beneath her. She could feel the vibrations of its fist against her back and hear its snarling hungrily in her ear.

“You’ve woken him,” Merry accused them fearfully.

The Doctor shook his head. “No, we didn’t wake him. And you didn’t wake him, either. He’s waking because it's his time to wake, and feed. On you, apparently. On your stories.”

“She didn't say stories. She said souls,” Clara argued.

The Doctor shrugged. “Same thing. The soul's made of stories, not atoms. Everything that ever happened to us. People we love, people we lost. People we found again against all the odds…” He drifted off, sending a meaningful look to Rose as he looked between her and their daughter. “He threatens to wake, they offer him a pure soul. The soul of the Queen of Years.”

Rose kneeled down so that she was at the young queen's eye level. “Do you know what it means, Merry?” she asked softly.

“A god chose me,” she repeated what she had always been told.

The Doctor shook his head from where he stood beside them, looking down at her. “It's not a god. It'll feed on your soul, but that doesn't make it a god. It is a vampire, and you don't need to give yourself to it—”

“Hey, do you mind if I tell you a story?” Rose interrupted her husband quickly before he could continue on his righteous rant. She looked into Merry’s eyes. “It’s one you might not have heard before. All the elements in your body were forged many, many millions of years ago, in the heart of a far away star that exploded and died. That explosion scattered those elements across the desolations of deep space. After so many millions of years, these elements came together to form new stars and new planets. And on and on it went. The elements came together and burst apart, forming shoes and ships and sealing wax, and cabbages and kings. Until eventually, all of those phenomenon, big and small, came together to make you.”

She reached up to brush a stray hair behind the girl’s ear, fingers grazing against her temple in the process and sending every ounce of comfort she was able to give. Merry visibly relaxed, even managing a small smile, which Rose returned. “You are unique in the universe,” she told her earnestly. “There is only one Merry Gejelh. And there will never be another. Getting rid of that existence isn't a sacrifice. It is a waste.”

Her voice was small. “So, if I don't, then everyone else—”

“Will be fine,” Rose interrupted whatever Merry was going to say.

“How?”

The Doctor kneeled down beside her then, taking one of her hands in his. “There's always a way.”

“You promise?” she asked him.

He smirked. “Cross my hearts,” he promised, doing the motion.
Merry nodded and released her telepathic hold on Clara.

Clara huffed as she fell into the dust on her hands and knees. “Blimey,” she let out, breathing heavy, and turned just in time to see the mummy’s fist crack the glass. “’Having a nice stretch?’” she repeated her father’s words sarcastically, backing up until she stood beside Merry between her parents.

The ground beneath them shook.

Clara looked around frantically. Asteroids didn’t get earthquakes. “Something's coming,” she said, eyes landing on the door.

“The Vigil,” Merry answered quietly.

The Doctor’s head snapped down to look at her. “And what's the Vigil?”

Merry wouldn't take her eyes away from the door. “If the Queen of Years is unwilling to be feasted upon…” She swallowed thickly.

“Yes?” the Doctor prompted.

She spoke barely above a whisper. “It's their job to feed her to Grandfather.”

There was a puff of black smoke, and three robotic cloaked figures appeared before them.

“I'm sorry. I'm sorry,” Merry pleaded frantically, backing away.

“Don’t you dare,” Rose growled, pushing the young queen and her daughter (who were holding each other’s hands tightly) behind her back and stepping forwards toward the Vigil.

The Doctor stood beside her, looking admittedly a lot less intimidating than his wife (she was a wolf after all). “Yeah, stay back. I'm armed,” he tried anyway, holding up the sonic, “…with a screwdriver.” His words seemed to catch up with him as he furrowed his brow.

The lead Vigil promptly ignore their warnings, sending out a telepathic blast that knocked the sonic out of the Doctor's hand, and then another that sent the Time Lord family flying through the air, their backs crashing against the far wall.

The Vigil started towards Merry, and the Doctor spotted the sonic, just within his daughter’s reach.

“Clara, sonic,” he managed to mumble through the pounding in his head.

She grabbed it and tossed it to him quickly, and he sent out a shield, protecting Merry from whatever telepathic trick the Vigil was about to play next.

Seeing them momentarily trapped, Merry ran into Rose’s arms, burying her head in the older woman’s neck and holding back a sob.

Rose looked to her husband desperately,

It was Clara who spoke though. “Merry, you know all the stories,” she said, getting the other little girl’s attention. “You must know if there's another way out.”

Her eyes widened minutely as she nodded hesitantly. “There's a tale. A secret song. The Thief of the Temple and the Nimmer's Door.”
“And the secret songs open the secret door?” Clara asked hopefully, earning another nod. “How does it go? Can you sing it?”

Merry took a deep breath, closing her eyes as she gained strength from Rose telepathically, and began to sing. The notes seemed to vibrate the air in the room, and to their left, in a hidden alcove, a door opened.

“Go!” The Doctor shouted, pushing the girls in front of him, and grabbing Rose’s hand as she passed. They made it out the door just in time to see the sonic shield fall, and the mummy finally break free of his prison. An energy beam fired at the sun as soon as the glass was broken. The Vigil bows their heads and disappear.

“Where did they go?” Clara asked breathlessly.

“Grandfather's awake,” The Doctor answered ominously. “They're of no function any more.”

Clara eyed him suspiciously at his tone and Rose’s fearful expression beside him. “Well, you could sound happier about it.”

“Actually, I think I may have made a bit of a tactical uh-oh. More of a semantics mix-up, really…”

She paled. “What uh-oh?”

“I thought the Old God was Grandfather, but it wasn't. It was just Grandfather's alarm clock.”

She shook her head. “Sorry, a bit lost. Who's the Old God? Is there an Old God?”

“Unfortunately, yes,” he answered, tuning slowly towards the massive red sun behind them, which was getting rather active.

“Oh,” Clara let out, words failing her. Her head snapped back around to her parents. “What do we do?”

“Against that? I don't know. Do you know? I don't know. Any ideas?” He looked to his wife.

“I might have one,” she said quietly—just barely above a whisper, as she squeezed his hand.

“But you promised!” Merry protested, seeing the fear and hesitation on their faces and panicking. “You promised!”

“I did,” the Doctor nodded. “I did promise.”

“He'll eat us all. He'll spread across the system, consuming the Seven Worlds,” Merry recited the prophecy. “And when there's no more to eat, he'll embark on a new odyssey among the stars.”

Clara blew out a long breath, surprisingly the most calm out of all of them. “I say leg it.”

Her dad raised a brow. “Leg it where, exactly?”

Clara shrugged. “Don't know. Lake District?”

Both her parents smirked. “Oh, the Lake District's lovely!” he enthused. “Let's definitely go there. We can eat scones. They do great scones in 1927.”

Clara snorted in surprise, the words getting taken right out of her mouth. “Yeah, I know.”
The sun was beginning to burn even brighter now, forcing all of them to look back at it.

Clara took in the determined looks on her parents faces as they straightened their shoulders, gripping each other’s hands like it might be the last time they could. She sighed, “You're going to fight it, aren't you.” It wasn’t a question.

“Regrettably, yes. I think we may be about to do that,” the Doctor answered without looking at her.

“I'm staying with you,” Clara said automatically.

They both spun around at that. “No, you're not,” Rose said sternly.

Clara was not so easily reprimanded. She folded her arms stubbornly. “Yes, I am. I can help.”

Rose shook her head. “No, absolutely not. Under no circumstances will you—”

“What about that stuff you said?” Clara cut her off. “We don't walk away.”

Rose kneeled down and took her hands. “No. We don't walk away. But when we're holding on to something precious, we run. We run and run as fast as we can and we don't stop running until we are out from under the shadow. We already lost you once, Clara. I won't lose you again. You are my number one priority—the universe be damned.”

Clara squeezed her hand. “Are you coming with me?” she asked smally.

“Yes,” the Doctor answered firmly before Rose could get out the negative. She whirled around to glare at him incredulously.

She spoke telepathically to keep their daughter and the other young girl from hearing the argument. ‘I'm not leaving you, Doctor.’

‘It’s not just us anymore, Rose. One of us has to stay with her. She can’t be on her own.’

‘The TARDIS would bring her to Amy.’

‘She’s not the TARDIS’s or Amy’s responsibility. She’s ours. And we can’t let her be an orphan again. She deserves at least one parent.’

Rose shook her head, closing her eyes against the thought. ‘Don’t say things like that.’

He smiled slightly. ‘Of course, love. I’ll always come back to you. All the false gods in the universe couldn’t keep me from you.’

Rose laughed and wiped away a stray tear and fell into his arms. The whispered a string of Gallifreyan that meant so much more than ‘I love you.’ She pulled away and took both Clara’s and Merry’s hands.

“Take the moped.” he said. “I'll walk.”

“We’ll see you soon, yeah?” Clara asked.

He smiled down at her. “Of course.”

“You promise?”

“Cross my hearts.”
He placed a kiss to the top of Clara’s head and gave Rose one last peck before turning on his heel and walking towards the Old God.

Rose, Clara, and Merry took the moped back to the amphitheatre where they stand and watch him, just a small silhouette in the light of the star.

“Isn't he frightened?” Merry asked.

“I think he is,” Clara nodded, and her mum pulled her closer. “I think he's very frightened.”

“I want to help,” Merry said.

“So do I,” Clara agreed, looking up to her mum while Merry resumed her place at the pedestal and began singing.

Rest now, my warrior. Rest now

On the asteroid, the Doctor could hear her song, and a second later her felt Rose and Clara plant themselves firmly in his mindscape, sending him all the love they had within them to give.

He smiled, his hearts tightening. “Okay, then. That's what I'll do. I'll tell you a story.”

Hundreds more voices join Merry’s in the sound.

And let the cloak of life cling to your bones.

The Doctor spoke to the Old God. “Can you hear them? All these people who've lived in terror of you and your judgement? All these people whose ancestors devoted themselves, sacrificed themselves, to you. Can you hear them singing? Oh, you like to thing you’re a god. But you're not a god. You're just a parasite eaten out with jealousy and envy and longing for the lives of others. You feed on them. On the memory of love and loss and birth and death and joy and sorrow. So, come on, then. Take mine. Take my memories. But I hope you've got a big appetite, because I have lived a long life and I have seen a few things.”

Energy tendrils reached out to the Doctor, lapping at his soul. His very very old soul.

The Doctor continued, shouting now as his anger rose. “I walked away from the last Great Time War. I marked the passing of the Time Lords. I saw the birth of the universe and I watched as time ran out, moment by moment, until nothing remained. No time. No space. Just me. I walked in universes where the laws of physics were devised by the mind of a mad man. I've watched universes freeze and creations burn. I've seen things you wouldn't believe! I have lost things you will never understand!” He choked slightly on his words as tears unchecked. Images of Rose falling into the void, memories of the inescapable pain that followed. Then came Alina and Amy and Clara being cruelly taken from them one after another—the universe refusing to give them a break. Endless, senseless pain.

The sun continued to drain him. “And I know things. Secrets that must never be told. Knowledge that must never be spoken. Knowledge that will make parasite gods blaze. So come on, then. Take it! Take it all! Have it! You have it all!” He was practically begging.

Suddenly, the Doctor glowed golden as Rose projected herself, shielding him before the false god could steal his soul. He fell backwards, panting as his energy slowly returned to him.

‘Rose, what are you doing?’ he demanded.
‘Protecting you, my Doctor,’ she spoke with the dual tones of Bad Wolf, and a second later she was standing in front of him, the whole of time and space swirling around her.

“You are tiny,” she spoke to the sun. “You call yourself a god, but you are only a devourer. A glutton. You do not create, you destroy.” He eyes glowed brighter as the timelines lashed out in anger at the false god. “You feed off what has been but I am everything that will be, everything that could have been, everything that never can. I am infinite.” She held her arms out and projected the light of the universe towards the false god, watching as it crumbled.

Chapter End Notes

Wow it’s really been two months. This semester has been absolutely insane and I’ve still got two more weeks left of final projects and papers to get through but then I’m FREE to dedicate my time to things I genuinely enjoy—like writing this story. Thank you so much for sticking with me. ❤️ Comments much appreciated.
Clara spent a lot of time in the TARDIS library. She still had the distinct feeling that the ship didn’t like her all that much, but her parents were steadfastly ignoring that fact. “She’s like a cat. A bit slow to trust, but you’ll get there in the end,” her father said. Clara was sure this wasn’t true though, cos she asked Amy and all her aunts and uncles and none of them had reported a warm-up period with the TARDIS.

So, just to be on the safe side, she never wandered anywhere past her room, the console room, the galley, and the library. Which was fine by her, really. With a library as massive as that at her disposal—she wasn’t likely to want to be anywhere else anyway. There was far too much knowledge in there to pass it by.

Whenever Rose and/or the Doctor would join her they’d help her with learning Gallifreyan, which was going really well, or with telepathy, which was going considerably less well.

“Why don’t you read a story?” her father offered as he was giving her a much needed break from the telepathy lessons. “You can learn just as much from fiction, you know. Perhaps even more.”

He picked up Wizard of Earthsea and held it out to her proudly, but she wrinkled her nose in distaste. He frowned and tossed the book over his shoulder before plopping down on the sofa beside her. “It’s stories that last, Clara. When Earth is nothing but a distant memory it’s our stories that will be remembered—far more than any of this.” He made a wide gesture at all the textbooks she had open in front of them.

She sighed and pulled her knees up to her chest. “Everywhere I went,” she started quietly, keeping her eyes trained on the floor. “All those people. Not a single one of them remembers me.” Her eyes flickered up to meet his. “For years I didn’t even properly exist. I wasn’t even a story in people’s heads. The only thing I ever had was my own head. And I wasn’t even sure I had that half the time.”

The Doctor stared back at her, unsure of how to respond to that, so he just pulled her closer until her head rested against his chest.

Rose blinked back the sudden blurriness as an overwhelming sense of fear suddenly consumed her. It wasn’t her own, but it wasn’t The Doctor’s either. She fell back against the jumpseat, hands automatically moving to her temples as a frantic message came through: help me.

She gasped and the unfamiliar intrusion disappeared as quickly as it had come. Her eyes flung open to find her husband kneeling in front of her, one hand gripping her arm while his other reached out to push her hair behind her ear. Their daughter hovered just behind him, looking worried.
“We have to go,” she said, eyes wide as she stood up and started flying the TARDIS out of the time vortex, following the psychic signature that had been left in her head.

The Doctor could read her thoughts (even the frantic jumbled up ones) well enough to automatically start helping her without having to ask questions, but Clara barely even felt empathic on her best days.

“Sorry, what’s happening?” she asked, chasing her parents around the console as the ship rocked.

Images flashed in front of Rose’s eyes. “We’re going ghost hunting,” she answered, and a second later the TARDIS landed with a dull thud, and they could hear the steady beat of rain coming from outside.

‘How is it even possible that someone was able to get past my barriers?’ Rose asked as the three of them huddled under their oversized umbrella on the way up to the large Victorian manor they’d landed in front of.

‘Emma Grayling,’ the Doctor supplied. ‘Most powerful empath the human race has ever known—well, maybe. Powerful enough that UNIT knew about her when I worked for them.’

‘Empath?’ Rose repeated. ‘But then how was she able to send me a message?’

‘She didn’t.’ He threw his arm around her. ‘Her fear was strong enough that her psychic centres’ self-preservation instincts kicked in, projecting it out into the universe. Somehow, you were the one who picked up the signal. Purely coincidence.’

They came to the wide oak doors finally, and the Doctor knocked jauntily. When it swung open to reveal a spectacled man, and a woman standing just behind him, the Doctor rocked back on his heels and waved. “Hello! We’re looking for a ghost.”

The man’s brows shot into his hairline. “And… you are?”

“I’m the Doctor,” he said, holding out the psychic paper. “This is my wife, Rose, and our daughter, Clara.” He smirked and leaned forward. “Take your kid to work day—you know how it is.”

He squinted at him. “Doctor what?”

“If you like.” The Doctor shrugged, patting him on the shoulder as he pushed passed him into the house. He ran immediately towards a table full of all sorts of high-class 1974 science-y stuff. “Ah, but you are very different!” He turned to smile at the man, standing very close to him. “You’re Major Alec Palmer! Member of the Baker Street Irregulars and the Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare. Specialised in espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance behind enemy lines. You're a talented watercolourist, professor of psychology and ghost hunter. Total pleasure. Massive.” He shook his hand excitedly.

The woman spoke up for the first time. “Actually, you're wrong,” she said. “Professor Palmer spent most of the war as a POW.”

The Doctor smirked. “Actually, that’s a lie told by a very brave man involved in very secret operations. The type of man who keeps a Victorian Cross in a box in the attic, eh?” Professor Palmer looked deeply uncomfortable by the assessment, so the Doctor turned towards the woman, tilting his head. “But you know that, because you’re Emma Grayling, the Professor's companion.”

“Assistant,” she corrected automatically.
The Doctor nodded. “It’s 1974,” he remembered out loud. “You’re the assistant and non-objective equipment—” he glanced to Clara, “Meaning psychic.”

Clara grinned proudly. Her telepathic abilities might not be all that developed yet, but she was getting good at recognizing other psychic beings. “Getting that!” she said happily, tapping her head, and her parents beamed down at her.

Emma, on the other hand, had tensed considerably at being called out by the perfect stranger.

“Relax, Emma,” Palmer soothed her automatically, recognising the rigidity in her shoulders. “He’s Military Intelligence.”

The Doctor frowned at that and glanced down to the paper. For once it didn’t tell a lie, but just held his actual UNIT credentials. He bit back the impulse to roll his eyes.

Palmer sighed in annoyance. Apparently, he wanted UNIT there just as much as the Doctor did. “So, what is all this in aid of?”

“Health and safety,” the Doctor answered automatically. “Yeah, the Ministry got wind of what’s going on down here. Sent me to check that everything’s in order.”

Palmer scoffed indignantly. “They don't have the right!”

“Don't worry, guv'nor, I'll be out of your hair in five minutes.” He clapped his hands together and turned back to the table of equipment, his eyes lighting up as it fell upon a familiar piece that he hadn’t seen in centuries. “Oh! Oh, look. Oh, lovely. The ACR 99821!” He started playing with the switches. “Oh, bliss. Nice action on the toggle switches. You know, I do love a toggle switch. Actually, I like the word toggle. Nice noun. Excellent verb.”

Clara had sat down next to him on the table and reached out to mess with the controls as well, but her father batted her hand away.

“Oi, don't mess with the settings!” he admonished.

Rose rolled her eyes and pulled the sonic screwdriver from her husband’s pocket, using it to do a quick scan of the equipment, downloading all of their readings history at once.

“What's that?” Palmer demanded.

Rose glanced over to him, raising her brows in amusement. “That’s classified,” she answered vaguely, mostly for the effect. “But it’s telling me you haven't been exposed to any life-threatening transmundane emanations.”

Palmer and Emma stared at her incredulously while the Doctor laughed and hopped up from the table, pulling Clara with him. He picked up a three-pronged candelabra from the table, which Rose thought was pretty cliche considering it was 1974 and there must have been an electric torch around here somewhere (very possibly in the Doctor’s pocket, actually).

“So, where's the ghost? Show me the ghost. It's ghost time,” he rambled as he lead them down the corridor.

“What’s a Baker Street Irregular?” Clara asked all the adults at large as she followed after them. Her father squinted down at her, looking scandalised. “Really, Clara? Sherlock Holmes? Never?”
Clara bit the inside of her cheek. “Oh. No. Sorry, don’t really know anything about it.” She looked up to see her parents furrowed brows. “Look, I told you I’m not one much for stories, okay?” She crossed her arms defensively and grumbled, “My life is already enough of one.”

The professor was supremely disinterested in this, and brought the Time Lords’ attentions back around to the situation at hand as he pushed ahead to lead them into a warmly finished sitting room where food and drink was already stocked on a collapsible table.

The Doctor and the professor moved automatically to the corkboard where Alec and Emma had collected their findings—photographs of the ghosts, readings it’d put out, and their own hastily scribbled notes.

Rose followed Emma over to the table, intent on getting more information on the woman who’d been able to enter her mind, and after a moment’s hesitation Clara followed after her. Telepathy (or empathy) was objectively more interesting than ghosts, and played a more important role in her day-to-day than ghosts tended to.

“So,” Clara started as she sat down with her mum across from Emma. “What’s an empathic psychic?”

Emma shrugged, speaking mostly to the floor. “I sense feelings, the way a telepath can sense thoughts…” her head snapped up suddenly as she hastily added in assurance, “Sometimes, though! Not always.”

Rose smirked. “You can tell we’re telepaths though,” she said knowingly, and Emma’s eyes widened as her suspicions were confirmed and as she was so easily read. Rose assured her as well, “Don’t worry. We’re only touch telepaths. Can’t read your thoughts unless you allow us to.”

Emma squinted at her as that didn’t add up. “You and your husband though…”

“Special circumstances,” Rose explained vaguely, waving her hand around. “We’re bonded—we share one mind.”

Emma nodded slowly, for her part taking it all rather well, but Clara suspected that would be the case considering only the small glimpse of the woman’s life that they’d gotten so far.

“Rose, Clara,” the Doctor called suddenly, making all three girls look up. He gestured for them to come join him. “Come take a look at this.”

“Caliburn House is over four hundred years old,” Palmer explained as they examined the board together, “but she has been here much longer. The Caliburn Ghast. She’s mentioned in local Saxon poetry and parish folk tales. The Wraith of the Lady, the Maiden in the Dark, the Witch of the Well.”

“Is she real?” Clara asked smally, unable to hide the bit of fear that ran up her spine at the pictures of the screaming woman.

“Oh, she’s real,” Palmer answered, not a shadow of a doubt in his tone. “In the seventeenth century, a local clergyman saw her. He wrote that her presence was accompanied by a dreadful knocking, as if the Devil himself demanded entry. During the war, American airmen stationed here left offerings of tinned Spam. The tins were found in 1965, bricked up in the servants’ pantry, along with a number of handwritten notes. Appeals to the Ghast: For the love of God, stop screaming.”

The Doctor’s eyes frantically searched the images. “She never changes. The angle’s different, the framing, but she’s always in exactly the same position…” His head snapped over to look at the
professor. “Why is that?”

He shook his head. “We don't know. She's an objective phenomenon, but objective recording equipment can't detect her—”

“—Without the presence of a powerful psychic,” the Doctor finished the thought easily, taking steps over to where Emma stood slightly off to the side.

Palmer shot her a small smile. “Absolutely. Very well done.”

Rose’s eyes narrowed as she looked between the two of them. A slight blush was colouring Emma’s cheeks and the professor looked away from her quickly, eyes snapping to the floor as he remembered she could sense his emotions.

Emma tucked away her disappointment as she looked back to the Time Lord with a small nod. “She knows I'm here. I can feel her calling out to me.”

The Doctor raised a brow. “What's she saying?”

“‘Help me,’” Emma quoted. She still couldn’t tell if the emotions coming from the ghost were so strong that the felt like words, or if her fear was so unending that even an empath could pick up on her desperate pleas.

She imagined it was somewhere between the two.

‘Doctor, that’s what I heard,’ Rose said and he looked over to her curiously. ‘Emma wasn’t calling out herself. She was projecting the woman’s message.’

‘And you picked it up…’ he finished, looking her up and down in a bit of awe.

A cheeky grin passed over Rose’s features. ‘Well I am a very powerful telepath. Even more than you.’

“Oi!” The Doctor spoke out loud on accident, and chuckled as Rose said, ‘See?’

Both Emma and Clara looked amused, sharing knowing looks, while Professor Palmer looked utterly confused at the sudden outburst and the couple’s staring at each other.

The Doctor, for his part, seemed to realise they were being rude. He spoke out loud in Gallifreyan instead. “I remember when you barely knew how convey an emotion telepathically, Rose Tyler. I taught you everything you know.”

Rose grinned. “And so the student surpasses the master,” she replied, still in his native tongue.

Clara’s brain was working overtime to try and translate. They usually spoke slower than this during lessons, but she was picking it up quickly enough. “Hey, I understood all that!” she exclaimed happily, even more proud of herself as she was able to speak it as well.

Her father held his hand up for a congratulatory high-five which she accepted with a wide smile, drinking in the pride she saw on her parents' faces.

“What language is that?” Professor Palmer spoke up, seemingly perplexed at not knowing something. “I’ve never heard anything like it.”

“Oh you wouldn’t have,” the Doctor waved him off casually. “Not many people left who speak it.” He spun around to tap Clara on the head. “Come on.” He started making his way down a darkened
She stared after him. “To where?”

His brow furrowed as he stepped back, speaking at a whisper. “To find the ghost.”

“Why would I want to do that?” she asked incredulously.

“Because you want to! Come on!” He tugged on her hand to get him to follow, but Clara kept her feet firmly planted.

“Well, I dispute that assertion!”

He tilted his head. “Eh? I’m giving you a face. Can you see me? Look at my face.” He made a weird face that Clara imagined was his attempt at ‘stern.’

She pouted. “Take Mum.”

“Mum’s busy.”

“No she isn’t.” Clara looked over to where her mother was watching them amusedly. “I’m looking at Mum. Mum isn’t busy. Mum’s just standing there.”

The Doctor smirked and raised a single brow in challenge. “I dare you,” he whispered.

“You what?”

“Dare you.” He rocked back on his heels with a mischievous glint in his eyes. “No takesies-backsies.”

Clara couldn’t fight the smile on her lips. “Fine,” she finally acquiesced, trying and failing to look put-out as he grinned triumphantly at her and pulled her down the corridor, grabbing the candelabra on his way.

Rose watched them go, ignoring her hosts’ curious looks as she didn’t follow, and moving to the far side of the room—where humans would be out of earshot, but she couldn’t hear them perfectly well.

“Is he really from the Ministry?” Emma asked him quietly.

“Er, I don’t know. He’s certainly got the right demeanour. Capricious, brilliant—”

“Deceitful,” Emma broke in.

Rose bit back her immediate offense at that word. It was true that the Doctor didn’t lie to her, but to everyone else… He had a tendency to omit certain truths.

Palmer let out a surprised laugh. “Yes. Ha. He’s a liar…” he trailed off with a distant look in his eyes. “But, you know, that’s often the way that it is when someone’s seen a thing or two. Experience makes liars of us all. We lie about who we are, about what we’ve done…”

“And how we feel?” Emma added hesitantly.

“Yes. Always. Always that.” His breathing hitched and his eyes flickered down to her lips, jumping back to her eyes just as quickly. He cleared his throat and took a step back, away from her. “You know, I have to, have to be getting on with things. The, er, the equipment and so forth…” he trailed
off awkwardly, motioning behind him with his thumb and half turning in that direction.

Emma nodded smally, looking down to the floor to keep her emotions in check. “Of course.”

A rush of nostalgia swept through Rose at the familiar scene, and she felt the Doctor prodding her curiously as her chest tightened.

‘Nothing, love.’ She shook her head. ‘They just remind me of another couple I know is all.’

Just before he could prod for more, both their thoughts were cut off by a loud slamming noise coming from the third floor of the manor. Rose’s head shot up along with Palmer’s and Emma’s.

They all shivered and the professor looked around the room with his brow furrowed. “Does it seem colder?”

Rose could feel the degrees ticking down exponentially with every second. As their breath became visible Emma stared hauntedly into the empty space in front of her. “She’s coming,” she whispered.

Upstairs there was still a lot of loud angry banging and they could hear the others running around… along with a third presence. Rose felt the fear coming off her bondmate and daughter in waves. Her shoulders stiffened as she moved swiftly across the room to stand behind Emma, her fists clenching.

A gyrating black disk appeared in the air just as the Doctor and Clara came barreling down the stairs and bursting into the room. They stopped in their tracks at the sight of the thing that appeared to be there and yet not quite be there at the same time.

“Has this ever happened before?” the Doctor asked as he stepped in front of all of them.

“Never,” Palmer breathed.

“Camera!” The Doctor requested suddenly, holding his hand out, but Rose was already moving to grab it before the first syllable had formed on his lips. She placed it in his palm, acknowledging his silent thanks before turning to Emma who was looking at a point just beyond the disk, her chest rising and falling rapidly.

Rose placed her hand on the other woman’s arm and sucked in a sharper breath as she could feel the pure fear Emma was projecting. But it wasn’t her own. It was someone else’s—being filtered through her.

Their eyes met for a brief moment before Emma’s head suddenly snapped back around as she gasped. An energy rushed through her body with a piercing scream and a plea that Emma could feel and Rose could hear as she kept hold of her arm. “Help me!”

Rose let go in surprise and Emma collapsed from the shock, falling backwards into Palmer’s arms. The Doctor took one last photo and Rose processed the clicking noise she’d been hearing in the background of the whole ordeal has been the camera’s shutter.

Clara rushed into her mother’s side as Palmer carried Emma over to the sofa, laying her down just as she was beginning to stir. Rose instinctively pulled Clara closer and the young girl buried her head into her arm, unable to mask her own fear—especially now that they were touching. Rose placed a kiss to the top of her head and looked up to find her husband’s eyes mirroring her own concern.
The Doctor nodded and pulled Palmer away from Emma by holding up the camera’s film capsule and inquiring after the dark room. Palmer looked to Rose for reassurance that she would look after his “assistant” and waited until she nodded before leading the Doctor down an adjacent corridor.

The Doctor finally spoke as the photos were soaking and drying. “I had a little peek at your records, back at the Ministry,” he started casually. “You’ve certainly seen a thing or two in your time. Disrupting U-boat operations across the North Sea, sabotaging railway lines across Europe. Operation Gibbon. The one with the carrier pigeons, brilliant. I do love a carrier pigeon.”

The professor didn’t close up though, as the Doctor had expected. Instead he let out a long breath, shaking his head, apparently prepared to speak openly in present company. “I did my duty,” he said, “but then so did thousands of others. Millions of others. I was just lucky enough to come back.”

The Doctor could understand that. Though he wasn’t able to call it luck until he met Rose. “Yes, but… how does that man, that war hero, end up here in a lonely old house, looking for ghosts?”

Palmer didn’t look at him as he spoke, the red lighting casting dark haunted shadows across his face. “Because I killed, and I caused to have killed. I sent young men and women to their deaths, but here I am, still alive and it does tend to haunt you. Living, after so much of the other thing.” He sighed heavily. “You see, I was alone and unmarried and I didn’t mind dying. I mean, not for that cause. It was a very, very fine cause, defeating the enemy.”

The Doctor nodded. The Time War flashed before him, and the professor must have seen the pain behind his eyes because he didn’t ask about it.

There was a long, heavy silence, until the Doctor broke it by pulling out the photo that had just appeared in the chemical bath. “Ah ha!” he exclaimed, hanging it up.

There’s a screaming face visible in the white energy of the woman.

“Who do you think she is?” Palmer whispered.

The Doctor didn’t answer that, instead asking, “Can I borrow your camera?” He held it up and barely waited for the professor’s consent before running off with it, a quick “Ta!” tossed over his shoulder—if only for Rose’s presence in his head silently reminding him to.

“Come along, Ponds!” he called to his family on his way towards the exit.

Rose and Clara shared a look before chasing after him. “You know we’re not actually Ponds, love.”

“Ah, but aren’t we all Ponds deep down?” he threw over his shoulder, emphasizing his point with a spin and sending them a goofy grin.

The girls just rolled their eyes and followed him out into the downpour. The TARDIS was waiting for them at the other end of the expansive front gardens, parked underneath the ivy-covered cloisters. They had to run through the rain to reach her, but Clara still paused despite getting soaked when they came within a few metres of the ship.

“I feel like it’s looking at me,” she said.

“Shes, ” both her parents corrected together, and then took her by the hand to pull her out of the
storm and into the TARDIS.

Clara stared ringing out her hair as soon as she passed through the threshold, making a puddle on the floor.

“Oi!” the Doctor reprimanded her. “How do you expect her to like you when she’s all wet?”

Clara’s eyes widened and she looked quickly up to the ceiling to apologise, but the ship only gave her a noncommittal hum in response, which didn’t sound at all like forgiveness. She sighed and chased her parents around the console.

“Can she see me—us—then? Is it like… we’re walking around inside her?”

The Doctor’s brow furrowed at that and he shook his head automatically. “No, no… that’s ridiculous. The TARDIS is a telepathic consciousness; she doesn’t have a corporeal form. The ship—the part we’re standing in—is more like the space she occupies. She’s all around us, but she can’t really see. Not in the way you’re thinking anyway. It’s more like feeling.”

Clara wrinkled her nose. “If she’s not got a body then how’s she a she?” She kept putting emphasis on the word, like it was a conscious effort.

The Doctor stared at her. “What’s a body got to do with pronouns?”

She blinked a few times as she realised her own mistake. “Oh, right. No, you’re right. Sorry.” She directed the last word to the ceiling again, more sincere this time, and the resulting hum sounded at least a bit more understanding this time.

Clara hung her head and her mum placed a hand on her shoulder. “Don’t beat yourself up over it. It’ll make more sense once you’ve worked more on your telepathy.”

She felt more guilty then though, at how often she’d put off the telepathy lessons and deemed it as a bad job with little reward. She just wasn’t any good at working on things that didn’t come easily. She was so used to things just making sense—little effort on her part necessary. It was a bad habit of hers to write off everything that required more energy to learn.

Rose, sensing the morose direction of her daughter’s thoughts, ruffled her hair quickly and pulled her to the console, and Clara brightened considerably. “So,” she said, picking her shoulders back up. “Where are we going then?”

“What’s a body got to do with pronouns?”

She blinked a few times as she realised her own mistake. “Oh, right. No, you’re right. Sorry.” She directed the last word to the ceiling again, more sincere this time, and the resulting hum sounded at least a bit more understanding this time.

Clara hung her head and her mum placed a hand on her shoulder. “Don’t beat yourself up over it. It’ll make more sense once you’ve worked more on your telepathy.”

She felt more guilty then though, at how often she’d put off the telepathy lessons and deemed it as a bad job with little reward. She just wasn’t any good at working on things that didn’t come easily. She was so used to things just making sense—little effort on her part necessary. It was a bad habit of hers to write off everything that required more energy to learn.

Rose, sensing the morose direction of her daughter’s thoughts, ruffled her hair quickly and pulled her to the console, and Clara brightened considerably. “So,” she said, picking her shoulders back up. “Where are we going then?”

“Nowhere!” the Doctor exclaimed happily. “We’re staying right here. Right here, on this exact spot, if I can work out how to do it…” he trailed off and muttered something not-English to himself as he fiddled with the controls. Rose reached over and adjusted a few herself and he sent her an unamused look which she smirked at cheekily.

Clara bounced on her toes, attempting to peak over her father’s much-higher shoulders to get a glance at the monitor. “So… when are we going then?” she rephrased.

The Doctor grinned. “We’re going always.”

“We’re going always,” Clara repeated dryly.

“Totally!” his eyes lit up like a child’s on Christmas before he dashed down the stairs below the console, pulling up one of the floor panels and procuring a chest of miscellaneous things.

She crossed her arms. “That’s not actually a sentence,” Clara argued as she leaned over the railing
with her mum to watch him.

“Well it’s got a verb in it!”

“I thought I told you to move that chest to the attic,” Rose reprimanded him.

Clara was momentarily distracted. “We have an attic?” she asked curiously.

Rose started to nod, and opened her mouth to no doubt list the infinite other types of rooms on the TARDIS that the ship would never show her, but was cut off as the Doctor spun around holding up a bright orange spacesuit and grinning proudly. “What do you think?”

Rose ran through every other time she’d seen him wear that suit, most of them with a different face, and even more of them in unpleasant situations. She and Clara both wrinkled their noses in perfect sync with one another, though for entirely different reasons.

“The colour’s a bit boisterous,” Clara said.

The Doctor pouted, but proceeded to put the suit on anyway, making a bit of a show of it. Rose pulled the dematerialisation lever while he was still shuffling back up the stairs, forcing him to grab onto the railing to keep from flying backwards and tumbling back down to the lower level.

“Oi!” the Doctor huffed indignantly, but stepped outside to take a picture of the Earth before it was even properly the right size, or even had anything resembling an atmosphere. As soon as he was back in Rose was adjusting the ‘time’ portion of the coordinates to a few hundred years in the future.

After that it was all a bit of a blue for Clara. Continuously dragged out of the ship for glimpses of desert and mountains and jungles. Insects, dinosaurs, people in every century she’d lived in and a few she hadn’t… and then nothing.

The Doctor put the environment suit back on. Clara looked at the monitor and sees that it’s the year five billion. The video feed flickered on and the terrain outside had been roasted by an unnaturally large sun. Even through the camera’s lense she can see the air shimmering in the intense heat.

Rose mumbled something strange like, “Our first date,” and the Doctor laughs but Clara can barely hear them through the static in her ears.

He left to take the final photograph and Clara watched her mother watch him. There was nothing on her face that suggested she found anything strange in what they’d just done. Her eyes flickered down to hers, a furrow in a brow that revealed her concern, and Clara remembered the familial empathic bond which was projecting her stronger emotions.

Before Rose could figure out what she’s thinking the Doctor came back, making quite a racket as he yanked off his helmet and threw it off to the side. He let the suit fall to the floor and kicked it over the edge.

Clara looked to him, her emotions were not hidden in her features, but the emotion was not a plain one, and even with the telepathy he couldn’t figure out what it was.

“Oh, what’s wrong?” he asked, his brow mimicking his wife’s. “Did the TARDIS say something to you?” he demanded, and then glared accusingly at the time rotor. “Are you being mean?”

“No, no, it's not that,” Clara hurried to assuage the time ship with whom she was already on shaky
ground with. She looked between her parents as they were both standing in front of her now. “Have we just watched the entire life cycle of Earth, birth to death?” she asked smally.

“Yes,” the Doctor answered, still waiting for the explanation.

“And you’re okay with that?”

He shrugged noncommittally, not getting it. “Yes?”

Rose understood though, and she squatted so that her and her daughter were at eye level. “For our first trip, when I first met your father, two hundred years ago now, he took me to here. The year five billion. The day the Earth burned. In a space station up in the sky at nineteen years old I watched my planet be consumed in flames.”

Clara’s eyes widened and she paled as she looked up to her father. He rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly. “Yeah… maybe not have had much tact back then.”

Rose smiled up at him indulgently, but turned back to their daughter. “The point is, that scared me.” She squeezed Clara’s hand. “But that’s okay.”

Clara shook her head. “It’s all happening at once for you,” she said, looking between them. “The Earth is dying at the same moment it’s being born. Entire civilizations are lost before they can even be built. People don’t even exist. They can’t.”

“Clara, no, you’ve got it wrong,” Rose told her gently. “Everyone, every single person we’ve ever met, they always exist, all at once, forever.” There was a bit of golden light behind her eyes that she probably didn’t even notice. Clara suddenly understood what it was in Rose that had scattered her timeline.

“You’re gods,” she whispered reverently.

Rose was clearly about to dispute the assertion, but the Doctor was quicker. “Yes,” he said, staring into her soul before pulling a lever on the console and sending them spiraling back to 1974.

‘It’s the belief that we’re gods that had both our daughters taken away from us,’ Rose said as they walked back to Caliburn House, just a few minutes after they had left.

‘No, it was our refusal to accept that to some people we are gods. Eventually we have to take the responsibility the universe has thrust on us, Rose. We didn’t ask for this, but that doesn’t mean we get to reject it. The universe is ours to protect, whether we like it or not. We can’t afford to be selfish or reckless because more than us will suffer for it.’

Rose was so unused to his wisdom it had her stumbling a step. It’s not that she didn’t know he was wise, of course. It’s just that for the last a hundred years or so it was more often than not her job to deliver the earth shattering revelations and philosophies.

But the strangest thing about it was that it wasn’t new. It was something she’d known once—had taken to heart. Somehow in the last seventy years they’d lost sight of that. And people had suffered for it.

‘It was after Alina,’ she said, knowing he’d been following her thought process. They’d become embittered by the loss of their first born. They blamed the universe for an unavoidable tragedy. Convinced themselves they’d been slighted by invisible powers at play—robbed of a happiness they deserved (more than anyone else). They became selfish and reckless and that’s why Amy was taken. But instead of realising their faults they continued to blame outside forces and paid the price
again with Clara.

The Doctor squeezed her hand. It felt like they’d had an epiphany through Clara’s naïve words, but really they’d known the truth all along.

As soon as they stepped inside the house Emma could feel the tumultuous emotions rolling off of the small family. It nearly knocked her over with the power of them, and she was secretly grateful when both the Doctor and Rose went with the professor to develop his new roll of film.

Clara looked smaller than she had before. Emma approached her carefully. “What’s wrong?”

The little girl shrugged. “Nothing I just… realised something is all. I don’t know if I wish I had or not.”

“What did you see?”

Clara didn’t know how to put any of it into words. Finally she settled on “That everything ends.”

Emma immediately shook her head. “No, not everything. Not love. Not always.” She glanced down the corridor to where the ancient beings had disappeared. “They know that better than anyone.”

Clara didn’t know much about love. She only very recently had found anyone to love her. But she thought she might understand what Emma was saying.

Her parents reappear soon after that, wheeling in a projector. “Right, done. That’s it. Gather round, gather round. Roll up, roll up,” the Doctor calls as he guides the cart to face a blank wall.

He behinds speaking like a university professor would to a lecture hall. “The Ghast of Caliburn House. Never changing, trapped in a moment of fear and torment. But, what if she's not? What if she's just trapped somewhere time runs more slowly than it does here? What if a second to her was a hundred thousand years to us? And what if somebody has a magic box. A blue box, probably. What if said somebody could take a snapshot of her, say, every few million years?”

At this, he clicked through the slides, each picture fast forwarding centuries, but only a few milliseconds for the ghost in the picture—she’s moving.

“She's not a ghost. But she's definitely a lost soul. Her name is Hila Tacorian. She's a pioneer, a time traveller,” he tilted his head, “or at least she will be in a few hundred years.”


“Resolve themselves, by and large,” the Doctor interrupted whatever misinformed spiel the professor was about to indulge in, making the man pull his chin back at the authority on which the Doctor spoke.

Emma didn’t question their validity. “How long has she been alone?” she asked quietly, clutching at the collar of her dress in memory of the woman’s fear and loneliness—knowing now that she’d been this way for centuries…

“Well, time travel’s a funny old thing. I mean, from her perspective, she crash landed three minutes ago,” the Doctor assuaged her fears quickly.

“Crash landed?” Emma repeated. “Where?”
He blew out a long breath. “She’s in a pocket universe. A distorted echo of our own. They happen sometimes but never last for long.” He gave the young woman a meaningful look. “Hila’s trapped there, but you're a lantern, shining across the dimensions, guiding her home, back to the land of the living.”

Clara found her voice again then as she studied the fear in the ghost’s eyes. “But what's she running from?”

“Shall we see?” The Doctor flipped to the next slide, and they could see a thing just behind her, dashing out from the trees.

“What is that?” Clara asked.

The Doctor’s brow furrowed. “I don't know,” he answered, but then clapped his hands together and spun back around to face them. “Still, not to worry!”

“So, what do we do?” Emma asked, and Rose was impressed. There weren’t many humans who would feel compelled to help. Perhaps in another time they would have asked her to come on the TARDIS with them. She’d be great in the stars.

Still, Rose glanced over to the professor, she probably wouldn’t want to come anyway.

The Doctor gave her a small smile, either thinking the same thing as Rose or just picking up on her thoughts and agreeing. He set his hands on Emma’s shoulders. “Not we, you. You save Hila Tacorian because you are Emma Grayling. You are the lantern. The rest of us are just along for the ride, I'm afraid…”

“Don't do it,” Palmer said suddenly, the words coming out so quickly they seemed even to surprise himself.

Emma squinted at him. “I'm sorry?”

He took a deep breath and strode forward until he was standing directly in front of her. “Nobody asked her to risk her life. This woman, she doesn't deserve— Whoever she is, however brilliant, however brave, she's not you. She is not worth risking a single hair on your head. Not to me.”

The Doctor and Rose shared a look that said a lot more than words ever could.

Emma reached out her hand and took the professor’s. “Tell me what I'm thinking.”

“I can't. I don't have your gift.”

“You don't need it. Just look at me and tell me.”

They looked into each other’s others eyes and shared a small smile between them.

“There you are, you read my mind.”

Clara followed her parents back into the TARDIS and watched as they started trying to find all the things they would need to pull it off. “Can’t you just… I don’t know, fly the TARDIS into the parallel universe and bring her back?”

“The TARDIS can’t fly into the parallel universes,” Rose answered automatically. “But it’s not a parallel universe, it’s a pocket universe. We could probably get there but…”
“Entropy would bleed her power sources,” the Doctor finished for her. “Trap her there until the entire universe decayed back into the quantum foam. Which would take about three minutes, give or take.”

“So you’re not completely omnipotent then,” Clara said dryly.

The Doctor chuckled. “No, no, not completely.”

The Doctor and Rose worked mostly silently after that, speaking to each other telepathically save for the occasional Gallifreyan direction given to Clara whenever they needed a hand. It was obvious they were too focused on the task at hand to welcome questions. Together they had long silver tubes running from the TARDIS console into the front room of Caliburn House where they expertly rewired the retro technology to fit with the alien.

Rose sat cross-legged on the patterned rug, tongue poking out just slightly as she used a spare sonic she’d pulled from a drawer of the discarded tools to splice the wires together. It was smaller than the one the Doctor was using, with a blue light and a tendency to flicker out of every few clicks—a trait that Rose was apparently used to and dealt with easily.

Next to the chair they’d set in the middle of the room the Doctor placed the blue crystal from Metebelis Three (“The Eye of Harmony” he’d called it) into a sort of headpiece resembling a crown—save for the wires coming off of it.

Finally, the professor could hold back his curiosity no longer. “What exactly is this arrangement?” he demanded.

While Rose seemed to have not heard him speak at all, the Doctor looked up suddenly, as if he was surprised to find another person in the room with him. “A psychochronograph,” he answered after a beat.

Rose spoke up then, apparently she had heard him. “It will allow Emma to open the connection fully and give us access to the pocket universe,” she explained. “We’re graphing together Emma’s psychic frequencies with the TARDIS’s telepathic matrix and the vortex manipulator. Basically, we’re opening a wormhole outside of the time vortex—in your sitting room, to be exact.”

Palmer blew out a long breath, glancing worriedly between the two Time Lords. “Forgive me, but isn't it all a bit, well, make do and mend?”

The Doctor placed the crown on Emma’s head as she sat down on the chair, and Rose finally stood from her place on the floor, dusting her hands off on her jeans. The Doctor shoved on a parachute harness.

“Non-psychic technology won't work where I'm going,” he said. “Listen, all I need to do is dive into another dimension, find the time traveller, help her escape the monster, get home before the entire dimension collapses, and Bob's your uncle.”

Emma grasped the hem of her dress tightly. “Doctor, will it hurt?”

“No,” he answered automatically, but knew it wasn’t fair to lie to her. “Well, I don't know,” he told her honestly. “It could quite possibly hurt a lot. It might be agony.”

He was giving her another chance to back out, she knew that. Emma looked over to Palmer, and he gave her a reassuring nod. It was all she needed.

She took a deep breath, steeling herself before calling out, “I'm talking to the lost soul that abides
in this place. I'm speaking to Hila Tarcorian.”

All of the clocks which had been taking from every room of the mansion and placed around the psychochronograph began ticking backwards. Rose helped the Doctor hitch his harness to a rope. The air temperature dropped considerably and before them the wormhole opened and burst into a doorway of bright light that was difficult to look at. Strong hurricane winds blew violently around the room.

“See?” the Doctor shouted over the noise. “The Witch of the Well! It's a wormhole! A reality well! A door to the echo universe!” He glanced behind him to Emma. “Ready?”

She set her jaw with a determined look. “Ready!”

The Doctor pulled his daughter in for a tight hug, kissed his wife soundly, and then turned to the wormhole. He tilted his head, his jaw clenching. “Geronimo.”

And then he leaped into the other universe.

The ground beneath his feet ran less than a mile deep—only a few metres before the planet’s core. The sky above his head was closer than it should be, and the forest around him was washed-out in shades of grey. The pocket universe was shrinking rapidly from this side.

The Doctor unclipped the harness and let it fall to the ground. “Hila?” he shouted, spinning in circles. “Hila! Hila Tarcorian!”

To his right a branch snapped, and he caught a flash of something distinctly not-human. He spun in the other direction, facing the opposite way he knew Hila should be running.

She ran right into him. “Hila Tarcorian, I presume.”

She was still panting. “Who are you?”

There wasn’t time for the usual introductions. He spoke quickly, “Collapsing universe. You and me, dead, two minutes. No time complete sentences. Abandon planet.” He grabbed her hand started to pull her, but she resisted, looking to her right.

“Wait. There's something in the mist.”

He pulled more forcefully, refusing to follow her line of sight. “Then run. Run!”

He could hear Rose shouting, though if it was through the wormhole or through their connection he couldn’t be sure. “Doctor! Doctor! Come home!”

The Doctor tried to follow her presence, but telepathic bonds never worked all that well across universes. They ran to the edge of the planet, it dropped suddenly downwards into swirling mist. “Not that way, which means…” He spun in a frantic circle, “Er, probably…”

“What's wrong?” Hila asked.

“You know that exit I mentioned?”

Her voice took on an impossibly more worried tone as she sensed where this was going. “Yes?”

“I seem to have misplaced it.”
“Doctor!” That was Emma’s voice that time, definitely. Which had to be coming from that wormhole.

“This way,” he said, sprinting back into the woods, following Emma’s screams. It was obvious she was in pain, and the faster he got back the sooner it would end.

They came upon an exact replica of Caliburn House. “Whoa,” the Doctor breathed.

“What's that?”

“An echo house, in an echo universe,” he answered and then dashed inside. “Clever psychic. That is just top-notch.”

He locked the doors behind them just in time to hear something scratching from the outside. It began prowling around, looking for a way in. They ran further into the manor.

Emma’s voice echoed through the house. “I'm not strong enough!” she shouted, and then screamed.

Finally, they found the wormhole in the music room, the harness laying beside it. “Grab the rope!” the Doctor shouted over the noise of the untempered vortex as he sonicked the door lock. “Give it three tugs, quick as you like!”

Hila did as he said. “What about you?”

“I'll be next,” he nodded. He didn’t need the harness. So long as Rose was on the other side she could guide him back home.

Hila jumped through the wormhole without any further questions. She was good at following orders, her.

The creature banged against the door again, an exact replica of the sound he and Clara had heard in the prime universe. He paused on his way to grin in sudden realisation. “Oh, that's what that noise was! Lovely!”

He took another step forward, but the wormhole closed, the house disappearing with it. He was back in the woods with no way home.

“No!” Clara screamed as Emma collapsed to the floor. Palmer ran to his assistant’s side while Rose helped Hilda disentangle herself from the rope and harness.

Clara turned to see Emma gathered in the professor’s arms, passed out from exhaustion and she knelt down next to her. “Wake up, please!” she begged. “Please you have to open the thing! He’s still over there!”

“I'm sorry—” Emma started, her eyes still filled with tears from the pain.

Palmer shushed her immediately and pulled her closer. “Don't be sorry. Don't be. What you did—”

“Wasn't enough!” Clara screamed, bordering on hysterical now. “She needs to do it again!”

“Clara,” Rose warned.

“She can't! Look at her!” Palmer said, and it was true. Emma could hardly stand, much less open a
portal to another universe.

“She has to! We can't leave him!” Clara cried, and then turned as she felt Rose behind her. She buried her face in her mother’s jumper.

Palmer ignored them, holding Emma’s face in his hands. “Look at that woman over there,” he said, nodding to Hila. “You saved her. She's only here because of your strength… and so am I. I was as lost as her, but being with you, you gave me a reason to be, Emma. You brought me back from the dead.”

Rose took a few hesitant steps forward. “Don’t worry,” she said quietly. “You couldn’t open it now, anyway. Your connection was with Hila, and she’s not there anymore.”

Emma was regaining her strength now after Palmer’s confession. “I could try—”

Rose shook her head and held her hand out. “I’ll have to do it now.”

The Doctor was running through the woods again. He could hear the thing pursuing him, but he didn’t dare pause to look round. In his head, all was silent. The bond hadn’t broken yet, but nothing could get through. It was only a matter of time before the universe was dissolved into nothingness—him along with it. His only comfort was that since time was distorted across the universes, Rose wouldn’t have to feel the full force of a broken bond all at once.

Almost as soon as that thought crossed his mind though a bright light opened up just in front of him. He felt the bond burst back to life and Rose shouting at him across the vortex. “Run, Doctor! Come home to me, please!”

And he didn’t need telling twice. He flung himself through the portal and landed in front of Rose just in time to hear her let out one last horrible scream of pain and see her collapse onto the carpet, golden tendrils of time energy swirling around her.

“Rose!” he shouted just as Clara cried, “Mum!” and they both ran to her side.

The light was beginning to fade and the Doctor was at least glad she wouldn’t be regenerating right there and then. No need to burn down the house down right after they got rid of the ghost, after all. “Rose, Rose, Rose,” the Doctor repeated frantically, turning her dazed expression to focus on him. “Are you okay? Tell me you’re okay.”

Rose turned her head though to look at Emma. “Good on you, mate. I couldn’t have done it for that long,” she said, and then winced at the effort of it. She pressed her temple into the Doctor’s arm and grumbled to herself, “Bloody human can open the time vortex.”

An hour later the sun was finally beginning to rise on Caliburn House, and the odd group of aliens and time travellers and psychics stood underneath the cloisters as the last of the makeshift psychochronograph was thrown back into the TARDIS.

Emma and Hila embraced. “Where will you go?” Emma asked.

Hila sighed, and nodded to the Time Lord couple. “Well they can't take me home. History says I went missing.”
“But they can change history!” Emma insisted.

The Doctor walked up then. “No, no, no, we can't, actually. There are fixed points in time, you see —” He was cut off as Rose came up, smiling politely and pulling him away.

Hila laughed slightly to herself and then looked to Emma seriously. “I knew you were there. I could feel you.”

Emma smiled. “I know.”

They studied each other for a moment. “Have we—?” Hila started.

“No, you can't have met but she can be your great, great, great, great, great granddaughter!” Palmer walked over then and the Doctor grinned at him. “Yours too, of course. But you guessed that already, didn't you!”

He received blank stares from the humans and amused looks from his wife and daughter. Rose just sighed. She'd tried to avoid this, but well… there was only so much one could do to keep the Doctor’s gob shut.

The Doctor swallowed awkwardly. “Oh. Apparently not.”

Palmer stuttered, “The paradoxes—!”

“Resolve themselves,” the Doctor cut him off, “by and large. That's why the psychic link was so powerful. Blood calling to blood, out of time. Not everything ends. Not love. Not always.” He turned to smile at his family and they came to rejoin him outside of the TARDIS.

Palmer chased after them, Emma close on his heels and Hila staying behind. “Doctor, what about, what about us? Emma and me?”

The Doctor tilted his head. “What about you?”

“Well, what's supposed to happen? I mean, what do we do now?”

He’d meant about Hila, but the Doctor didn’t get that. “Hold hands,” he said. “That's what you're meant to do. Keep doing that and don't let go. That's the secret.” Rose’s hand slipped into his, their fingers twining together as naturally as breathing, and he grinned down at her.

That’s when it hit him.

“Oh, I'm so slow!” He shouted suddenly, using his free hand to hit himself in the head. “I am slow! I'm notorious for it! That's always been my problem! You should have seen how long it took me to figure out Amy was our daughter. But, but I get there in the end. Oh yes—”

Rose attempted to follow his frantic thoughts but they were moving too quickly even for her to follow. She was swept up in a sea of interlocking events, most of which she hadn’t actually been present for. She squeezed his hand. “Doctor?”

He pointed at Clara. “How do sharks make babies?”

Clara pulled her chin back. “Carefully?”

He made a face. “No, no, no. Happily!”
Clara squinted at him, trying to picture a happy shark. “Sharks don't actually smile. They're just, well, they've got lots and lots of teeth. They're quite eaty.”

The Doctor snapped. “Exactly. But birds do it, bees do it, even educated fleas do it!” He kept hold of Rose’s hand as he dragged them out of the cloisters. “Every lonely monster needs a companion!”

Clara followed them out onto the green and looked up to the third floor windows where there was movement. It was just like the monster he and Hila had described in the pocket universe.

“There's two of them?” Clara asked.

The Doctor’s smile was brighter than the twin suns of Gallifrey. “It's the oldest story in the universe, this one or any other. Boy and girl fall in love, get separated by events. War, politics, accidents in time. She's thrown out of the hex, or he's thrown into it. Since then they've been yearning for each other across time and space, across dimensions. This isn't a ghost story, it's a love story!” He took his hand to throw his arm around Rose’s shoulders and pull her closer. Neither one of them had missed the irony of the day.

They ran back to where Palmer, Emma, and Hila were discussing what they were going to do. “Excuse me. Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt the rest of your life. Tiny favour to ask.”

The Doctor explained that the wormhole actually probably would have been easier to form the second time if Clara had done it. Blood calling to blood and all that. The Doctor and Rose were of one mind, so it worked just fine, but bonds didn’t always hold up so well across universes. Blood was blood. Clara would have had an easier time than Emma even, since she was his daughter and not his great-times-five granddaughter or whatever. This is all provided though that she was a strong enough telepath, which she wasn’t. Really, it would have gone a lot smoother with Amy.

This annoyed Clara, but she tried not to look it.

Anyway, none of the present psychics had any blood relation to the creature which lurked alone in the pocket universe now, so it would take both Emma and Rose together to open the wormhole. Clara tried to volunteer as well, but her parents wouldn’t let her.

This also annoyed her, and she did a considerably less-good job at hiding it this time.

In the end, the Doctor hopped back into the pocket universe, got the creature, then herded them both onto the TARDIS and flew them to a mostly uninhabited planet in Alpha Centauri. When that was all done, they landed in Amy’s back garden because, as the Doctor said, “blood calls to blood… and also to dinner.”

Clara sat with Amy in the grass while the Doctor was inside teaching Rory how to fix the broken refrigerator and Rose was supervising to make sure nothing blew up.

“I realised a lot of things today,” Clara said as they stared up at the stars. (Normally, one couldn’t see stars this close to central London, but they had a TARDIS which was very good at clearing light pollution from small areas.)

“Oh, yeah?” Amy prompted.

“Well, for one thing I realised our parents are gods—”

Amy snorted. “You get used to it.”
Clara laughed. “But more than that. It’s their whole… story, I guess. I mean… talk about a love story. And I know I don’t even know most of it.”

Amy nodded in understanding. “That’s half the fun of it though—figuring them out. Never a dull moment, always something new to be discovered, even without leaving the TARDIS. Rory and I have a running tally on who could get the most interesting stories out them.”

“Who’s winning?”

“Oh I am, of course.”

Clara smirked, “Of course.”

Amy let out a long sigh as she knew she couldn't just continue to brush over this. "Our parents are gods, Clara. The most important thing you have to realise is that if it comes down to a choice between us or the universe, they have to pick the universe. And it will destroy them." She turned to look at her little sister seriously then. "It's our job to make sure it never comes down to that. Because if they lose us again, the universe is lost.'

Later that night Clara wandered into the TARDIS library, for once having no idea what she was looking for. The vague notion of ‘a story’ floating about her head. She needed to escape.

The TARDIS seemed in a good enough mood to want to help her out, and guided her towards a shelf of fiction she thought the young Time Lord might like.

Chapter End Notes

Only three more chapters after this one and two of them are already written (though unfortunately neither of those two are the next chapter). As you can see I decided to skip Cold War and I will also not be writing Crimson Horror or Nightmare in Silver. Mostly because I really don't like those episodes. The next chapter will be a very very different version of Journey to the Center of the Tardis. It's really not Journey to the Center of the Tardis at all. But it will be Tardis-Centric, anyway. It's more of an intermission, really. Then it's a lead up to the 50th rewrite and the 50th rewrite itself which I'm really really excited for (hence their already being written).

Leave comments ily ❤
The Life and Time Lords

Chapter Summary

A very domestic interlude

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rose’s brow furrowed in her sleep as she felt her husband’s mind churning in the back of hers. She whinged and turned over to sling her arm across his stomach and burrow into his chest.

“You’re thinkin’ too loud,” she grumbled sleepily, her cockney accent coming back with a vengeance so soon after waking.

The Doctor chuckled lightly and ran a soothing hand down her back. “Sorry, love. Trying to figure out where to go today.”

Rose made a displeased noise at that. “No, we’re staying in today.”

He raised a curious brow. “Oh?”

“Mm. Four straight days of travelin’, we all need a break. I need more sleep.” She emphasised her point by cuddling up next to him and keeping her eyes still firmly closed. “So do Amy and Rory, and they only get that when the TARDIS is watching after Melody.”

He laughed and pulled her even closer. “Time was we could go weeks before taking a break.”

“Gettin’ old,” Rose mumbled, already falling back asleep. “Gramps.”

When she woke up again it was to the sounds of the Doctor speaking what sounded like poetry as he traced circular patterns into her arms. It took her a second to realise he was speaking Gallifreyan, and even longer to get that part of her brain working enough to process what exactly he was saying.

Rose was conscious enough now to process that he’d been writing ‘I love you’ into her skin as he spoke. She shifted so that she could look up at him from her place on his chest. He tilted his head down to her and she smiled at his slightly reverent look. “Love you too,” she whispered, and accepted his kiss.

Across the TARDIS, Clara was having a considerably less peaceful morning than her parents.

For one thing, she woke up on the floor, and was now stumbling around the corridors looking desperately for her bedroom while the TARDIS tittered at her little attempt at a joke.

The nearly-twelve-year-old cursed rather eloquently in Gallifreyan. She angrily beat her palm against the wall and shouted at the timeship. “Where is it?” she demanded, not for the first time.
Clara’s telepathy still wasn’t anywhere near the realm of “good” but she understood enough to know when the TARDIS was making fun of her. She glanced down to her Ravenclaw pajamas bottoms and oversized “I ❤️ NNYC” shirt, complete with bunny slippers and a terrible case of bedhead.

She screamed angrily and stomped down the corridor again, grumbling about how it was like having an annoying little sister (except she, of course, was not nearly this bad to Amy—maybe it was more like having an annoying little dog that kept pissing on her shoes).

She found herself in the console room, and slammed her hands against the controls underneath the monitor. “Alright, tell me. Tell me what I did. Tell me what I can do to make you forgive me and give me back my bloody room.”

There was a long stretch of silence wherein Clara was convinced the ship was going to continue to ignore her pleas, but then the monitor flickered to life in front of her.

She saw her mum, standing in the console room, clutching a newborn to her chest. With a start Clara realised she was the newborn. Her mum glowed golden, giving a speech that Clara couldn’t hear but that she could feel. And then she collapsed.

Clara watched with tears in her eyes as Rory worked to bring Rose back to life while the Doctor and Amy sobbed helplessly. Her hand covered her mouth as she watched the years that followed, her father on the TARDIS alone in a console room that was considerably more cold and lifeless.

She could feel the ship’s sorrow as she relived those memories. Instinctively Clara pressed her hand against the console and the TARDIS sharpened into focus in her mind. Rose was a part of her and the Doctor. They weren’t meant to be separated.

The TARDIS couldn’t blame her Wolf though (couldn’t blame herself), so she took her anger out on Clara.

“That’s not fair,” Clara protested through the tears that ran hotly down her cheeks. “I didn’t want any of that to happen! I was just a baby! Do you think I wanted to spend my life jumping timelines and living in orphanages? For eleven years I didn’t even properly exist!”

The ship suddenly quieted at that.

Clara blinked and she was standing back in her bedroom. She looked up towards the ceiling. “It was hard on all of us,” she spoke quietly to the TARDIS, who hummed in response. “None of us wanted that. And it’s no one’s fault. I had to forgive them. You do too.”

The TARDIS was silent again, but whether that was because of Clara’s subpar telepathy or just because she didn’t have anything more to say, Clara couldn’t be sure. Either way, she had too much adrenaline now to go back to sleep, so she simply dug up her hairbrush and ran it through the tangles a few times before retreating to the galley.

The galley, like most things on the ship, was not built for people her height, so Clara was standing on the counter sifting through the cabinets trying to find the sugary cereal when Rory walked in with his two year old on his hip.

Melody clapped her hands together excitedly. “Auntie Clara climb!”

Clara sighed. “Aunt Clara can’t find her cereal.”

“I eated it” Melody informed her solemnly. “Me and Mummy eated Auntie Clara’s cereal. Was
secret.”

Clara groaned and banged her head against the cabinet while Rory laughed. “Sorry,” he said, not sounding all that apologetic.

She glared over at him. “When are you going home?”

Rory shrugged noncommittally and sat Melody down at the table. “A week, probably? We don’t want Melody to get too behind—she still ages like a human.”

Clara jumped down from the counter, landing gracefully on her bunny slippers. “So did Amy though, right? And so am I. Amy didn’t stop aging normally until like, what? Twenty-five?”

“Yeah.” Rory glanced over at her skeptically. “How tall are you? Four foot four? Are you sure you’re growing normally?”

Clara took off one of her slippers and threw it at him.

“Whoa, violence in front of the toddler!” Amy scolded as she entered, not really all that bothered to find out why her sister was throwing things at her husband. It was hardly an uncommon occurrence.

Rory picked up the slipper from where it had landed on top of the refrigerator. “Why would you do this to poor Thelma?”

“Actually that one’s Louise.” Clara snatched her slipper from his hand and shoved it back on her foot.

“Oooo, someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed,” Amy commented as she breezed passed her to turn on the kettle.

“Wrong side of the floor, more like,” Clara grumbled under her breath.

“What was that?” Amy asked.

“Nothing!” Clara sang, and then snatched the toast Rory had just finished buttering off of his plate and glided out of the galley, ignoring her brother-in-law’s annoyed “Oi!”

She skipped towards the library, intent on finishing the last *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* book (she found she could relate with the whole having-gods-for-parents thing), but, yet again, the TARDIS seemed to have other plans.

The doors that should have opened into the library instead gave way to what appeared to be a sort of storage area, with rows of metal shelves with a diverse array of stuff. Sort of like how Clara imagined the back room of a pawn shop would look like.

She sent a questioning look up towards the ceiling and got what seemed like a telepathic shove in response, so she stepped hesitantly into the room.

Within a few seconds she realised she was looking at all the random things her parents had collected over the years. All the impulse purchases at alien bazaars across the galaxy. It was mostly cool looking rocks and gizmos which only served a purpose on their planet of origin.

Clara continued down a few more rows though, reading the little Gallifreyan labels that the TARDIS has provided and smiling as she entertained herself imagining the adventures they had
been on in all of these places.

As she was studying a rock which was simply labeled “Bazoolium”, a shaft of light suddenly illuminated half her face, as to her right a door which hadn’t been their earlier creaked open. Clara gave the TARDIS another look before setting the bazoolium down and stepping hesitantly towards whatever the ship wanted to show her next.

The next room was considerably better lit than the last, and also considerably more pink. Clara winced slightly at the pink bed set combined with pink walls and pink carpeting. Her brows drew together as she looked around the bedroom, scanning for any clues as to what she was supposed to be finding here.

She zeroed in on the bureau, where a number of framed pictures were obscured by piles of clothes. Clara picked up the clothes first, finding the pile of denim she’d thought must have been multiple things actually turning out to be a single pair of JNCO jeans. She shuddered at the reminder of early 2000’s fashion.

The jeans were quickly forgotten though as the photographs were revealed. A much younger version of her mum smiled up at her, her arm wrapped around an older blonde woman wearing a tracksuit.

Carefully, Clara flipped the frame over and removed the back. Her mum’s handwriting greeted her: *Me and Mum, 1999.*

She couldn’t help the sharp breath she took as she flipped the photo over to look at the other woman more carefully. *That was her grandmother.*

“What happened to her?” Clara whispered, realising that it had never actually occurred to her to ask about her parent’s parents. They were already so old, it seemed almost impossible to think they could have ever been young.

The TARDIS hummed mournfully, which really wasn’t much of an answer, but it was enough of one. Clara looked to the other two pictures on the dresser and picked up the other one which featured her grandmother.

She recognised the other three people in the photo. It was her mum, Uncle Mickey, and her dad—but it was his last regeneration with the pinstripes. They were all wearing Christmas cracker hats and grinning brightly at the camera.

Well, most of them were.

The Doctor’s smile was directed at Rose, actually, his eyes shining with enough love and reverence to make even the coldest hearts turn to goo. Clara chuckled slightly at the look she recognised well (he still wore it every time he looked at his wife) and wondered if he’d told her yet in this photo. If not, he shouldn’t have had to. It was obvious. Maybe that’s why Rose had framed it.

She replaced the photo and turned to the final one. This one was of two men, one of which was Uncle Jack, and the other Clara recognised as her father’s last last regeneration. The quality of this photo was significantly lesser than the other two. The edges were all slightly blurry as Jack laughed merrily at something while the Doctor looked on peevishly, his arms crossed stubbornly in front of him.

Clara rolled her eyes at this surly version of her father, so unlike the goofy dork she knew. She shook her head with a slight smirk as she put the photo down.
The door leading out to the corridor opened, and Clara dutifully followed the not at all inconspicuous nudging of the timeship, distantly hoping this wasn’t going to go past lunch.

She inspected the door as she left it, it was wooden, unlike most of the doors on the TARDIS which were typically metal, and engraved into it was a rose over circular Gallifreyan.

“Bad Wolf,” Clara read out loud as her fingers traced the words. The TARDIS sent her an image of her mother glowing golden and Clara sucked in a sharp breath, turning quickly from the door.

Across from her another door was now ajar, and she slipped through it.

She was met with bright yellow walls and plush carpeting. A cradle sat against one wall, and a little mobile hovered above it. There was a rocking chair near the wardrobe which was slightly open enough to reveal the shelves of baby clothes.

The entire room gave off an air of not having been stepped in for at least a century. Clara wandered hesitantly over to the mobile, afraid of disturbing anything, and carefully reached out to touch one of the little stars.

The lights dimmed and the mobile spun, and all around her the room turned into a galaxy.

“Well,” Clara breathed, “we can’t have astronomically inaccurate nursery mobiles.”

On the shelf there were a number of Gallifreyan bedtime stories, which Clara nicked before dashing out of the room.

Melody had wandered off from her parents, but they weren’t all that worried about it because the TARDIS was actually a rather phenomenal babysitter.

She tottered into the console room and placed her hands on the console, using it as leverage to get up onto her toes and peak over the edge. She reached one arm over to mash a few buttons, but they didn’t appear to be doing anything at the moment.

Rose appeared at the top of the stairs then, and Melody grinned up at her. “Nana!”

Rose laughed and glided down the stairs, lifting Melody up onto her hip as she ran into her arms. “Oh, hello! You’re up early, aren’t you. Are you giving your parents a rough morning?”

Melody shook her head. “Nu-uh.”

Rose gave her a skeptical look. “Hmm…” She looked to where the two-year-old had been playing with the ship controls. “Were you helping to drive to TARDIS?”

As Melody nodded, Rose readjusted a few of the switches the toddler had hit. The TARDIS was doing a good job keeping them from doing anything, but it was energy she didn’t really need to be expending.

“Well, one day you’re gonna be an even better pilot than your gramps. I guess we’d better get started training then, hadn’t we?”

By now, Melody was used to being told things she would do in the future. They hadn’t gone into detail, of course, but she was a bright two-year-old, and she understood time travel pretty well. In fact, she found it odd that her classmates at school didn’t have time machines—she’d been under
the impression they were standard.

She wiggled so that her nana would let her down, and ran to drag out the little stool from underneath the console. She stepped on it, and then her head just barely came over the control panel. She grinned proudly up at Rose who laughed indulgently.

Then the Doctor came down the stairs, still tying his bow tie and tripping slightly as he reached the bottom. “Whoa! What’s going on here?”

“I drive the TARDIS!” Melody informed him happily.

“Oh, are you?” The Doctor went around to glance at the monitor to check they were in fact still in the vortex. “Learning from the best, I see.”

“Nana’s a better driver.”

The Doctor made an indignant noise. “I resent that, Melody Pond! I was piloting this ship perfectly fine without your grandmother for centuries!”

Rose grinned, her tongue peeking out between her teeth. “Yeah… but it’s better with two. Right, Doctor?”

He could never resist that smile. “Of course.”

“It’ll be three with me!” Melody piped in brightly, earning laughs from her grandparents. “And four with Auntie Clara!”

“What about your mum?” The Doctor asked.

Melody wrinkled her nose. “Mummy can’t drive.”

Amy chose that moment to appear. “Oi!” she shouted. “Who told you I can’t drive?”

“Daddy.”

Behind Amy, Rory’s eyes widened and he smartly stepped out of her range, skirting around her to hide valiantly behind their two-year-old. “I said no such thing ever in my life not once ever,” he lied unconvincingly.

Amy just hummed and went to sit down on the jumpseat—she wasn’t actually under any illusions that she could drive. “Where to today?”

“We were actually just thinking of having a day in if that’s all right?” the Doctor answered.

Amy brightened. “Yeah, sounds lovely! Let’s go out for dinner though, yeah? I’ve been craving those lobster rolls we had on—”

“Glyxsol System Ten,” the Doctor filled in her blank. “Not actually lobster.”

“Yeah sure so long as you don’t tell me what it actually is. Let me have this.”

The Doctor threw his hands up in surrender. “I won’t say a thing, I promise.”

Clara appeared from around the corner then, having abandoned her mismatched jim jams and bunny slippers in favour of a casual collared dress and a pair of chucks, she was just finishing plaiting her hair. “Is Amy talking about her not-lobster again?”
Amy pointed a warning finger at her little sister. “Don’t say a word.”

Clara snorted. “Yeah, no promises from me,” she teased, and Amy stuck her tongue out at her.

Rose rolled her eyes. “Girls,” she warned them lightly, peering over the monitor to give them a stern look.

The Doctor clapped his hands together. “Clara, library, telepathy lessons.”

She instantly groaned. “Nooooo, do I have to? Let’s do Gallifreyan instead—”

“No, no,” he cut off her protests as he had hundreds of other times. “You’re already fluent.”

Clara smirked. “Yeah, but Amy isn’t.”

“Hey!”

“I bet I could try to get something through that thick skull of hers,” Clara went on as if she hadn’t heard her.

Amy growled, jumping up from the seat, and Clara squealed as she careened around the corner and down the corridor.

“There’s no use running! My legs are longer than yours!” Amy shouted as she started after her.

“And the TARDIS loves me more than you!”

“Girls!” the Doctor shouted after them, but it was no use. His voice was lost to their childish laughter and dramatic screams.

Surprisingly, the two Time Lord sisters did actually end up curled up on the library couch as Clara helped Amy with her Gallifreyan. She really wasn’t all that bad, it was just that it was harder for her being older and raised human.

Amy threw her pencil down after a few hours. “All right, I’m tapping out,” she said, rubbing at her temples and stretching her legs out for the first time in entirely too long.

Clara laughed and sat back as well. “Now you know how I feel after telepathy lessons.”

Amy pressed her lips together at that, considering. Telepathy really hasn’t been that hard for her to pick up—about as easy as Gallifreyan had been for Clara. She’d taken for granted her natural ability and not really considered that it was literally learning to use another part of her brain. Their different learning abilities were just products of their (very complicated) genetic pool, she supposed. “I wonder which one mum struggled with.”

Clara snorted. “I bet mum was a natural at both like she is everything.”

The Doctor spoke up from where he was leaning against the door frame. “Well, I can’t argue with you there,” he said amusedly, getting their attention, “but she did have both of you at an advantage.”

Amy laughed and pulled herself to standing. “What’s Melody up to?” she asked, raising her arms above her head to try and get feeling back into them.

“Finger painting in Rose’s studio,” he answered, tilting his head in that general direction. Amy
thanked him with a kiss to the cheek before leaving and allowing him to trap Clara into the telepathy lessons she’d been so expertly avoiding for the last few days.

“Ugh!” Clara moaned, immediately slumping into the sofa cushions like she might be able to disappear into them.

The Doctor rolled his eyes and took the empty space beside her. “I have an idea. It’ll either make everything much easier, or it’ll be too difficult to pull off.”

“I don’t need Amy’s sight to tell you it’ll be the latter,” she deadpanned.

“Oh come on Clara at least try. I know you do actually want to get better at this.”

She sighed and rolled her head around to look at him finally. “I know it’s important to you and I know it’s an important part of being a Time Lord and I want to be a part of it—I just wish it wasn’t so bloody difficult.”

“Language,” he admonished, but sounded more amused than anything. He patted her leg, signaling for her to sit up, which she did with only minor grumbling. “All right, now this is something that you normally don’t do until basic telepathic communication is comfortable, but I think it might be easier if you’re able to envision what I’m talking about when I say ‘telepathic centres.’”

Clara wrinkled her nose. “It’s the fuzzy bit, isn’t it?”

He chuckled. “Yes, but many—or well, actually most—telepaths have physical, or rather meta physical telepathic centres. Sort of like a mental hub for communication.”

She squinted. “Sort of like how when Mum shows me our timelines and it’s like we’re somewhere else?”

“Yes! Exactly like that actually! Though the timelines are a separate cognitive process than the hubs…” He drifted off as he tried to think of an example. “Do you remember when I had to go into that Albarian woman’s mind? To help her fight off that psychic attack?”

Clara nodded. “Yeah, you told her to imagine a hallway of doors, and to close all of them.”

The Doctor nodded. “Yes, that’s the simplest way for non-telepaths to imagine telepathy. Walking amongst someone else’s memories. If you were to just jump into someone’s mind it would be a bit like standing in a room made completely of filing cabinets, but none of it is filed properly. Getting them to imagine the doors at least gives it some order.”

She turned that over in her head for a moment. “But a telepathic hub is…. different?” she guessed.

“The hub is the starting point for anything and everything your mind processes—telepathic or otherwise. Telepaths have them so that we can easily go into or telepathic centres without getting lost in all the junk, so to speak. It also makes communicating with others much easier.”

Her brow furrowed. “Well if it makes everything so much easier, why didn’t we start with that?”

The Doctor laughed again slightly. “Normally, hubs tend to develop on their own as telepathy develops through practice. You can’t just imagine your hub, you have to summon it. Normally, it looks like someplace that reflects how your mind works.”

Clara snorted. “Is your hub a water park?”
“No,” he cracked a smile which looked an awful lot like hers. “Mine’s the TARDIS. Start in the console room, completely customizable, can go anywhere from there.”

He sounded like he was bragging. “What’s Amy’s?” she asked, tilting her head.

“Garden maze,” he answered easily, and went on at her raised brow. “It’s cool; run into a statue shaped like a unicorn and remember the time we freed one—”

“You what?”

He smirked. “I’ll let your sister tell you that one.” Clara sighed but motioned for him to continue.

“Thorns are bad thoughts or feelings, flowers are good ones. That sort of thing.”

Clara studied her father contemplatively. “What’s mum’s hub then?”

The Doctor couldn’t help the happy dopey sort of grin that spread across his face. “Oh, her mind is beautiful. To be in her mind is to walk amongst the stars. Her telepathic hub is the entire universe—at her fingertips.”

Clara’s eyes widened. “So… black holes, supernovas, entire galaxies… that’s mum?”

The Doctor nodded. “That’s mum.”

“She’s literally everything?”

“Yup,” the Doctor popped the ‘p’.

Clara thought about that for a bit. It wasn’t really anything new, but sometimes she found herself having to reprocess her existence. Her mum had looked into the untempered schism in order to save her dad. And she realised that she had to create herself—had to create everything that led up to her, to them, it order to save it all. Everything. The whole universe. The Big Bang was Rose Tyler. The universe happened because Rose loved the Doctor.

Bad Wolf creates herself, and she is everything.

Clara took a deep breath. “Okay so how do I summon my telepathic centre or hub or whatever?”

Upon his instructions, she closed her eyes and attempted to carry out the vague orders. Blimey, she thought just focusing on her telepathy was hard. Everytime she thought she had a grasp on the fuzziness it slipped back into the recesses of her mind. Her face scrunched up in concentration (and frustration) as she tried to think of an imaginary place without actually attempting to dictate what it was.

“You’re thinking too hard,” the Doctor said.

Her eyes snapped open as she let out an irritated noise. “Isn’t that what telepathy is? Thinking?”

His brow furrowed. “No, absolutely not. What gave you that idea? Certainly I never said that.”

“Well it’s— it’s…” Clara stuttered over her words. “It’s just brain stuff! That’s what brains do!”

“No no no no no,” he shook his head with every syllable. “No, Clara. Telepathy is not thinking. Your mind does so much more than think. It feels, it learns, it grows, it creates. Learning to use your telepathy is learning to focus on all of those things individually and all at once.” He tapped her head for emphasis.
Clara sighed. Everything about telepathy was so... unscientific. *Feel* this! *Feel* that! It made absolutely no sense to her whatsoever! How could she learn about something that didn’t even properly exist—

“Relax,” he father instructed, simultaneously sensing the direction of her thoughts and pushing her to keep trying. “Just try and empty your head of everything. Don’t even focus on the fuzzy bit.”

Clara always hated that instruction. “Empty her head”? How the hell was she supposed to do that? But she just rolled her eyes behind her lids and took a deep breath, focusing on relaxing all of her muscles until she gave herself the illusion of floating. She could hear the gentle hum of the TARDIS and allowed that to fill her ears.

Then the Doctor’s fingers tapped gently against her temples, and she further relaxed her rudimentary barriers (which were mostly built by her parents). He slipped into her head easily and she could feel him standing there in the empty space.

‘*Now focus on the feeling of using telepathy, from all the times that you have before, and summon those feelings to you. Let it surround you.*’

It felt like it took hours, and every time Clara thought about giving up, her goal got further away, but the Doctor was patient. Until finally, finally, the blackness exploded into—

Exactly the room they were sitting in.

Clara thought for a second that she had just opened her eyes and destroyed all her progress again, but then she noticed the way her father was beaming at her, and then she looked around properly.

Her telepathic hub was the TARDIS library, but it wasn’t *exactly* the TARDIS library. The lights were dimmed and the ceilings were higher—so high she couldn’t actually see the top, and none of the shelves were labeled. The books were all haphazardly arranged, like those “magical” bookshops where they glued the covers together to make the stacks look like they were defying gravity.

She looked down to her hands and gasped at having a physical form. She’d *never* been able to do that. Not unless her parents had imagined one for her.

The Doctor removed his hands from her temples and she blinked back into the brighter library. “You did it!” he exclaimed, pulling her into a hug.

Clara laughed as she hugged him back.

In the studio, Rose had stuck a black french beret on top of Melody’s head that was entirely too big for her as she sat at one of the art desks with the sort of focus only a half Time Lord toddler could have and painted random circles with her fingers.

Rose glanced over to her occasionally as she sat on a stool in front of an easel. She was working on a canvas in acrylics, painting Melody in the Valley of the Gods on Gallifrey. It was a place she’d only been to in the Doctor’s mind, and it was of the few peaceful scenes she’d seen of his home planet. Even before the war, Gallifrey hadn’t exactly been a Utopia.

Twin suns gleamed in the burnt orange sky, shining out from the peaks of the mountains Solace and Solitude. Silver trees glittered up the horizon and red grass grew wildly through the valley. Rose but her lip as she painted in the details of the small child’s face as she ran through the field.
“Oh that’s gorgeous,” Amy said, making her mother jump as she apparently hadn’t heard her come in.

Rose laughed as her palette fell against her dungarees, covering them in even more paint than there already was. “Thanks,” she said, sighing, “I’m still not happy with it.”

Amy wasn’t all that surprised at the comment. Rose was a bit of a perfectionist when it came to her art, but it paid off. “What planet is that?” she asked, taking in the unfamiliar landscape.

Rose turned back to the canvas, a sad smile on her lips. “Gallifrey,” she whispered. “I’ve been dreaming of it a lot recently. I don’t know why?”

Amy tilted her head. For herself, recurring dreams usually meant something big was coming—a turning point which was so big and in flux that it couldn’t come through all at once in a vision. Sometimes it was the same for Rose (Amy got it from somewhere after all), but it could also just as easily be a coincidence. I had to have been a coincidence. Gallifrey was gone.

She found she didn’t have any way to respond to that. She knew they were both thinking the same thing, and there wasn’t any use saying it out loud. Instead, Amy situated herself on the plush armchair nearest the easel, pulling her knees up to her chest and taking in the studio. The large room was covered in Rose’s art, many of the shelves were canvases stacked on top of each other and others leaned on each other against the wall.

“I wish I had your talent,” Amy lamented. “I can hardly draw a stick figure.”

Rose laughed. “I think this was a product of doodling between the margins in maths for eleven years. Who knew I’d eventually understand quantum mechanics?”

“Oh this is way cooler than quantum mechanics.” Amy smirked and picked up the nearest piece, which happened to be a family portrait Rose had finished recently.

“I’ve been meaning to move that to the study,” Rose said, glancing over the edge to see it better.

“We should take Christmas photos this year,” Amy grinned. “Send out cards all over the universe.”

Rose smirked, raising a brow. “Happy Holidays from the TARDIS?”

“Time Lord Tidings,” Amy quipped with a glimmer, earning a laugh from her mum.

Rose’s eyes sparkled with mischief. “I bet I could find your father’s old scarf. We could wrap it around all of twice!”

“Okay now this has to happen!” Amy laughed.

Rose got a sort of far away look then. “Oh, my mum used to always insist on taking Christmas photo. It was only ever just the two of us, and we couldn’t afford a professional… but every year she’d dig out this ancient looking camera and make us pose in front of the tree. I moaned about it when I got older, but I secretly enjoyed it. She even roped the Doctor into it—the one Christmas we had before…” she drifted off and Amy nodded in understanding.

“Do you think she’d like us?” Amy asked quietly, making her mum look over at her. “Clara and me, I mean. And Rory and Melody too.”

“Oh, she’d love you,” Rose said with enough conviction to chase Amy’s fears away. “She always wanted grandchildren… used to pester us all the time. God, I never missed her more than when I
was pregnant for the first time with Alina—and after we lost her.”

Rose wouldn’t say it out loud, but sometimes she was glad Jackie hadn’t been there for what happened to Amy and Clara. She couldn’t face having to tell her mum that bad people had taken Amy and the same people had made her abandon Clara. If by some miracle she ever did see her mother again, the details of her children’s births would remain unsaid.

Amy stayed quiet. Her parents so rarely opened up, even now, and she was scared breathing too loud might break the spell. But she could tell by the look on her face that she wasn’t just reliving Alina’s birth. “Do you think you’ll try again?” she asked hesitantly.

Rose’s gaze flickered back to hers with a pained expression. “I don’t know. You saw what happened. I don’t think I could go through that a fourth time.”

“None of that was your fault.”

“Weren’t they?” Rose asked automatically, but then immediately backtracked before her daughter could lecture her. “No, I know. But I can’t help but think the universe is trying to tell me something. Maybe our life just isn’t meant to have a baby in it.”

“That’s rubbish,” Amy told her firmly. “First off, the universe can’t tell you anything. You created this universe. Secondly, you and him are great parents. You’re the best parents any girl could wish for and I wouldn’t trade you or our life for the whole bloody world, and neither would Clara. And as for the whole baby thing, I’ve seen you both with Melody and you’re great and she’s perfectly wonderful in this life on the TARDIS traveling. She loves it. And you’ve never once put her in danger.”

“We wouldn’t.”

“Exactly.”

Rose gave her a look. “You know it’s more complicated than that.”

Amy sighed. “Yeah, I know Mum. I’m just saying. Don’t write it off cos you’re afraid. You deserve to be happy.”

“I am happy, love,” Rose assured her. “Like you said, I wouldn’t trade any of this for anything.”

Amy smiled. “Good.”

Melody interrupted them then, holding up her painting. “Mummy! Nana! Mir’an! ” she said the Gallifreyan word for ‘look.’

Her painting was just a big brown blob, but they both told her how lovely it looked.

“Hey,” Amy said as Melody ran off to go show her dad, “and maybe if you have another kid she’ll finally get the artist gene.”

Rose let out a surprised laugh.

Chapter End Notes
The Good News: the next two chapters are already written. The Bad News: it’s the last two chapters. (Plus a short epilogue).

Leave comments! 💖
Fourteen year old Clara Oswald leant back against the TARDIS console, staring boredly up towards the ceiling as the phone in her hand continued to ring.

Her parents were off visiting friends and had left her in charge of the ship. Which sounded fun at first—until they told her not to fly it. So she’d decided to start scrolling boredly through the mainframe until something caught her eye while the speakerphone continued to ring shrilly.

Finally, her sister answered. “Amy, thank god, I swear this phone has been ringing for ages,” Clara started before Amy could even say hello.

Amy laughed a bit. “She was probably shifting through timelines to try and get a hold of me then.”

Clara wrinkled her nose at that. “Where are you? What year is it? What’s happening?”

“Uh…” Amy drifted off as she pulled her mobile away to look at the screen. “12th of October, 2020. London. Rory just took Melody out to go see her grandfather play golf.”

Clara didn’t have to ask which grandfather, because there’s not a planet in the universe on which their father would play golf. She rocked back on her heels. “Sounds like you’ve got some time to kill then…” she said mischievously.

Amy squinted suspiciously at the tone of her little sister. “What are you up to?” she asked dryly.

Clara pulled her chin back and huffed in offense. “What makes you think I’m up to something?”

“You’re always up to something.”

Clara shrugged, unable to hide her smirk at that admittedly apt description. She spun back around to start typing into the computer terminal again. “I found this really cool setting in the TARDIS controls. We can travel along people’s timelines—”

“That sounds dangerous,” Amy interrupted her.

“Everything about the TARDIS sounds dangerous,” Clara shot back, and all around her the ship dinged angrily. Clara just rolled her eyes in response. They’d made up years ago, but she and the ship still liked to antagonise one another. She went on, “That’s not even the interesting bit. The interesting bit is that I found Mum’s timeline.”

“Okay… that sounds really dangerous.” Amy sighed. “I’m not going to tell you it’s a good idea to
start snooping around Mum’s past, if that’s what you’re looking for. You could mess up and get us both undone. Or y’know… get the universe undone.”

Clara rolled her eyes again. “That seems unlikely.”

“Really? Because it seems more unlikely to me that a fourteen year old could manage to fly a time machine randomly about her mother’s timeline and manage not to screw anything up.”

She didn’t miss a beat. “Come with me then.”

“I’m sorry, what?” Amy asked incredulously.

“Listen, I’m going to do it either way. The way I see it, it’s just better for everyone if you come along to keep an eye on me.”

“Clara, I just got one child out of my house, now I have to take care of you too?”

“Hey, at least I son’s wet the bed.”

Amy groaned in exasperation, pinching the bridge of her nose as she did. “Oh they’re going to be so cross with me…” she mumbled.

“But you’re an adult. They can’t ground you.”

“That’s the real reason you want me to come, isn’t it? To shirk the blame onto me. They’ll be more cross that I let you do it, than that you did it at all.”

Clara shrugged noncommittally. That was, admittedly, part of her plan, but not most of it. “Also because it would be fun. We are sisters. And I rarely ever get to see you…”

Amy huffed out a long breath. “Oh, don’t start with the guilt thing,” she complained, but Clara could already hear in her sister’s voice that she’d won.

“So I’ll be there to pick you up in half a second.” She grinned, already pushing buttons and pulling levers.

“Don’t you need my time?”

Clara shook her head. “No need. Also figured out how to trace a call’s T.S. coordinates.”

“Of course you did.”

A few minutes later Amy and Clara both let out small screams as their backs hit the glass floor beneath them with a less-than-stellar landing.

“You’re a terrible driver,” Clara commented as she blinked away the fogginess.

“Yeah,” Amy pushed herself up, “I’ve been told. So where are we?”

Amy had adjusted the monitor back to normal-person-height while they were flying, so Clara had to go up on her toes to read the Gallifreyan that scrolled across the screen in front of her. “Um… London, April, 2005. Mum is 19 then, this is probably right when she meets Dad…” Clara paused and tilted her head. “Funny. I popped up in London a lot, but I don’t think ever in 2005.”
“I might have come on a school trip around this time,” Amy supplied.

They both looked at each other as the weirdness of their lives settled in, as it was wont to do every now and again, but they shook it off easily. Clara ran to the doors before her sister could start regaling her with reminders about the fragility of the time space continuum.

“Klaraiztelme!” Amy shouted as she chased after her. “I swear to—”

She was cut off from whatever deity she was about to shout as Clara yanked her behind a rack of clothes. “Hesutecalla!” Clara hissed ‘shut up’ in Gallifreyan, and jabbed a finger towards one of the shop girls behind the counter.

Amy rolled her eyes. “Come on, Clara, every blonde we see is not going to be—oh my god that’s Mum.” Her eyes widened as the blonde in question turned around to reveal herself to in fact be Rose Tyler. Amy looked around to see that the TARDIS had landed in a dressing room, and she quickly pulled the curtain closed around it. “This is so stupid.”

“This is so cool,” Clara corrected her, unable to take her eyes off their mother.

Amy tilted her head. “She looks so young.”

“Well she is about a three centuries younger.”

Amy snorted at that, and nodded. “Are you happy now? Can we go home?”

Clara opened her mouth to say no, but before she could speak, directly to their left a man with a thick northern accent shouted “There you are!” —making the girls spin around in wide eyed horror as a leather clad man flung back the dressing room curtain and walked into the TARDIS.

They chased after him, stopping in the threshold to watch their father turn in a slow circle, taking in the unfamiliar surroundings.

“This… is not my TARDIS,” he mumbled.

Instead of sort of lying by agreeing Clara said, “It’s ours, actually.” Effectively getting his attention.

“It can’t be,” the Doctor growled.

“We’re Time Lords so actually it can be,” Amy threw back, giving as good as she got. Unwilling to put up with anybody’s bad attitude—much less a past version of her father’s.

He scoffed. “No you’re not. You can’t be!”

Clara muttered to her sister out of the side of her mouth, “This is right after the Time War.”

Amy closed her eyes and let out a Gallifreyan curse.

“How do you know that?” the Doctor demanded. “How do you know Gallifreyan? Who are you?”

Clara took a few slow hesitant steps forward. “We’re sisters,” she told him. “We’re mostly Time Lord, part human.”

“That’s not possible,” he continued to argue. “And this is my ship. I don’t know how, but it is.” He tapped the side of his head for emphasis and both the girls nodded as they realised how he’d found their TARDIS at all. Telepathic connections still worked across timelines.
“If you can feel the TARDIS than you should be able to feel us too,” Amy spoke softly. “Just put your walls down.”

The Doctor shook his head vehemently. “There’s no one left. I’m the only one. It’s silent.”

Amy reached out tentatively towards his telepathic frequency, but it barely registered at all. His walls had never been as high as they were now. She shook her head sadly. “It won’t be forever.”

“Who are you?” he demanded again.

“We’re your daughters,” Clara answered before Amy could stop her.

“I don’t have daughters.”

Clara huffed in annoyance. “Boy, you sure do like to argue, don’t you? Mum really must have put you in your place enough times. I swear you’re much better at just going with it in the future.”

The Doctor just stared at her incredulously, mouth hung open slightly as if he couldn’t quite comprehend what she was saying to him.

Amy took a step back suddenly as her vision swam with the image of their mother getting shot by a store room dummy. “Speaking of which, you need to go now if we want to have any chance at getting born,” she spoke urgently.

Clara read the look on her sister’s face and could feel her emotions well enough to put together what she saw. “Or if we’d like the universe to get made,” she added, looking nauseous now.

“Sorry, what?” the Doctor sputtered.

“You need to lock these memories now,” Amy told him sternly, “and go save your wife.”

“My what now?”

“GO!” Both girls shouted at once, taking him by the arms and shoving him out the doors.

The Doctor stood there blinking for a few seconds after the door closed behind him. Every rational thought he had was screaming at him not to believe them. But that little bit of hope, that tiny little bit of light left in the back of his head that he still couldn’t squash, told him to listen.

The future TARDIS dematerialised, and a second later he locked away the memories of it ever existing, along with any ideas of having a future at all.

He ran towards the basement.

Amy looked slowly towards her little sister. “That was the stupidest thing you’ve ever convinced me to do.”

Clara grinned though, eyes sparkling. “That was so cool!” she exclaimed, already running towards the console to start scrolling through their mother’s timeline again.

“Cool. Stupid. Are those words just synonymous in this family?” Amy chased after her exasperatedly. “What are you doing? You better be taking us home.”

The TARDIS flashed her lights in offense at that before Clara could respond. “Sorry, other home,”
Amy amended quickly, patting the ship and earning a pleased sort of telepathic purr in return.

They landed though a second later and Amy could tell by the look on Clara’s face that they were not home. “Sycorax ship over London, Christmas 2006… translation matrix disabled for some reason.”

By the door, brown robes and masks that looked like animal skulls appeared along with the vague telepathic notion that they should put them on before walking outside.

“Oh no,” Amy breathed.

“Oh yes!” Clara exclaimed, already running to shove on the questionable wardrobe.

They were on a spaceship, though it looked like a rock cave, and quietly the two girls snuck into the crowd. The room was set up like a sort of atrium. With bleacher rows of Sycorax, and their leader at the bottom, facing the other TARDIS as they dragged Rose out of it, another man following after her.

“Oh my god, is that Uncle Mickey?” Clara asked incredulously, and Amy hushed her.

There was a man and a woman in suits (“Amy that’s Harriet Jones!”), and the man was translating what the Sycorax were saying. “The yellow girl. She has the clever blue box. Therefore, she speaks for your planet.”

“Damn right she does,” Clara mumbled proudly, and Amy couldn’t help but laugh.

Harriet Jones protested though. “But she can’t!”

“Yes I can,” Rose cut it, taking a determined step forward.

Mickey tried to stop her, “Don't you dare.”

Rose looked back to him angrily. “Someone's got to be the Doctor!”

“What? Where’s Dad?” Clara whispered, yet again getting hushed by her older sister.

“They'll kill you,” Harriet tried to stop her as well.

“Never stopped him.” Rose didn’t back down, taking a few more steps forward, though her shaking legs gave away her fear. “I, er, I address the Sycorax according to—Article Fifteen of the Shadow Proclamation… I command you to leave this world with all the authority of the… Slitheen Parliament of… um… Raxacoricofallapatorius, and er, the Gelth Confederacy as uh, sanctioned by the Mighty Jagrafess and—oh, the Daleks! Now, leave this planet in peace!”

Amy and Clara both winced through the entirety of the speech, cringing inwardly at all the completely misplaced words and phrases. All around them the Sycorax laughed.

“How far into her timeline did you say this was?” Amy asked quietly.

“About a year after she met Dad,” Clara answered, and her sister nodded as it made sense then that Rose had no clue what she was talking about.

The man translated what the Sycorax leader was saying. “You are very, very funny. And now you're going to die.”

Clara lunged forward at that, Amy just barely managing to grab her arm and hold her back. Harriet
Jones and Mickey were likewise both held back as they tried to do the same.

The man continued reading from the translation device as the leader approached Rose. “Did you think you were clever with your stolen words? We are the Sycorax, we stride the darkness. Next to us you are but a wailing child. If you are the best your planet can offer as a champion—”

“Then your world will be gutted,” the Sycorax was suddenly speaking English, “and your people enslaved—”

Suit-Guy looked up as he realised he was repeating them now. “Hold on, that's English.”

Amy and Clara both looked behind them, wondering if their TARDIS had switched back on the translation matrix.

“...If I can hear English, then it's being translated. Which means it's working. Which means…” Rose turned slowly towards her own TARDIS, and everyone in the room followed suit.

The Doctor (dressed in his jim jams) flung open the doors with a manic sort of grin. “Did you miss me?” he asked cheekily.

The Sycorax cracked his electrically charged whip, meaning to kill him, but the Doctor grabbed it easily with his hand, yanking it from the Sycorax’s grasp. “You could have someone's eye out with that,” he reprimanded him.

Another Sycorax came up behind him wielding a club over his head. But just before Clara could instinctively call out to her father in warning, The Doctor grabbed the club and broke it across his knee.

Both Amy and Clara let out the breaths they’d been holding.

“How dare—!” the Sycorax leader started.

“Now, you, just wait,” The Doctor interrupted him, holding up a finger, “I'm busy.”

He spun back around towards the humans. “Mickey! Hello! And Harriet Jones, MP for Flydale North. Blimey, it's like This Is Your Life!” He grinned widely at all of their shocked faces. “Tea! That's all I needed! A good cup of tea! Superheated infusion of free radicals and tannin. Just the thing for healing the synapses. Now, first thing's first…” He stepped up to Rose and looked down at her seriously, talking only to her now. “Be honest, how do I look?”

“Holy sideburns, Batman,” Clara whispered, and Amy snorted but hushed her quickly.

Rose scanned his face. Anybody with eyes could see her obvious attraction to this new regeneration as a blush stained her cheeks. “Er… different,” she settled on, and unbeknownst to her their future daughters giggled in amusement.

“Good different or bad different?” he pressed, and gods, it was so obvious he wanted her to fancy him.

“I think there’s a reason Dad got such pretty faces two regenerations in a row after meeting Mum,” Clara whispered.

“You look just like him,” Amy whispered back, and Clara furrowed her brow in consideration.

Rose shrugged noncommittally, not wanting to risk saying anything too forward. “Just different.”
He was clearly disappointed in her apparent lack of enthusiasm for his new face, and switched tactics. “Am I ginger?” he asked her seriously.

His daughters both failed to conceal their laughter at that as Clara elbowed Amy in the ribs.

Rose squinted up at him in obvious confusion. “No, you're just sort of…” she made a vague gesture towards her hair indicating his own, “brown.”

“Aw!” the Doctor whinged, swinging away from her. “I wanted to be ginger! I've never been ginger!” He seemed to remember something suddenly though and spun back around to point at his future wife. “And you! Rose Tyler! Fat lot of good you were! You gave up on me!”

Rose pulled her chin back at that, opening her mouth to yell back at him, but The Doctor’s words seemed to catch up to him before she could.

“Oh, that’s rude,” he scolded himself. “Is that the sort of man I am now? Rude… Rude and not ginger.”

“Guess we finally know where that came from,” Amy mumbled and Clara nodded.

Harriet Jones stepped forward then, looking to Rose for help. “I'm sorry. Who is this?”

“I'm the Doctor,” he answered for himself.

“He's the Doctor,” Rose confirmed, eyes sparkling as she looked up to him, and he sent her a dazzling smile in return.

“We should go,” Amy whispered, tugging her little sister reluctantly back towards their TARDIS.

“Are we at the Olympics?”

“Oh my God is that Dad?”

“Oh my God that’s Dad!”

“I’ve always wanted to see Shakespeare. Didn't imagine it’d go like that.”

“I guess there’s a reason Dad kept saying no.”

“Yeah cos he didn’t want Will to flirt with Mum!”

They stepped out on to a high hill overlooking a bustling city. “At a guess… Ancient Rome?” Clara tried, annoyed that the TARDIS had refused to give them the coordinates.

Amy shook her head. “Come on, Clara. You’re a Time Lord, we’ve been over this.”

Clara wrinkled her nose and glared up at her sister before scrunching her eyes shut and attempting to use her time-space senses. “I don’t know… 70… 9… AM? No wait sorry that’s AD. That makes more sense.” She opened her eyes again and turned in a small circle, “I’m still gonna say Rome. It feels Roman.”
“Close but,” Amy pointed to the singular mountain in the distance, “Rome had *seven* hills.”

Clara pouted. “That’s cheating,” she complained, and Amy only snorted and rolled her eyes in response. “Alright so where are we then?”

It was Amy’s turn to wrinkle her nose, squinting as she looked into the middle distance. “I don’t… know… something is blocking the signal. Do you feel that?”

Clara raised her brows, looking up as she felt for anything out of the ordinary. “No?”

Amy pursed her lips and started walking down the hill towards the city. Clara watched her go before remembering she should probably try and keep up.

“Ammy!” Clara called after her, chasing her into a bustling marketplace, “Ammy! What are you doing?”

“I’m looking for… aha!” She made a triumphant noise as she pulled back a red gauzy curtain to reveal a hidden door. She pushed it open easily and started fearlessly down the dusty cobblestone corridor.

Clara stared incredulously between where the TARDIS had landed far up on the hill and the curtain Amy had pushed aside. “How did you…?” She looked up and realised her sister was already far ahead of her. “Hey! Wait up!” Clara ran to catch up with her, and slowed her pace once she’d finally reached her side. “How did you find this? What’s going on?”

Amy shook her head. “I don’t know. There’s some sort of telepathic presence here.”

“Other aliens?”

Again, Amy shook her head, brow further furrowing. “No, they’re definitely human… or mostly human at least. There’s a part of it that’s… weird. How do you not feel that?”

Clara shrugged noncommittally. “You’re a stronger telepath than me, maybe you’re just more sensitive to it than I am. How do you mean human? Can humans be telepathic?”

“Sometimes, but it’s pretty rare—especially in adults,” Amy explained.

“So we’re headed towards a large group of psychic children?”

“No, they’re definitely all adults… or teenagers at the youngest. They’re *really* strong telepaths, Clara; you should be able to feel them—especially now we’re getting closer.”

Clara muttered something rather unkind in Gallifreyan under her breath at that, but Amy only rolled her eyes as her little sister concentrated on the frequencies surrounding them. “Oh,” she whispered eventually, “whoa.”

“Yeah,” Amy breathed, just as the corridor opened up into a large room. Fifteen girls stood in a circle, all of them draped in hooded red robes with their faces painted white, and black lines framing their eyes.

Clara’s eyes widened as she took in the scene in front of them. “Oh great,” she mumbled sarcastically. “We’ve stumbled into a creepy cult meeting. Shotgun not getting sacrificed first.”

Amy glared down at her sister warnedly, but she didn’t have time to hush her before the women we’re turning their attention on them.
“Who dares enter the Temple of Sibyl?” One of them demanded, making the sisters freeze as she stormed towards them, her comrades flanking her on either side. “Looking upon this sacred ceremony is punishable by death!”

Amy opened her mouth, grasping for some sort of response to that, but she was saved from having to as another voice came from behind a thick set of gauzy red curtains. “Wait,” it rasped, sounding not unlike a chronic smoker. “These two are children of time—sisters born in the light of the universe.”

“Does Mum count as the light of the universe now?” Clara muttered, and Amy elbowed her sharply in the ribs.

The woman squinted at the two girls suspiciously even as she headed the words of her high priestess and took a step back from them. “Their minds, they are guarded,” she observed.

“They are gifted with the Sight,” the high priestess insisted.

“Actually it’s just h—” Clara started.

“Just both of us!” Amy shouted over her. “Yep, we both can see the future. Prophecy and all that.”

Clara pressed her lips together as she realised where this was going.

“You will join the Sibylline Sisterhood,” the high priestess declared, still hidden as she was behind the curtains. It clearly was not a question, and the two Time Lords had absolutely no say in the matter as the sisterhood took them by the arms and led them further into the temple.

Clara huffed as she was shoved into a kneeling position in front of a girl holding a paintbrush. She grumbled and shifted her knees against the cushion as the cold paint hit her cheek. “What on Earth are you playing at?” she growled to her sister in Gallifreyan.

It took Amy a second longer to process what her sister was saying, as she still wasn’t as well-versed in their father’s native language as she would have liked to have been by now. “Keeping us alive,” she answered shortly.

Clara rolled her eyes. She’d used the wrong form of ‘us,’ but she knew well enough not to correct her sister’s grammar at such a time as this. “They’re going to find out I can’t predict the future,” she whispered instead.

“Just... improvise,” Amy suggested unhelpfully, and Clara grit her teeth together to keep from shouting at that.

She turned her attention instead towards the eyes that the girl was now painting on the backs of her hands. “What are these?” She asked her, speaking in English (or probably Latin, actually) now.

“They are the eyes of the Wolf,” the girl answered, and both Amy and Clara stiffened. “The Sybil teaches us many things,” she went on idly as she continued to paint gold flecks into the eyes. “It is the Wolf spirit that connects the universe, and thus us to each other. It is through her eyes that we can See.”

“The Sybil,” Amy started, leaning over to hear the conversation better, “was she blessed with Sight by the Wolf?” The girl nodded in response and Amy mimicked the movement. “Yeah, me too,” she whispered unconsciously, missing the way the girl looked at her for it.

Clara wiggled her fingers slightly as she inspected the paint, the eyes on the back of her hands
looking far too much like her mother’s now for comfort. “ *Is this why the TARDIS brought us here?*” She wondered out loud in Gallifreyan. “ *Maybe Mum isn’t even here and it’s just her influence.*”

Amy shrugged noncommittally. “ *We still don’t even know where ‘here’ is,*” she reminded her. “ *Either way we need to stay and find out what is going on. These girls shouldn’t be able to see the future. And I’m pretty sure their telepathy goes way beyond that. Do you feel that sort of knocking sensation in the back of your head?*” Clara nodded silently, and Amy gave her a significant look. “ *They can read minds. They’re trying to get in.*”

Clara’s eyes widened minutely at that and she shook her head incredulously. “ *What I don’t understand is how they are all telepaths. I can reason Mum running into the Cumaean Sibyl at some point and accidentally showing her the future and starting another religion but...*” She motioned vaguely around them to all the robed girls “ *How are they all psychic?*”

Amy nodded in agreement, “ *we need to talk to the high priestess.*”

A few hours later, after they were both painted and further initiated into the society, both girl rocked back on their heels as yet another jolt in the telepathic frequencies sent their minds reeling.

“Oh god what is that?” Clara complained rubbing at her temple as a high-pitched screech filled her ears.

“Mum and Dad just landed. I think the two TARDISes are arguing,” Amy hazarded her best guess explanation for why whatever was happening wouldn’t translate properly.

The noise stopped abruptly then though, and they both looked at each other, communicating silently that they needed to see what was going on. They snuck back out through the way they’d come, and ended up in the market place just in time to see their parents and Aunt Donna pass by the alleyway.

“... Coliseum, Pantheon, Circus Maximus,” their dad was listing off classic Roman landmarks as they came by, and Clara looked smug at having apparently guessed correctly on their location, even as Amy’s brow furrowed in disbelief. “You'd expect them to be looming by now. Where is everything? Try this way.”

The girls peaked around the corner surreptitiously before following the trio a few steps behind until they came out into a small piazza.

“Not an expert, but there's seven hills of Rome, aren't there?” Donna asked, motioning to the singular hill looming over the city. “How come they've only got one?”

Right on cue the ground started shaking violently beneath their feet.

“Here we go again,” a nearby vendor sighed, moving to hold onto vases and other breakable wares, the others doing the same with varying degrees of panic.

“Wait a minute...” Donna spun in a small circle once the earth had finally stopped quaking. “One mountain, with smoke... Which makes this...”

“Pompeii,” Rose breathed, looking nauseous. “We're in Pompeii.”

“And it's volcano day,” the Doctor finished ominously.
Behind them their daughters shared terrified glances.

They ran back to the temple.

“What are you going to do?” Amy called frantically to her sister’s back as they dashed behind the curtain and down the secret passageway.

“I have a plan!” Amy threw over her shoulder.

“You do?”

“Well… sort of,” she mumbled, not giving her sister time to reply to that before they came into the temple and Amy was already prostrating herself in front of the high priestess and the three sisters who guarded her.

“I beg audience with the high priestess of the Sibylline,” she spoke to the floor, glancing up to see their reactions.

Spurrina, the lower priestess, regarded her carefully. “The high priestess cannot be seen. What would you tell her, sister?”

Amy sat back on her heels, assuming it was probably okay that she did so. “It has come, as foretold by prophecy. The box. The blue box.”

She was taking a big risk—guessing at what prophecies have been foretold. But it was a pretty safe bet that any religion anywhere had a story about the TARDIS, especially one revolving around “the spirit of the Wolf.”

The girls gasped, and Amy concealed her triumphant smirk by mirroring their worried faces.

As they ran off to go dig up some old dusty book, Clara pulled Amy to the side. “How did you know that would work?” she asked, eyes wide.

Amy shrugged, “I didn’t. But y’know…” she made a vague gesture to the eyes painted on the back of their hands and Clara nodded in understanding.

“But why? Why would we tell them that they’re here?”

“You heard Dad; it’s Volcano Day. These girls have proven they are actually psychic and can at least somewhat see the future. Why can’t they see it then? What’s blocking them from seeing the whole city burning?”

“We need to see their prophecies.” Clara nodded, filling in the gaps.

A second later the girls came back, slamming a heavy book down on the center alter. “We have found it, Sister Spurrina, in the thirteenth book of the Sibylline Oracles. The blue box. A temple made of wood.” Thalia ran her finger down the papyrus in which there was etched a drawing of the TARDIS. “And yet the Sybil foretold that the box would appear at the time of storms, and fire, and betrayal.”

“Sisters,” the rasping voice spoke from behind the curtains, and they all gasped as they spun around to kneel in front of the hidden high priestess.

“Reverend Mother, you should sleep,” Spurrina spoke with her head bowed.

“The Sibylline Oracles are wrong,” the high priestess declared, and the girls all shared startled
disbelieving glances.

“But we have venerated her words for generations—!” Spurrina began to protest.

“This is a new age,” the high priestess cut her off. “Heed my words: I predict a future of prosperity and might. An endless empire of Pompeii, reaching out from this city to topple Rome itself and encompass the whole, wide world. If the Disciples of the Blue Box defy this prophecy, their blood will run across the temple floor.”

Amy and Clara sucked in silent breaths at those words, and all around them the ground shook again.

The syllabine sisters all threw their arms out, leaning back as they looked up to the shaking ceiling.

“The gods approve!” Spurrina declared.

That evening, Clara looked up as she realised someone was staring at her. “What? What is it?” She asked the young girl in front of her.

“You’re mind… it is guarded so. How do you do that? You are so young…”

“Yeah well, so are you,” Clara deflected, squinting at her.

“And yet my mind remains open. Even your timeline is… cloaked.”

Clara tilted her head as she studied her curiously. “Yeah I don’t much care for people messing about in my head,” she answered, but then went on. “Have you got parents? Cos you can’t be much older than me.”

“I was promised to the Sybilline at a young age,” the girl told her, and she appeared to be unused to speaking about herself. “What about you?”

“Oh yeah, me? I’ve got parents. Great parents, actually. The Best. Two of ‘em, even though it seems like more a lot of the time…” Clara drifted off as she thought of the three faces of her father’s that she’s met so far. “They taught me how to guard my mind, keep unwanted guests out and all that.”

The girl looked like she was about to answer, but she was cut off by a sharp inhale of breath, and around them the sisters did the same thing, all of them bringing their hands up to cover their eyes. Clara looked around confusedly for a moment before she got the gist that she was meant to be doing the same thing.

She was only a little surprised when it was her Aunt Donna inside the hive mind’s eye.

“Evelina,” she said, “I’m sorry, but you’ve got to hear me out.”

Clara gathered then that it was Evelina who they were all Seeing through.

“Evelina, can you hear me? Listen.”

Evelina shook her head vehemently. “There is only one prophecy.”

Donna didn’t back down. “But everything I’m about to say to you is true, I swear. Just listen to me. Tomorrow, that mountain is going to explode. Evelina, please listen. The air is going to fill with
ash and rocks, tons and tons of it, and this whole town is going to get buried. ”

“ That’s not true! ” Evelina argued, and Clara wished she could slap her telepathically.

“ I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, but everyone's going to die, ” Donna insisted.

Spurinna spoke through the connection to all of them. “ A new prophecy! ”

“ Impossible! ” Thalina intruded as well. “ There is only one! ”

Donna couldn’t know though, that there were others speaking to Evelina. “ Even if you don't believe me, just tell your family to get out of town. Just for one day. Just for tomorrow. But you've got to get out. You've got to leave Pompeii! ” she begged her.

“ This is false prophecy! ” Evelina repeated the words running through her mind, and brought her hands down.

Clara blinked confusedly as suddenly she was just looking at her palms again. She looked up from her place on the floor to see the sisters kneeling around the altar of the high priestess.

“The noble woman,” Spurrina spoke, and distantly Clara wondered just how was it that they were getting names . “She spoke of a new prophecy. The fall of Pompeii.”

“Pompeii will last forever,” the high priestess contradicted.

“Then what must we do?”

She didn’t hesitate. “The false prophet must die,” she declared, making Clara’s blood run cold. “Sacrifice her.”

Across the room, Amy and Clara shared terrified glances.

Clara really had started out this day intending to just see some cool stuff. Really, that was her only intention. Just travelling, that’s all.

She really hadn’t meant to join a cult.

And now she was standing around the altar on which her aunt was tied down and a priestess held a knife above her head.

All in all, the day really had not gone to plan.

Donna, surprisingly, seemed to be less panicked about the whole ordeal. “Oh, you have got to be kidding me,” she muttered, rolling her eyes.

“The false prophet will surrender both her blood and her breath!” Spurrina declared.

“I'll surrender you in a minute!” Donna shot back. “Don't you dare!”

“You will be silent!”

Donna huffed in annoyance. “Listen, sister, you might have eyes on the back of your hands, but you'll have eyes in the back of your head by the time I've finished with you!” She pulled against her restraints to no avail and growled, “Let me go!”
“This prattling voice will cease forever!” Spurrina pulled the knife high over head.

“Oh, that'll be the day,” the Doctor’s voice interrupted the priestess’s actions, and Amy and Clara let out twin sighs of relief.

Spurrina’s eyes flared with anger. “No man is allowed to enter the Temple of Sibyl.”

“Well, that's all right. Just us girls,” he shoved his hands in his pockets as he pushed himself off the pillar he’d been leaning against, and Rose came around the other side of it, following him further into the temple.

“Do you know, I met the Sibyl once. Yeah, hell of a woman,” he paused to wink at his wife. “Blimey, she could dance the Tarantella. Truth be told, I think she had a bit of a thing for me.” He spoke directly to Rose as he said all this, cheeky grin plastered on his face, and their daughters realised with sudden clarity that Rose hadn’t just shown the Sybil the future, she was the Sybil.

They groaned inwardly. Typical.

The Doctor leaned around a few of the sisters to see Donna. “You all right there?”

“Oh, never better,” she answered mildly.

The Doctor smirked, “I like the toga.”

“Thank you. And the ropes?” She really had been the perfect companion.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose. “Yeah, not so much,” he quipped, pulling out the sonic to cut the ropes in one quick flick of the wrist.

“What magic is this?” Spurrina asked incredulously as Donna pulled herself to standing.

The Doctor ignored the question, tucking the sonic back in his pocket as he walked around them to pull Donna to his side.

Rose crossed her arms angrily and planted her feet. “The Sybil,” she said, “the founder of this religion. She’d be ashamed of ya! All of that wisdom and insight turned sour! Is that how you spread the word, eh? On the blade of a knife?”

She was so clearly personally offended, it was a wonder that the rest of them hadn’t put together who she was.

“Yes, a knife that now welcomes you!” Spurrina held the blade above her head again.

The high priestess interrupted from behind the curtain. “Show me this couple,” she rasped.

“High Priestess,” Sprurinna contended, “the strangers would defile us!”

“Let me see,” she insisted. “These two are different. They carry starlight in their wake.”

“Oh, very perceptive,” The Doctor took a step forward so that he was standing next to Rose again. “Where do these words of wisdom come from?”

“The gods whisper to me,” the high priestess bragged.

“They've done far more than that…” he muttered, and then looked directly to Amy and Clara as they stood closest to the curtain. “Might I beg audience? Look upon the high priestess?” he asked
them, and it was so weird being spoken to by their father who didn’t know he was.

They drew back the curtain before Spurrina could start arguing again.

Behind it sat a woman made only of stone, her features completely erased by the animated rock.

“Oh, my God,” Donna breathed. “What’s happened to you?”

“The heavens have blessed me,” she said, even as every word she spoke sounded like pure agony.

The Doctor took a hesitant step forward, holding his hand out, “If I might?” She held out her arm for him to touch. “Does it hurt?”

“It is necessary,” the high priestess deflected.

Rose looked sick to her stomach. “Who told you that?”

“They're stone,” Donna breathed as she ran her fingers along the woman’s arm, looking to the Time Lords for an explanation.

“Exactly. The people of Pompeii are turning to stone before the volcano erupts…” He spun in a small circle “But why?”

“This word, this image in your mind. This… volcano ,” the high priestess read the Time Lord’s mind. “What is that?”

The Doctor shook his head. “More to the point, why don't you know about it? Who are you?”

She held her head up as she gave her title, “High Priestess of the Sibylline.”

“No, no, no, no. I'm talking to the creature inside you. The thing that's seeding itself into a human body, in the dust, in the lungs, taking over the flesh and turning it into… what?”

She pulled her chin back, “Your knowledge is impossible!”

“Oh, but you can read my mind,” he countered cleverly, “You know it's not. I demand you tell me who you are.

A deeper voice overcame her at that, she was not in control of her own mind anymore. “We are awakening,” the thing answered threateningly.

Spurinna fell to the floor. “The voice of the gods!” she shouted, and the rest of the girls followed suit—save for Amy and Clara, who earned curious looks from their family for it.

The rest of the cult sisters chanted, rocking back and forth on their knees. “Words of wisdom, words of power. Words of wisdom, words of power. Words of wisdom…”

“Name yourself,” the Doctor spoke over them. “Planet of origin. Galactic coordinates. Species
designation according to the universal ratification of the Shadow Proclamation!”

“We are rising!”

“Tell me your name!”

“Pyrovile!”

The cult sisters changed their chants. “Pyrovile, Pyrovile, Pyrovile…”

“What’s a Pyrovile?” Donna asked from over Rose and the Doctor’s shoulders.

“Well, that’s a Pyrovile,” he answered quickly, “Growing inside her. She's a halfway stage.”

“What, and that turns into…?”

“That thing in the villa,” Rose answered, “that was an adult Pyrovile.”

“And the breath of a Pyrovile will incinerate you, Doctor!” The thing in the high priestess spoke, taking a step forward, but the Doctor pulled a yellow plastic water pistol from his jacket pocket and pointed it at her like it was a real gun.

“I warn you, I’m armed!” He took a step back, “Donna, get that grill open.”

Donna squinted between him and the hypocause. “What for?”

The Doctor rolled his eyes. “Just—” he tilted his head to the grill, and Donna huffed before turning on her heel to listen to him for once. He turned his attention back to the alien. “What are the Pyrovile doing here?” he demanded.

“We fell from the heavens. We fell so far and so fast, we were rendered into dust.”

“Right… creatures of stone shattered on impact,” he muttered to himself. “When was that, seventeen years ago?”

“We have slept beneath for thousands of years,” she corrected him.

“Okay, so seventeen years ago woke you up, and now you're using human bodies to reconstitute yourselves. But why the psychic powers?” At this he glanced over to Amy and Clara, and it was obvious he could feel they were a different sort of psychic—though he hadn’t figured out what yet.

“We opened their minds and found such gifts!”

“Okay, that's fine. So you force yourself inside a human brain, use the latent psychic talent to bond. I get that, I get that, yeah…” (He did actually get that pretty well.) “But seeing the future? That is way beyond psychic. You can see through time. Where does the gift of prophecy come from?” Because he knew it wasn’t from his wife anymore.

“Got it!” Donna shouted as she yanked the grate from its fitting.

“Now get down,” he told her over his shoulder.

Donna pulled her chin back at that. “What, down there?”

The Doctor just barely kept himself from groaning at Donna’s complete inability to ever just do as she’s told without questioning him. “Yes, down there,” he grumbled, and then levelled the
priestess with a look. “Why can’t this lot predict a volcano? Why is it being hidden?”

“Sisters, I see into his mind!” Spurinna spoke up suddenly from behind them. “The weapon is harmless!”

The Doctor looked to the toy in his hand and tilted his head, “Yeah, but it's got to sting.”

He squirted the pyrovile with the water, and she immediately started screaming in pain.

“Get down there!” The Doctor shouted to Donna and Rose as the cult sisters ran to help their priestess. He watched as Amy and Clara took steps back from her though. “You two! With us! Come on!”

They didn’t need telling twice.

“You fought them off! With a water pistol!” Donna shouted incredulously at the Doctor as their shoes hit the hot stones. “I bloody love you!”

Clara smiled indulgently at her aunt, it was clearly all still new for her. Her parents. The travelling. She could see now why they loved taking companions with them. It was like an extra dose of excitement seeing it all through someone else’s eyes.

The Doctor ignored her though, turning instead to the sisters. “You two, you haven’t been consuming the vapors have you?”

They both shook their heads silently, terrified of speaking and saying the wrong thing.

“You didn’t seem surprised though,” Rose jumped in, squinting at them, “about the volcano. Actually, nothing we did seemed to surprise you.”

“We…” Clara started, her voice small. “We… um…”

“You’re psychic as well,” The Doctor added, studying them seriously now. “Granted, your barriers are up very high, but I’m pretty good at spotting telepaths. So what are you? If you’re not human and you’re not Pyrovile?”

Clara finally found her confidence again at that. “I’m sorry, but I was raised to understand that it was rude to ask of one’s species so directly?” She put her hands on her hips and raised her brows at her father—throwing his own (future) lessons about intergalactic communications in his face.

He pulled his chin back at that, squinting impossibly further at her. “Right…” he drifted off, clearly running the calculations in his head. “My apologies. Come on, this way.” He tilted his head and motioned for them to follow.

“Where are we going now?” Donna asked, picking up her toga as she followed them, Amy and Clara staying a few steps behind.

“Into the volcano,” The Doctor called back over his shoulder.

“No way.”


“You have an idea of who they are,” Rose spoke in Gallifreyan to her husband. Behind her, Donna clicked her tongue in annoyance, rolling her eyes.
Amy and Clara pressed their lips together and tried to appear as though they were confused.

The Doctor raised his brows at her. “So do you.”

“They’re from our future,” Rose nodded, “that much is obvious. But I can’t figure out the telepathy thing.”

“Well, they’re sisters,” The Doctor supplied, and then went on at Rose’s curious look. “Their walls are up against us, but not each other. You can tell by how their frequencies are interacting with one another.”

Rose glanced behind her and the sisters did their level best to keep their eyes trained on their feet.

Clara glanced up and stumbled at the look her mother was giving her and started to fall. “Mer’fauci,” she let out the Gallifreyan expletive without thinking, the language at the forefront of her mind. She repeated it in English at a whisper as The Doctor and Rose stopped dead in their tracks.

The girls stood frozen as their parents stared at them.

“How do you know that word?” The Doctor asked in a low voice, jaw tightening.

Amy moved so that their arms were touching. ‘They’ll have to erase these memories anyway. We might as well tell them now.’

The Doctor caught the movement. “You’re touch telepaths,” he said, his mind clearly reeling as now everything about the girls was screaming Time Lord—but that was impossible.

They opened their mouths to try and answer, but they were saved from having to as the mountain shook again, sending rocks falling all around them. The Doctor grumbled something unintelligible under his breath before grabbing Rose and Donna by the hand and hauling them down the path. “Come on,” he growled, and Amy and Clara took off after them.

“But if it’s aliens setting off the volcano, doesn’t that make it all right for you to stop it?” Donna yelled as they ran, clearly returning to a point she had been making earlier.

The Doctor huffed. “Still part of history.”

“But I’m history to you,” Donna continued. “You saved me in 2008. You saved us all. Why is that different?”

“Donna, time is complicated. Some events are fixed, and some of them are in flux,” Rose explained far more calmly than her husband would have, “Pompeii is a fixed point in time. We can’t change what happens here.”

Donna shook her head, “How do you know which is which?”

“Because that’s how we see the universe,” the Doctor answered. “Every waking second, we can see what is, what was, what could be, what must not. That’s the burden of a Time Lord, Donna.”

Clara felt her heart sinking. They’d never explained it to her like that. They’d never told her that being who they were was a burden. It didn’t even make sense though. She knew what fixed points in time felt like, and this wasn’t it. If it were they would have known the second they landed—they all would have. It still wasn’t adding up.
“How many people died?” Donna challenged.

“How many people died?” she pressed.

He let out a long sigh. “Twenty thousand.”

“Is that what you can see, Doctor? All twenty thousand?” Donna’s earlier excitement was gone, replaced now with horror. “And you think that's all right, do you?”

He halted their progress at that to turn to her, but just as he was about to answer there was a great big roar that sounded from above their heads.

“They know we're here,” he spoke to the tunnel’s ceiling. “Come on.”

They ran until they entered a large fiery cavern populated by pyroviles. Lava flowed around their feet and small eruptions scattered about intermittently.

“It's the heart of Vesuvius,” the Doctor spoke at a low volume. “We're right inside the mountain.”

Donna stared wide eyed at the massive lava-rock creatures surrounding them. “There's tons of them,” she breathed.

Rose nodded, but the Doctor didn’t seem to be paying any attention. He pulled out his glasses to study some construct on the other side of the cavern. He muttered, “What's that thing?”

Donna hit his arm as one of the bigger Pyrovile stepped towards where they were huddled. “Oi, you better hurry up and think of something. Rocky fall’s on its way.”

“That's how they arrived,” he continued talking to himself, “or what's left of it. Escape pod? Prison ship? Gene bank?” He led them to the thing and began scanning it with the sonic.

“But why do they need a volcano? Maybe it erupts, and they launch themselves back into space or something?” Donna offered, and Clara ducked her head to hide a smile. That’s always been one of her favourite things about her Aunt Donna—she was always offering up explanations.

“Oh, it's worse than that,” the Doctor shook his head, the pieces falling into place now.

“But why would they need a volcano? Maybe it erupts, and they launch themselves back into space or something?” Donna offered, and Clara ducked her head to hide a smile. That’s always been one of her favourite things about her Aunt Donna—she was always offering up explanations.

“How could it be worse?— Doctor, it's getting closer.”

They all turned to see the prophet Lucius standing on the precipice above them, flanked by pyrovillia on either side.

“Heathens defile us!” he declared, “They would desecrate your temple, my lord gods!”

The Doctor sonicked the door of the rock-like structure open. “Come on.”

“We can't go in!” Donna protested, keeping all of them from entering the capsule.

“Well, we can't go back.” The Doctor raised his brows at her and looked pointedly to where Lucius was standing, arms raised before him.

“Crush them! Burn them!”

A pyrovile reared up behind Donna, and The Doctor just barely had enough instinct to pull out his
water pistol and send it reeling backwards. That was all she needed to allow him to shove her into the rock capsule. Amy and Clara followed her in as well as they still couldn’t find the words to fight with their parents.

Lucious cackled, “The Doctor may run with his Rose and their daughters of time, but there is nowhere to hide from the gods!”

Rose joined the Doctor as he stepped forward. “Now then, Lucius, my lords Pyrovillia,” he started, “don’t get yourselves in a lather. In a lava?” He looked to his wife and she wrinkled her nose in distaste. “No? No. But if I might beg the wisdom of the gods before we perish. Once this new race of creatures is complete, then what?”

“My masters will follow the example of Rome itself!” Lucious divulged proudly, “An almighty empire, bestriding the whole of civilisation!”

Rose glanced around her at the crashed ship and sufficient technology to rebuild it. “But you have enough here… why don’t you just go home?”

“The Heaven of Pyrovillia is gone,” Lucius spoke now almost fully with the voice of a Pyrovile.

The Doctor squinted at that phrasing, “What do you mean ‘ gone ’? Where's it gone?”

“It was taken. Pyrovillia is lost,” he answered, as if giving synonyms was sufficient explanation. “But there is heat enough in this world for a new species to rise!”

“Yeah, I should warn you, mate,” Rose tilted her head and jammed her thumb behind her, “it's seventy percent water out there.”

“Water can boil,” Lucius disregarded her easily, “and everything will burn!”

The Doctor rocked back on his heels, shoving his hands in his pockets. “Then the whole planet is at stake. Thank you. That's all I needed to know. Rose,” he grabbed her hand and ran them back towards the pod where the other women were waiting.

He sonicked the doors shut and they could just barely hear Lucius through the stone walls. “You have them, my lords,” he told the Pyrovillia.

Donna huffed in exasperation at that, throwing her arms up in the already tight space. “Could we be any more trapped?”

The Doctor barely heard her as he started mashing buttons and scanning the readings appearing on the screen. “See?” he spoke to Rose, Amy, and Clara who were already looking over his shoulder, and then Donna who joined them at that. “The energy converter takes the lava, uses the power to create a fusion matrix, which welds Pyrovile to human. Now it's complete, they can convert millions.”

“But can't you change it with these controls?” Donna asked, motioning to the array of buttons in front of them.

“Of course I can, but don't you see?” He turned so that he was only facing her. “That's why the soothsayers can't see the volcano. There is no volcano. Vesuvius is never going to erupt. The Pyrovile are stealing all its power. They're going to use it to take over the world.”

Donna still didn’t see the desperation in his eyes. “But you can change it back?” she asked hopefully.
“I can invert the system, set off the volcano, and blow them up, yes… But, that's the choice, Donna. It's Pompeii or the world.”

“Oh, my God,” she whispered.

“If Pompeii is destroyed then it's not just history, it's me. I make it happen,” he said, sounding defeated.

Rose’s hand shot out to grab his at that, and even for everyone who couldn’t hear what she was saying to him telepathically, it was obvious by the clear defiance in her eyes.

“But the Pyrovile are made of rocks…” Donna shook her head. “Maybe they can't be blown up.”

“Vesuvius explodes with the force of twenty four nuclear bombs. Nothing can survive it… Certainly not us.”

Donna didn’t even hesitate at being told she was going to die. “Never mind us,” she said, like it was simple.

The Doctor turned to the two girls who he didn’t know were his daughters. “What about you two?” he asked. “I dragged you into this.”

Amy shook her head. “We chose to be here,” she said firmly.

“We’re with you,” Clara told him. “No matter what happens. Ad kadir se sfæindeq Temkariosze .” She spoke the Gallifreyan promise.

The words seemed to give him renewed energy. He finished typing in the commands, but his hands hovered over the lever. “Push this lever and it's over,” he whispered, the Time War clearly waging behind his eyes. “Twenty thousand people.”

His daughters watched as their father was forced to make that decision again. Struggling with the fact that they were powerless to comfort him—not now anyway, not in the time.

Instinctively Amy knew they would survive this, she would have felt it if it were otherwise, and she passed this information on to her terrified little sister as she gathered her into her arms. It was still horrifying, facing the prospect of death while dispelled from their own timelines, so close to their family but yet being complete strangers to them at the same time.

The Doctor glanced over to them apologetically as Clara buried her face in Amy’s shoulder. Instinctively, Clara whispered an ancient Gallifreyan prayer, which Amy returned.

Rose placed her hands over his on the lever, and Donna followed shortly after.

They pushed down, and Vesuvius erupted.

They all screamed as the pod soared through the explosion, making them slam into one another in the tight space as they rolled over and over.

They landed with a hard thud and skidded across the mountainside. They laid on the ceiling for a few seconds, breathing heavy as the realisation that they were all still alive set it.

The Doctor got the door open and helped them all out. “It was an escape pod,” he explained distantly as they all turned to see the nuee ardente screaming down the mountain side towards a terrified Pompeii.
They turned on their heels and ran into the city, barrelling towards the marble shop where the TARDIS had been taken.

Spurrina caught Amy by the shoulder. “You lied to us!” she screamed. “And yet this was meant to be…” her eyes widened and she released her grip.

Clara yanked on her sister’s arm, dragging her back to the present as they ran to catch up with their parents.

The air was already thick and black from ash as Donna tried desperately to yell instructions to the Pompeians.

“Don’t—Don’t go to the beach!” she shouted, grabbing at shoulders moving in the wrong direction to no avail. “Don't go to the beach, go to the hills. Listen to me. Don't go to the beach, it's not safe! Listen to me!”

They all continued to run past her until finally she spotted a crying little boy. “Oh, come here,” Donna spoke softly to him as she kneeled down and opened her arms, but just before he could go to her, his mother came.

“Give him to me,” she said, picking him up off his feet and running toward the beach—sealing their fates.

Amy and Clara herded their distressed aunt in the direction of their parents, ignoring her indignant protests.

Evelina and her family were huddled together in the quickly disintegrating marble shop. Her father looked up to them with wide, terrified eyes. “Gods save us, Doctor,” he begged.

With a dark, haunted look, the Doctor turned away from them and walked into the TARDIS.

His family ran after him, Donna leading as tears streamed down her face and she sobbed out her pleas. “No! Doctor, you can't. Doctor! You can't just leave them!”

The Doctor growled, rounding on her. “Don't you think I've done enough? History's back in place and everyone dies.”

Rose felt the need to argue and comfort her husband, but for reasons she couldn’t understand she felt the more overwhelming need to comfort the two strange girls who had followed them into the TARDIS. They were both crying and they fell into her side easily—as if they were used to being there. She found their telepathic frequencies and projected comfort in a way that was both new and strangely familiar.

Donna wasn’t backing down. “You've got to go back!” she screamed as the time rotor started moving. “Doctor, I am telling you, take this thing back! It's not fair!”

He wouldn’t look at her. “No, it's not.”

“But your own planet! It burned!”

He rounded on her. “That's just it. Don't you see, Donna? Can't you understand? If I could go back and save them, then I would. But I can't. I can never go back. I can't. I just can't, I can't!”

His face shifted and he pulled on another lever. The TARDIS rematerialised, and he opened the door to hold out his hand.

“Come with me,” he said.

They landed on the opposite end of the hillside Amy and Clara’s TARDIS waited—just out of sight. The Time Lords and Donna stood back while Evelina’s family watched their city burn beneath them.

The Doctor broke the silence first. “It’s never forgotten, Caecilius. Oh, time will pass, men'll move on, and stories will fade. But one day, Pompeii will be found again. In thousands of years. And everyone will remember you.”

Donna stepped forward to talk to the young girl who’d she grown to care for. “What about you, Evelina? Can you see anything?”

She shook her head. “The visions have gone.”

“The explosion was so powerful it cracked open a rift in time, just for a second,” the Doctor explained. “That's what gave you the gift of prophecy. It echoed back into the Pyrovillian alternative. But not anymore. You're free.”

“But tell me,” Metella said, “Who are you, Doctor? With your words, and your wolf, and your temple containing such size within?”

He shrugged her off. “Oh, we were never here. Don't tell anyone.”

Caecilius hadn’t taken his eyes off Pompeii. “The great god Vulcan must be enraged. It's so… volcanic. All those people…” his voice was solemn.

Once the family had started on their journey to Rome, the Doctor finally turned his attention to Amy and Clara.

“You’re Gallifreyans,” he said.

They shook their heads. “Neither of us was born on a planet,” Amy said. “Gallifrey was gone long before we were born. We’re Time Lords, but we cannot call Gallifrey home. I’m sorry.”

“That’s not possible,” he said, but he didn’t sound like he believed it. They’d already given more than enough proof. He shook his head. “How?”

They both opened their mouths, searching for a way to explain, but Rose beat them to it. She stepped forward. “You’re our daughters, aren’t you?”

“How did you…?” Clara started.

“I could feel you, in my mind. It was like nothing I’d ever felt before. I knew you. I love you in a way only a mother could love her daughters.”
Clara felt a stray tear roll down her cheek and she wiped it away quickly as she nodded. Rose didn’t know how to interpret the crying. “Tell me I’m not dead,” she tried not to sound desperate.

They both thankfully laughed. “No, no, not dead,” Amy assured her. “Neither of you—or you, Aunt Donna.”

As Donna sputtered, the Doctor let out a relieved breath, and then seemed to realise what that meant. “Then what are you doing here?” he demanded, suddenly sounding very fatherly. “Surely you know the danger that—”

“Yes, yes, sorry,” Clara interrupted his spiel. “We were stupid, and you’re just gonna have to give this lecture again in the future so spare us, please.”

Rose smirked openly at her cheek while the Doctor tried hard to continue looking stern rather than amused.

Amy was eyeing the TARDIS behind them though. She had a feeling the ship had wanted them to see this. And she wasn’t quite done with them yet. “We better get going,” she said. “Before the universe implodes or something.”

“Hang on,” Donna said just as they were about to turn. “If you’re their daughter, then how come you’ve got a Scottish accent?”

Amy laughed brightly. “I don’t know. Just always have. But Aunt Donna, if he’s from another planet, why’s he sound like he’s from London?”

Donna tilted her head at that, conceding her point.

“See you in the future then?” Rose asked.

Clara grinned, “Oh yes!” And then she grabbed her older sister by the hand and together they ran down the hillside towards their TARDIS—which still had one more adventure waiting for them (now that she knew they’d understand).

Chapter End Notes

Last chapter up next week! (I'll get sappy then)

Leave comments I need them to keep living ❤
“I am the Bad Wolf. I create myself. I take the words, I scatter them in time and space. A message to lead myself here.”

Here.

She blinked into the bright light of the twin suns. She spun in a small circle, kicking up the dust in her wake, and she could feel every single home and every single person that once stood where she did now.

Nothing but dust now, all of it.

Only one structure remained: a small wooden barn in the distance—a building so unremarkable that even the war that was destroying everything in its wake, regardless of gender or class or race, could not be bothered to give the two seconds of time it would take to knock it down. It survived simply by virtue of being not worth destroying.

Oh, but the war didn’t know what she knew. That barn was the centre of the universe. The point at which all timelines from the dawn of everything to the very end of it all were converging.

She walked towards it, stepped inside, and waited.

Either a few seconds or a few hours passed before he came. She was good with time, but only in the sense that she had every single second of the whole of time and space running through her head at one billion times the speed of light. Seconds? Hours? Years? What’s the difference compared to the entire history of the universe?

He stepped into the barn, muttering to himself, leather-clad shoulders hunched over an intricately designed box. But she didn’t listen to his words as he kneeled down in front of the machine. His thoughts were repeating one phrase over and over again: No more.

She kicked her feet against the crate she was sitting on, and he spun around. “What are you doing here?” he demanded angrily in a northern accent.

She jumped down onto the ground and moved to sit on the small box he’d brought in. “It’s nothing. Just a wolf,” she replied mildly, looking up at him through her lashes, her eyes flashing gold for just a moment.

He yanked her up by the arm. “Don't sit on that!”
She smirked. “Why not?”

“Because it’s not a chair, it’s the most dangerous weapon in the universe!” he shouted, and with that flung open the barn door (nearly taking it off its hinges) and tossed her out.

He spun back around to find her sitting on the weapon again. “What, can’t it be both?”

He glared at her and she crossed her legs, resting her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand, staring up at him thoughtfully. “Why did you park so far away? Didn’t want her to see it?”

He squinted at her. “Want who to see it?”

“The TARDIS. You walked for miles and miles and miles and miles and miles—”

“I was thinking!” he cut her off, realising that she was the type to go on for a while.

“I heard you.” Her eyes glowed slightly again.

“You heard me?” he repeated incredulously.

“No more,” she whispered.

“You heard me?” he repeated incredulously.

“What, can’t it be both?”

“Who are you?” he demanded again, though he swallowed and she didn’t miss the movement.

She smirked playfully up at him. “Oh, look at you. Stuck between a girl and a box. Story of your life, eh, Doctor?”

“You know me?” he sputtered.

“I know you better than you know yourself,” she told him. “I hear you. All of you. Jangling around in that dusty old head of yours. You’ll know me almost as well one day.”

The Doctor shook his head. “I don’t have a future.”

She rolled her eyes as she stood up. He was her future. And her past. Her everything. And she was his. “I’m called Rose Tyler,” she told him, but her brow immediately furrowed. “No. Yes. No, sorry, no. No... in this form... I’m called Bad Wolf.” She glowed completely then, the timelines coming out to swirl around her and sing with the song of the universe. She tilted her head. “Are you afraid of the big Bad Wolf, Doctor?”

“Stop calling me Doctor.”

“That’s what you’re called though. Ninth time on. Unless you prefer I use your real name—”

“No,” he cut her off. He could feel her in his head now. A telepathic frequency that felt like it should be familiar, but wasn’t. But she wasn’t a Time Lord, or in fact any species he’d ever met before. He shook his head. “I’ve lost the right to be called Doctor. I don’t help people anymore. I just build weapons of mass destruction in the name of a war I don’t believe in. The Doctor is a name of honour. There’s nothing honourable in that.”

Her eyes narrowed. “But you’re the one to save us all.”

He nodded. “Yes.”

She raised her brows. “You sure about that?”
“If you have been inside my head, then you know what I’ve seen. The suffering. Every moment in time and space is burning. It must end, and I intend to end it the only way I can.” He looked to the box again.

“You're going to end it by killing them all, Daleks and Time Lords alike,” she finished his thoughts, but she wasn’t surprised (she couldn’t be). “There will be consequences.”

“I have no desire to survive this.”

She shifted so that she was in his line of sight again. “If you do this, if you kill them all, then that's the consequence: you will live. But Gallifrey, you're going to burn it, and all those Daleks with it, but all those children too. How many children are on Gallifrey right now?”

“I don't know.”

“One day you will count them. One terrible night.” Her voice broke slightly as Rose overtook the goddess for just a moment. The night they lost Alina flashing through her mind.

The goddess raised a brow. “Do you want to see what that will turn you into?” she asked, and grinned as he glared at her again. “Come on, aren't you curious?”

Above them, a rip through the vortex swirled.

“I'm opening windows on your future,” she told him. “A tangle in time through the days to come, to the man today will make of you.”

A fez dropped through the portal. He looked at her incredulously.

“Okay… I wasn't expecting that.”

[England, 2018]

Rory skidded into the TARDIS, tripping up the stairs on the way to the console, and panting as he grabbed his twelve-year-old sister-in-law by the shoulders. “Tell me you didn’t,” he pleaded.

Clara looked up at him sheepishly and he groaned, “Amy is going to kill me.”

“Why?” Rose asked, entering from the left-side staircase. “What’d you do this time?”

“Not me.” Rory straightened up, crossing his arms as he gave Clara a stern look. “Your daughter.”

“You’re the one who left me alone with her!” Clara argued stubbornly. “How was I supposed to know?”

“She’s two! And your niece! You should know!”

“Wait, sorry!” Rose spoke over whatever her daughter’s next retort was going to be. “What happened?”

Rory opened his mouth to answer, but was cut off as Amy shouted, “Rory!” form somewhere outside of the TARDIS in the Pond garden, and stormed in a moment later, eyes ablaze. “Why does my daughter know that word?” she demanded.

Rory swallowed and wasted no time in jabbing an accusatory finger towards his kid sister-in-law.
“Clara did it!”

Amy rounded on her little sister, charging towards her, making Clara scream and run until she was chasing her around the console.

“I’m gonna kill you, you little—”

“Girls!” Rose shouted over them to no avail. “Girls! Stop it!”

The Doctor entered then, immediately jumping into action and grabbing Clara by the waist, hiding her behind him as he held a hand out to stop Amy reaching around him. “What on Gallifrey are you two doing?” he demanded, dividing his stern gaze between the both of them.

“Your psycho daughter is trying to kill me!” Clara screeched.

“Oh, I’ll show you psycho!” Amy growled, and attempted to reach around her father to grab her.

Clara screamed and ran for her mum as the Doctor held Amy back. “It’s not that big a deal!” she said as she hid behind Rose’s hip.

“Not that big a deal?” Amy repeated incredulously. “You taught my two year old daughter an alien curse word!”

“By accident! And at least it wasn’t a human one,” Clara shot back. “It’s not like anyone but us will know.”

“That’s besides the point—!”

“Okay!” Rose shouted over them. “It sounds like we all need to take a step back and a deep breath —”

“She—” Amy flung her hand out, starting to argue again, but was cut off as the TARDIS monitor lit up with outside security camera footage to see little Melody attempting to open the back garden door. Amy let out an annoyed noise and shot another glare to her sister, pointing at her. “Don’t think this is over,” she said, before turning on her heel towards the door.

“Amy—” Rory started to follow her, but Amy’s finger turned on him as well.


They all let out a breath as the door closed behind her. Clara spun around to look up at her mum. “I swear I didn’t mean to! It was an accident! I was playing a game and I got angry and it just slipped out!”

“Okay, I believe you.” Rose patted her shoulder. “But it was still wrong of you, and you need to admit that and apologise to your sister.”

Clara’s eyes fell to the glass floor. “Yeah, okay,” she mumbled.

Rose kissed the top of her head. “Good girl. Now, let’s—”

She was cut off as the TARDIS suddenly rocked sideways and they all stumbled towards the console to try and hold on.

“What’s happening?” Rory asked frantically as Rose and the Doctor pulled around dual monitors.
“We're taking off,” the Doctor answered, “but the engines aren't going!”

They both started pulling at controls randomly to no avail. Until finally Clara ran over and flung open the TARDIS doors to reveal blue skies. They were flying.

Or more accurately: hanging. For as she leaned her head out to see what was going on, she found a massive black helicopter had a hold of them by a lifting grapple, intent on taking them somewhere.

Clara recognised the the emblem emblazoned on its side. It was a UNIT helicopter. Her dad, mum, and brother-in-law saw this too, and the Doctor grabbed the ringing telephone from the side panel of the door.

“Kate!” he shouted as it picked up.

“Doctor, hello,” she answered casually. “We found the TARDIS unmoving for a number of days. I'm having it brought in.”

“No kidding,” he replied dryly, glancing between the chopper and the ground.

“Where are you?” she asked.

In answer, he held the receiver up towards the sound of the rotors.

“Oh, my god!” Kate breathed as she realised what had happened. “Oh, Doctor, I'm so sorry. We had no idea you were still in there!”

The helicopter turned suddenly then, causing the Doctor to lose his balance and stumble out the door. Clara just managed to grab his feet before he could fall to his regeneration, and Rose and Rory knelt down to help her keep hold.

“Doctor, can you hear me?” Kate shouted into the phone as she heard screaming on the other end.

The Doctor grappled with the phone cord swinging wildly down beside him until he could finally speak again. “Next time, would it kill you to knock?”

She breathed a sigh of relief that he hadn’t died. “I'm having you taken directly to the scene,” she told him.

“Whoa!” The Doctor lost hold of the phone again as his family let slip one of his legs. He grabbed it again and shouted, “I'm just going to pop you on hold!” before bending himself backwards to grab onto the emergency handles underneath the base of the TARDIS.

He looked up to see the three of them on their stomachs, heads handing over the side to watch him. He grinned cheekily and let go of one of the handles to give a thumbs up before quickly grabbing on again.

Soon they were hovering over Trafalgar Square, a large crowd now gathered to watch the show, and the Doctor dropped down a few feet above the ground, dodging out of the way before the TARDIS could squash him. Rory, Clara, and Rose stood in the doorway.

A line of soldiers stood waiting for them. “Attention!” one of the officers ordered, and the Doctor instinctively snapped his shoulders back and saluted.

His brow furrowed as his brain caught up to him. “Why am I saluting?” he mumbled to himself before bringing his hand down and going over to make sure the others were okay.
Rose and Clara hugged him in relief while Rory clapped him on the back with a small chuckle. Kate was making her way over to them, followed by her assistant in a lab coat, so the Doctor pulled away to wrap an arm around Rose’s shoulders and keep a hand on Clara, Rory standing defensively beside them.

“Doctor,” Kate let out breathlessly. “As Chief Scientific Officer, may I extend the official apologies of UNIT.”

He let both his arms drop to his side so he could step up to her. “Kate Lethbridge Stewart, a word to the wise: As I’m sure your father would have told you, I do not like being picked up.”

He pulled his chin back as yet again his brain caught up to him, and behind him Rose and Clara giggled while Rory snorted.

“That probably sounded better in his head,” Clara said.

Kate straightened up. “I’m acting on instructions direct from the throne. Sealed orders from her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the First.” She handed him a wax-sealed letter.

“The Queen? The First?” Rory piped up. “Elizabeth the First?”

Kate nodded. “Her credentials are inside.”

The Doctor was about to break the seal on the message, but Kate stopped him, pointing behind her to the National Gallery. “No. Inside.”

“Oh,” the Doctor nodded in understanding, and motioned for his family to follow him and Kate up the stairs. They passed Kate’s lab assistant on the way. She was wearing a overly-long rainbow striped knit scarf. The Doctor grinned at it. “Nice scarf,” he commented lightly, and her eyes lit up.

Inside the gallery, Kate led them down a number of marble hallways.

“Amy’s really going to be cross now,” Rory whispered to Clara as they followed a few steps behind her parents. She glanced up to him, and they shared a fearful look.

They entered a massive room then, where in the center a large black sheet was draped over what they could only assume was a framed painting.

“Elizabeth’s credentials, Doctor,” Kate said, and the painting was unveiled. The image of Arcadia, the citadel burning on the last day of the Time War.

They all sucked in a breath. “But, but that’s not possible,” Rose whispered.

The Doctor’s jaw clenched. “No more.”

Kate looked surprised, though she shouldn’t have been. “That's the title.”

“I know the title,” he snapped.

“Also known as Gallifrey Falls,” Kate added.

He turned on her. “This painting doesn't belong here, not in this time or place.”

Clara could feel the anxiety coming off of her parents in waves. It was almost making her dizzy. “What is it?” she asked quietly.
The Doctor wouldn’t take his eyes off the painting as he spoke. “It's the fall of Arcadia, Gallifrey’s second city. Supposed to be impenetrable.”

His daughter stepped up beside him, reaching out towards it. “But how is it doing that?” she asked, because it looked like a window. Not just realistic, but like it had multiple dimensions on one flat canvas. “How is that possible? It's an oil painting in 3D.”

“Time Lord art,” Rose explained. “Bigger on the inside. A slice of real time, frozen.” She looked over to Kate. “I painted this more than a century ago. How did you find it?”

“Elizabeth told us where to find it, and its significance.” Kate gave her a sympathetic look and Rose’s gaze dropped to the ground as her daughter looked up to her in confusion.

The Doctor's voice was far away. The war was raging in front of his eyes. He could still hear their screams. Feel the fire on his face, the blood on his hands. “The day I did it. The day I killed them all. The last day of the Time War. The war to end all wars between my people and the Daleks. And in that battle there was a man with more blood on his hands than any other, a man who would commit a crime that would silence the universe. And that man was me.”

He choked on his words as he felt Rose’s hand enter his. He squeezed it tightly to ground himself.

Behind them, Clara leaned into Rory’s side and he wrapped an arm around her protectively. “But the Time War is over,” Rory spoke pointedly to Kate. “Why have you brought us here just to look at a painting?”

Kate did not falter in the centurion’s glare. “The painting only serves as Elizabeth's credentials. It’s not why you’re here.”

The Doctor sniffed and broke open the seal on the letter.

[England, 1561]

Following Pompeii, the TARDIS had ignored Clara and Amy’s request for home, choosing instead to crash land them in 1553, right in the middle of Queen Mary’s triumphant ride into London to overtake Lady Jane Grey for the throne. Elizabeth I was nowhere to be seen though, and Amy and Clara had known enough British history to know she was supposed to be there if Mary were to succeed. And well… only one of them had red hair.

Fast forward through a rebellion, an imprisonment, a fake pregnancy, and finally Queen Mary’s death, Amelia Pond somehow ascended to the throne as Queen Elizabeth I.

Clara had left early when it seemed clear the real Elizabeth wouldn’t be turning up anytime soon. The plan was to get their parents and find some way out of this without ruining history, but it was now 1561, and Amy hadn’t seen hide nor tail of her little sister in years.

Desperate now, and tired from running a country and starting the Church of England, Amy stormed into the queen’s chambers, having to maneuver around the massive dress the ladies maids had sewn her into so that she could sit at the writing desk.

Dad,

Please don’t be angry with me. If anything, it’s Clara’s fault. It was her idea to steal the TARDIS. But now I’ve accidentally become the Queen of England. She left to go find you, but it’s been
years. I’m hoping maybe by some miracle this will reach you faster. There are Zygons everywhere and I’m at a loss of what to do. Please help.

*Don’t tell Mum,*
*Aemeliastellaponse*

(Oh and I love you)

[England, 2018]

The Doctor snorted. “Elizabeth’s credentials, indeed.”

Kate attempted to lean over to see what had been written. “What’s it say?” she asked when she couldn’t get a glimpse.

The Doctor hadn’t seen the sign off until it was too late, as Rose had been reading over his shoulder. She turned around to look at Clara. “You are in so much trouble in the future.”

“What?” Clara demanded incredulously. “What will I do this time? It’s Amy’s fault!”

Both her parents raised their brows doubtfully.

[England, 1561]

No sooner had Amy locked the letter in the vault with instructions to give it to the Doctor on a date in the future that she knew for sure they’d be in London, that she heard the blessedly familiar sounds of the time rotor. She ran to the nearest window and sighed in relief as she saw the TARDIS materialising on a nearby hill.

She ran as fast as she could in the literal pounds of thick heavy fabric, but her footsteps slowed before she could start up the hill as a less familiar face greeted her.

It was her father’s last regeneration—pinstripes and chucks and all. He was holding up some odd-looking machine and calling something to the younger version of Rose just behind him as she turned in slow circles, taking in the view.

Amy paused in her progression, her fantasies of a tearful reunion full of hugs and apologies dashed in an instant.

She looked around, unsure of how to proceed, until she spotted her horse, already saddled and waiting patiently for her by the stable. Smirking, she mounted the white stallion and cantered the remainder of the way up the hill towards the Time Lords.

“Queen Elizabeth the First!” not-yet-her-father enthused as she pulled to a stop beside them.

Amy dismounted gracefully, patting her horse and allowing him to wander off to graze before turning to her parents and holding her head up in such a way that she imagined portrayed royalty. She did her best impression of the Queen’s English. “The Doctor and Rose Tyler,” she called them by their names for the sole purpose of catching them off guard, “I was wondering when you’d turn up.”
“Sorry, you know who we are?” Rose asked.

Amy crossed her arms. “Of course I know who you are. I’m the Queen of England.”

The Doctor’s brow furrowed however, and he held the machine up to her head. It dinged.

Amy swatted his arm away. “How dare you? What is that?”

“It’s a machine that goes ding,” he answered flippantly. “And you’re not the Queen of England. The real Elizabeth isn’t an alien from outer space.”

Amy’s eyes widened for half a second, but she was able to school her features and pull her face back in offense. “Excuse me?”

He tossed the device in his hand about casually. “Made it myself. Lights up in the presence of shape-shifter DNA. Also it can microwave frozen dinners from up to twenty feet and download comics from the future. I never know when to stop.”

Amy raised her brows, wholly unimpressed but definitely intrigued by this version of her father. They were very much the same despite appearances. “Shape-shifter DNA?” she repeated. “Are you not the man with ten faces?”

Rose’s head snapped around to stare at her husband in alarm, and he seemed surprised that she knew that, but chose to ignore it so that he could continue showing off. “Ah, but I was clever enough to cancel out the frequency of Time Lord DNA.”

*That rules out that explanation for the ding then, Amy thought.* Which means… Her eyes widened as she spun around wildly, looking for another lifeform with them on the hill. Her eyes narrowed as she spotted the horse.

The Doctor was still rambling though. “Oh, come off it. Just admit it. You’re a Zygon! How else would you know about me and Rose and ten faces and shape-shifting DNA?”

Amy hadn’t taken her eyes off the horse. She watched it transform, but neither of her parents had turned around to see it yet. “A Zygon, you say?” she asked, still not looking at him.

“Yes, a Zygon. Big red rubbery thing covered in suckers.”

“Kinda like that?” Amy nodded behind him, making them both frown in confusion as they turned.

The Doctor wasted no time in grabbing her and Rose’s hands. “Run!” he shouted, dragging them in the direction of the forest.

“If you’re not a Zygon,” Rose yelled as they ran between the trees, “then how do you know about us?”

“Well you were right about one thing,” Amy huffed as she hiked her skirts up further to free her legs, not bothering with the English accent anymore. “I’m not the Queen of England.”

Rose squinted at her. “Then who are you?”

Amy tilted her head. “It’s kind of a long story.”

In front of them, the Doctor suddenly skidded to a halt, his gizmo going absolutely bonkers dinging as he held it up to a lop-eared rabbit resting on a moss-covered tree stump.
He kneeled down to its level and set the creature with a look that could kill. “Whatever you've got planned, forget it. I'm the Doctor. I'm nine hundred and four years old. I'm from the planet Gallifrey in the constellation of Kasterborous. I am the Oncoming Storm, the Bringer of Darkness—and you are basically just a rabbit, aren't you?”

It hopped away.

The Doctor sucked in a breath. “Okay, carry on. Just a general… warning.” He cleared his throat awkwardly.

Amy and Rose were giggling as he stood back up, cheeks stained slightly as he ran a hand through his hair.

But before he could defend himself, or figure out why the gizmo was dinging, another red-haired Queen stepped through the trees.

Amy’s doppelgänger walked up to her slowly, ignoring the sonic screwdriver the Doctor was pointing at her. They turned in circles around each other, examining one another.

Amy opened her mouth to speak, but was cut off as suddenly a glowing portal opened above their heads.

The Doctor held his arms out, herding all three of the women backwards. “Back!” he ordered. “Back! All of you, now! That's a time fissure. A tear in the fabric of reality… Anything could happen.”

They held their breath.

A fez came flying out.

The Doctor raised his brows. “For instance, a fez.”

Amy grinned.

[England, 2018]

They followed Kate through a series of hidden passages and stairways until they were well underneath the National Gallery.

“You know, this is my job,” the Doctor told Clara conspiratorially as Kate continued to lead them.

Clara snorted. “You don’t have a job.”

The Doctor was clearly offended at his daughter’s dismissal. “Why shouldn't I have a job? I'd be brilliant at having a job,”

“You don't have a job,” Clara sung, shaking her head.

“I do!” he insisted. “This is my job! I'm doing it now!”

“You never have a job,” Clara insisted.

“I do! Rose! Tell Clara I have a job!”
Rose and Rory laughed, both of them staying silent on the matter. Clara grinned triumphantly while the Doctor pouted at the injustice of it all.

They went down one more set of stairs, and finally Kate said, “Welcome to the Under Gallery. This is where Elizabeth the First kept all art deemed too dangerous for public consumption.”

They came to a massive oil painting (this one thankfully in only two dimensions) and the family gaped up at it. It was, at first glance, only a painting of Queen Elizabeth I, but upon closer inspection, she bared rather a very close resemblance to Amy.

Clara made a derisive noise and rolled her eyes. “Of course she’s the bloody queen.”

“Language,” all three of the adults chided instantly, making Clara’s glare shift from her-sister-the-queen to the backs of their heads.

Kate pulled them away from the painting and into an adjacent gallery. The floor was covered in dust and all around them statues were protected by sheets. The Doctor stooped down to pick up the dust and run it through his fingers.

“Stone dust,” he mumbled.

Kate squinted at him. “Is it important?”

He glanced up at her. “In twelve hundred years I’ve never stepped in anything that wasn’t.”

Behind them, Kate’s assistant made a small squeaking noise. The Doctor spun around and took long strides towards her. “Oi, you! Are you science-y?”

She looked rather like she couldn’t believe she was still standing. “Oh, er, well, er, yes,” she stammered.

“Got a name?”

She pushed her glasses up her nose. “Yes.”

“Good. I’ve always wanted to meet someone called Yes!” he turned to wink at his family before grabbing her hand and pouring the stone dust into it. “Now, I want this stone dust analysed. And I want a report in triplicate, with lots of graphs and diagrams and complicated sums on my desk, tomorrow morning, ASAP, pronto, LOL.” He grinned over to Clara. “See? Job.” He pointed to Kate. “Do I have a desk?”

“No.”

“And I want a desk,” he added to the assistant.

She looked to her boss helplessly.

“Get a team. Analyse the stone dust,” Kate ordered, and began walking off, and then as an afterthought added “Inhaler!”

Clara watched as the girl grabbed her inhaler from her pocket and breathed for what appeared to be the first time since the Doctor had looked at her.

They descend further into the Under Gallery, and the Doctor ooo-ed, skidding to a halt as he spotted a fez in a glass display case. He removed the glass and picked it up, pulling it on without a second thought.
“Someday, you could just walk past a fez,” Rose said dryly.

He smirked. “Never gonna happen.”

They turned a corner into another room, this one lined with more 3D paintings of desert landscapes, and broken glass all across the floor.

There was a scientist standing there holding an iPad. “As you instructed, nothing has been touched,” he said to Kate as they entered.

She nodded and dismissed him, and then turned back to the Time Lords (and Rory). “This is why we called you in.”

Clara and Rory walked up to the paintings. “3D again,” Rory said, shifting slightly to watch the dunes move with him.

“Did you paint these?” Clara asked her mum.

“No.” Rose furrowed her brow. “Not unless I will later.”

The Doctor hummed as he crouched down to inspect the broken glass. “Interesting,” he muttered.

“The broken glass?” Clara kneeled down next to him.

“No, where it's broken from.” He stood back up. “Look at the shatter pattern. The glass on all these paintings has been broken from the inside.”

Kate nodded. “As you can see, all the paintings are landscapes. No figures of any kind.”

“So?” Rose asked.

“There used to be.” She handed them the iPad, and the original images are on it, all of them with red figures standing in the distance.

Rory looked back up to Kate. “Something's got out the paintings?”

“Lots of somethings,” the Doctor corrected ominously.

Kate shook her head. “This whole place has been searched. There's nothing here that shouldn't be, and nothing's got out.”

Then the time fissure opened.

“Oh no, not now,” the Doctor moaned.

“What is it?” Rory asked, wrinkling his nose.

“No, not now!” the Doctor continued complaining. “I'm busy!”

Kate kept her distance from the thing as the Doctor stepped forward. “Is it to do with the paintings?”

“No, no. This is different. I remember this…” he tilted his head as the vague notion of a memory provided him with no clue as to what to do next. “Almost remember… Oh, of course.” He smirked, and took off the fez. “This is where I come in.”
He threw it into the fissure.

The Doctor tossed a wink back to his wife before shouting “Geronimo!” and full on diving into the time portal.

“Doctor!” Rose shouted after him angrily, but it was too late. She held Clara back as she tried to step towards where her father had just disappeared.

[England, 1561]

Amy let out a sigh of relief as her father (the one she knew, anyway) tumbled out of the fissure with an undignified “oof.”

The Tenth Doctor put on the fez as the Eleventh pulled himself to his feet. The bow tied one squinted at his former self, wrinkling his nose in distaste.

“Oh, that is skinny!” he exclaimed, turning to the side as he looked him up and down. “That is proper skinny! I've never seen it from the outside. It's like a special effect—Oi!” He knocked the fez off of him. “Ha! Matchstick man.”

Beside them, Rose giggled, and Ten caught her thoughts. His eyes widened. “You're not.” he insisted to his other self.

Eyes narrowing, they both pulled out their screwdrivers. Eleven’s was much bigger. He flicked it and it opened and lit up as well. Ten pushed up the smaller probe on his own rather anticlimactically.

He was undeterred though, raising a single brow. “Compensating?”

Eleven pulled his chin back. “For what?”

Ten shrugged noncommittally. “Regeneration. It's a lottery.”

Amy gagged, which none of them noticed, and Rose snorted in amusement at watching her husbands bicker.

Eleven scoffed, put-off at being mocked by himself in front of their wife. “Oh, he's cool. Isn't he cool? I'm the Doctor and I'm all cool— Oops! I'm wearing sandshoes!” he pointed to Ten’s chucks.

His jaw tightened. “What are you doing here? I'm busy.”

“Oh right, yes.” He looked up to the two versions of his eldest daughter and sauntered over to them. He got up in the faces of both of them, scanning each of their eyes for recognition.

Behind him, his past self was saying something about Zygons and neither one of them actually being the Queen, but the Doctor wasn’t listening as he found Amy and put his hands on her shoulders so that they could communicate.

‘Are you all right?’

Amy just barely managed to keep from either nodding or hugging him. ‘I could be better.’

Her father glanced to the Zygon who was watching them carefully. ‘Think you can fight a Zygon?’

‘I have a dagger underneath my skirts,’ she told him.
'Why on Gallifrey—' he started to reprimand her.

'Queen of England, remember?' she cut him off briskly. 'Zygons or not, people keep trying to kill me.'

He nodded smally and took a step back, clapping his hands together. "All right, Elizabeth, or whoever whichever of you are. Turn around and run in the opposite direction of the other one."

Amy instantly dashed to the left. The Zygon hesitated for only a second before it realised this would be its best chance to dispose of its doppelgänger. It ran to the right, no doubt planning to circle back around.

Eleven spun on his heel to see Rose. She looked so young and unburdened by the universe. His eyes softened at the sight of her. "Hello, Rose," he whispered reverently.

Ten scoffed as Rose blushed. "Oh, don’t start!"

Rose rolled her eyes. "You can’t seriously be jealous of yourself, Doctor."

Ten was saved from having to defend the accusation as Rory called from the other side of the fissure. "Doctor? Hello, can you hear us?"

Rose’s brow furrowed. "Who’s that?"

Eleven chose not to answer that directly as he stepped in front of them again. "Hello, Rory!" he called back, surreptitiously indicating that it was safest if Clara and his Rose stayed silent for now.

"Where are you?" Rory asked.

Eleven looked to Ten. "Where are we?" he repeated.

"England, 1561," he answered to Rory.

There was a short pause before Rory asked, "Who are you talking to?"

"Myself," the two Doctors both answered together, and then shared an amused look.

"Come back!" Clara shouted suddenly, apparently fed up with the staying silent bit.

"Physical passage may not be possible in both directions," Eleven responded apologetically. "Ah! Hang on." He swiped the fez up from where it had landed in the dirt. "Fez incoming!"

There was a longer pause this time where they all waited until finally Clara said, "Nothing here."

Ten raised his brows. "So where did it go?"

There was some muffled speech on the other end of the portal in which only Rose seemed to remember to be careful what to say (so she said nothing at all).

Ten turned to Eleven with a sigh. "Okay, you used to be me, you've done all this before. What happens next?"

Eleven shook his head. "I don't remember."

"How can you forget this?" Ten asked incredulously, motioning between the two of them.
“Hey, hang on! It’s not my fault!” (He sounded like his daughters, but there was nothing to be done about it.)  “You’re obviously not paying enough attention!” He shoved a hand towards the fissure.  “Reverse the polarity!”

They both aimed their screwdrivers at it.

“It’s not working,” Eleven said after a few seconds of glancing at his younger self out of the corner of his eye while nothing happened.

Rose rolled her eyes.  “You’re both reversing the polarity,” she said dryly.

“Yes, I know that,” Ten said.

Rose sighed and shifted her weight from one foot to the other as she crossed her arms.  “There’s two of you. One of you’s reversing it, the other’s reversing it back again. You’re confusing the polarity.”

They both sheepishly put their arms down.

And then yet another Doctor dropped from the fissure, this one landing quite a lot more elegantly on his feet, catching his weight with his knees, and straightening up to address them all.  He held out the hat.  “Anyone lose a fez?” he quipped.

Rose’s eyes widened, her heart feeling as though it could beat right out of her chest as she saw her first Doctor for the first time in decades.

“What are you doing here?” Ten demanded.

Nine’s brow dropped at the rude greeting, his eyes flickering between the three of them, lingering on Rose in obvious confusion for just a second longer, before rocking back on his heels.  “Hello! I’m looking for the Doctor,” he told them.

Ten and Eleven shared a look while Rose hid a smile behind her hand.  “Well,” Ten said, “you’ve certainly come to the right place.”

Nine squinted at the vague language.  “Right… okay. Who are you? Are you his companions?”

Rose let out an involuntarily bark of laughter while her two husbands scoffed at her third.  “His companions?” Eleven repeated incredulously.

Nine very clearly did not care for the two men in front of him, and he wondered vaguely why he would ever choose them as companions.  He looked instead over their shoulders to the woman who looked like the Bad Wolf girl.  Her other form, at least, had a track record of knowing things.

“Could you point me in the direction of the Doctor?” he asked her.

Rose pressed her lips together and looked pointedly to Ten and Eleven.  They both raised their sonics.

His eyes widened.  “Really?” He sounded annoyed.

“Yes,” Eleven nodded.

“Really,” Ten finished.

Nine’s eyebrows were practically in his hairline from disbelief.  “You’re me? Both of you?”
“Yep.” Ten popped the ‘p.’

“Even that one?” He nodded to bow tie and suspenders over there.

“Yes!” Eleven exclaimed in obvious offense.

“You're my future selves?”

“Yes!” they both shouted together, and Ten stuck his thumb behind him in indication of Rose. “And she’s your future wife.”

Rose waved while Nine’s eyes widened comically further.

“Am I having a midlife crisis?”

“Oi!” All three of them shouted, though Rose the loudest. She’d forgotten how dismissive her first Doctor had been in the beginning.

“Still,” Ten tilted his head, “loving the bad-boy leather thing. It’s very convincing.”

Eleven snorted. “Brave words, Dick Van Dyke.”

Ten was about to think of something equally witty and insulting for a comeback, but was interrupted in the thought process as they were suddenly being encircled by a troop of knights riding horseback.

“Which of you is the Doctor?” the nobleman leading them demanded. “The Queen of England is bewitched. I would have the Doctor's head.”

“Well,” Nine smiled casually. “This has all the makings of your lucky day.”

The other two aimed their screwdrivers at the men threateningly, and Nine furrowed his brow at them, not bothering to take out his own. “What are you going to do with those?” he snapped. “Assemble a cabinet at them?”

The soldiers were paying more attention to the massive floating portal in the sky than they were the sonic probes, however. “That thing, what witchcraft is it?” the nobleman demanded.

“Ah, yes!” Eleven remembered that he was clever, and currently knew more than everyone else standing there. “Now that you mention it, that is witchcraft. Yes, yes, yes. Witchy witchcraft. Hello? Hello in there! Excuse me! Hello! Am I talking to the wicked witch of the well?”

Rory elbowed Clara in the ribs. “He means you,” he whispered loudly.

Clara pouted. “Amy gets to be the Queen and I’m stuck being the witch?”

Her dad rocked back on his heels awkwardly as the silence continued. “Clara?”

Rory shoved her forward and she let out a great dramatic huff, crossing her arms in front of her. “Yeah?”

“Clara! Hi, hello. Hello. Would you mind telling these prattling mortals to get themselves begone?”

“What he said.”
The Doctor just barely managed to keep from reprimanding her for being a poor sport. “Yes, tiny bit more colour,” he requested pointedly out of the corner of his mouth.

She sighed. “Right, fine,” she grumbled, and then raised her voice a few octaves. “Prattling mortals… off you pop… or I'll turn you all into frogs!”

“Ooo, frogs!” Eleven went along with it, sending a look to his other selves and wife to nod along in pretend terror, making similar noises. “You heard her.”

Clara gave up quickly. “What's going on?”

“It's a timey-wimey thing,” Eleven replied flippantly.


Ten shook his head. “I've no idea where he picks this stuff up.”

One of the Queens (we can’t be sure which one) re-emerged from the wood then, and there was a lot of mumbling as her knights fell to kneel.

She raised a brow at the four Time Lords. “You don't seem to be kneeling. How tremendously brave of you.” She had an English accent again, whichever one she was.

Eleven took a step forward. “Which one are you? What happened to the other one?” he demanded frantically, unable to tell if his daughter was okay. She wasn’t dead, that much he knew, but Zygons had to keep their prey alive in order to maintain the link. Not-dead didn’t mean safe.

“Indisposed,” she answered vaguely. “Long live the Queen.”

“Long live the Queen,” the knights repeated.

She held her head up high with a small smirk. She did not look to Eleven with any sense of recognition. “Arrest these men,” she ordered. “Take them to the Tower.”

“And what of the woman, your majesty?”

“She shall prove useful,” she said, looking Rose up and down. A horrible feeling settled in Eleven’s stomach.

“That is not the Queen of England!” Ten shouted, desperately trying to protect Rose as the men approached. “That's an alien duplicate!”

“No, hang on,” Eleven interrupted him, mind whirring. “The Tower…” He spun back around to the men pointing swords at them. “Breakfast at eight, please. Will there be Wi-Fi?”

“Are you capable of speaking without flapping your hands like that?” Nine demanded, squinting at the goofy man in front of him—sure that he couldn’t be him.

“Yes,” Eleven flapped his hands. “No.” He flapped his hands again and shook him off, turning back to the horses. “I demand to be incarcerated in the Tower immediately with my co-conspirators Sandshoes and Big Ears.”

“What?” Nine sputtered, hand reaching up to grab at his ear. He hadn’t actually seen his face yet. He was technically still in the middle of a war, after all.

“They're not sandshoes!”
Nine snorted. “Yes they are.”

“Silence,” the not-Queen warned. “The Tower is not to be taken lightly. Very few emerge again.”

[England, 2018]

“Dear God, that man's clever,” Kate said. “Come on.” They began fast walking out of the Under Gallery.

“Where are we going?” Clara asked, chasing after her much longer-legged companions.

“My office,” Kate answered, “otherwise known as the Tower of London.”

Rory looked to Rose. “Why didn’t he want you to speak?”

She shook her head, looking anxious. “Time is in flux right now. He can feel it—even almost as much as I can. We’re at a tipping point in the universe. Anything could happen. He’s attempting to limit the damage of three different versions of himself meeting by concealing as much of the future as possible.”

“Aren’t you sort of a given though?” Rory asked. “Why let us speak and not you?”

“Well, he really only wanted you to,” Rose shrugged. “Without me in his future, neither one of you would be here either. But Rory, your timeline is safer right now than Clara’s—well, not the extended one. But you’ll still y’know… be born.”

“So when you say time is in flux…?”

“I mean our life, specifically.”

“So…” Rory pulled his chin back as he tried to gather a meaning from that. “Okay. What does that mean? Everything we know can be undone?”

“Yes.”

“How is that possible?”

Rose shook her head. “There’s only one thing powerful enough to have that much control over the timelines. Only one thing that can even open fissures like that and tear through the very fabric of time and space.”

“Which is?”

She let out a long breath. “Me.”

“Come on, you lot, get in there.” The warden shoved the three Doctors into the (admittedly pretty large) cell.

The Eleventh Doctor immediately got to work, finding an old rusted nail in the dirt and straw lining the stone floors, and starting to scratch into one of the columns.

“Three of us in one cell?” he spoke as he worked. “That's going to cause some nasty anomalies if
we don't get out soon.”

Ten was still pouting about Rose being forcibly removed from his arms. “What are you doing?” he demanded of the older Doctor.

Eleven, who was much more used to get separated from Rose at this point, just rolled his eyes at the attitude. “Getting us out.”

Ten glared at him. “You should be more worried. Where is your Rose?”

Eleven ignored him, and Ten was just about to frantically demand answers when the sound of a sonic brought his attention around to the Ninth Doctor, who was scanning the door.

Ten shook his head. “The sonic won't work on that, it's too primitive.”

Eleven smirked. “Shall we ask for a better quality of door so we can escape?”

The Tenth Doctor pointedly ignored the witticism. “Okay, so the Queen of England is now a Zygon. But never mind that. Why are we all together? Why are we all here?” They all looked around at each other and then Ten turned on Nine. “Well, me and Chinny, we were surprised, but you came looking for us. You knew it was going to happen. Who told you?”

The Ninth Doctor’s eyes fell onto the empty bench near the door. Bad Wolf Rose held a finger to her lips, a bit of a cheeky smile playing there.

Neither of the other Doctors noticed. “Oi! ‘Chinny’?” Eleven demanded indignantly.

Ten raised an unrepentant brow. “Yeah, you do have a chin.”

[England, 2018]

In the Under Gallery, Kate Stewart’s assistant (whose name is not actually, in fact, ‘Yes’, but is ‘Osgood’ which she considers to be only *slightly* better) was talking to McGillop, the not-quite-head scientist of the department as they analyse the stone dust.

“Marble, granite. A lot of different stone, but none of it from the fabric of the building. It’s like somebody smashed up a lot of old statues…” She looked up from the microscope. “Are there any missing?”

McGillop shook his head as he looked around at all the sheet-covered statues around them, not an empty plinth to be seen. “Don’t think so. Why would anyone do that, anyway? I mean, I know we’re meant to keep an open mind, but are we supposed to believe in creatures that can hide in oil paintings and have some sort of a grudge against statues?” He turned back to look at her and found her eyes wide and her chest heaving. “You all right?”

Osgood fumbled with her inhaler and took a deep breath. “We have to go, right now, this minute.”

“What’s wrong?”

She spoke barely above a whisper. “The things from the paintings. I know why they smashed the statues.”

He looked at her incredulously. “Why?”
“Because they needed somewhere to hide.”

The nearest statue raised its arm, Osgood opened her mouth to scream a warning but she wasn’t quick enough. McGillop was knocked out and she ran out into the National Gallery.

She slammed the door behind her and collapsed against it, fighting for breath (running was not a sport asthmatic individuals often took part in). Next to her, the Zygon smashed through the painting of Elizabeth I which looked like Amy. Osgood screamed and ran into the lift. She hit the buttons frantically, but it wouldn’t move.

She slumped into the far corner, curling in on herself in fear as she heard the creature approaching. “The Doctor will save me. The Doctor will save me. The Doctor will save me. The Doctor will save me.”

The Zygon entered the lift, and in the blink of an eye and the crack of a neck, it turned into a duplicate of the lab assistant. It leant over her menacingly. “Excuse me. I'm going to need my inhaler.” It yanked the device out of the girl’s pocket and used it. “I so hate it when I get one with a defect.” It took a contemplative breath as it accessed the surface memories. “Ooo, you've got some perfectly horrible memories in here, haven't you? So jealous of your pretty sister. I don't blame you. I wish I'd copied her.”

Osgood looked down to the ground and noticed that the alien was standing on her scarf. “So do I!” she shouted, and then yanked hard on the fabric. The Zygon fell and Osgood ran.

“The Doctor will be trying to send us a message,” Kate spoke into her mobile. “We're looking for a string of numerals from around 1550, approximately. Priority One. I'm going to need access to the Black Archive.”

Rose and Rory were barely listening as they fast-walked through the tower environs. “But if it’s you, isn't that a good thing?” Rory asked her. “You wouldn’t do anything to destroy our lives.”

Rose shrugged. “I get a bit narrow-minded as Bad Wolf—especially in the beginning. I have a feeling I orchestrated this the first time I looked into the heart of the TARDIS.”

“But that was the past. If you did it in the past than this is the future it lead to… right?”

Again, she shrugged. “Maybe. Maybe not. It’s time travel. Nothing is definite.” She was chewing on her thumbnail, which somehow managed to make Rory feel even more nervous than her actual words did.

Kate led them down a dark underground corridor towards a large set of metal doors. “The Black Archive,” she explained. “Highest security rating on the planet. The entire staff have their memories wiped at the end of every shift. Automated memory filters in the ceiling.” They came to the guard outside of the doors and she handed him her key. “Access, please.”

He nodded. “Ma’am”

“Atkins, isn't it?”

“Yes, ma'am. First day here.”

Kate nodded politely as he let them in, and then whispered to the Time Lord family. “He’s been here ten years.”
“Lock and key? Bit basic, isn't it?” Clara asked skeptically as the padlock came open.

Kate smirked. “Can't afford electronic security down here. Got to keep your parents out. The whole of the Tower is TARDIS-proofed. They really wouldn't approve of the collection.”

Rose made an indignant noise and immediately she saw why UNIT wouldn't want them in there. Every inch of the place was lined with any type of weapon one could possibly imagine. “Do Martha and Mickey know about this place?” she demanded.

Kate snorted. “Not a chance. They're too loyal to you.”

Rose glared at the back of her head. Clara and Rory shared a look.

Kate either didn’t notice or didn’t care about Rose’s reaction (it probably didn’t matter, since their memories would be wiped anyway). She led them to a small room with a glass window with a leather wrist cuff inside.

“What’s that?” Clara asked.

“Time travel,” Kate answered. “A vortex manipulator bequeathed to the UNIT archive by Captain Jack Harkness on the occasion of his death. Well, one of them. No one can know we have this, not even our allies.”

“You shouldn’t have that,” Rose grumbled, crossing her arms.

“Why not?” Clara asked innocently.

“Well, for one thing, it’s Jack’s, and he wouldn’t have donated it to UNIT—”

“Unless you tell him to,” Kate interrupted, “because you know we needed it to get to the Doctor.”

Rory shook his head at the tenses. “But he gives it to Melody—”

“He what?” Clara demanded. “Uncle Jack gives his vortex manipulator to my baby niece, but not to me? How is that fair?”

Rose couldn’t help but laugh. “He doesn’t give it to her until she’s older. And there’s reasons she needs it.”

Clara pouted, but otherwise didn’t argue the point (for now). “Okay, so this is how we're going to rescue Dad... and whoever those other people were.”

Kate gave the vortex manipulator a contemplative look. “I'm not sure there's enough power for a two-way trip. In any event, we don't have the activation code. The Doctor knows we have this, so he's always kept the code from us. Let's hope he changes his mind.” She looked up to Rose.

“Unless you have it?”

Rose shrugged. “Never bothered to learn it. And the telepathy isn’t working too well right now. Too many crossed signals.”

Kate squinted at that, but didn’t get to reply as her mobile rang. “Yes? Well, if you've found it, photograph it and send it to my phone,” she snapped uncharacteristically.

Come to think of it, she wasn’t acting much like herself at all.

Osgood and McGillop had appeared in the doorway.
“Er, Kate?” Clara asked hesitantly. “Should they be here? Why have they followed us?”

Rose recognised the evil smirk that Kate gave them from all the many times she’d seen it on other aliens. Instantly she pushed Rory and Clara behind him.

“Oh, they've probably just finished disposing of the humans a bit early,” Kate said, confirming Rose’s suspicions.

Clara looked at the phone in Kate’s hand as it lit up with a photo message, and she committed the series of numbers and letters to heart. “The humans?” she questioned, keeping her distracted.

“Dear me. I really do get into character, don't I?” Kate spit venom onto the floor, making the family back up, and then transformed into a Zygon.

Clara used the moment to tap her mum on the hip and yank on Rory’s sleeve. She tilted her head towards the little room and together they went in.

The Zygon spoke to the not-Osgood and not-McGillop. “Prepare to dispose of one more human. We have acquired the device.”

Clara has picked up the vortex manipulator and strapped it to her wrist. The Zygons’ eyes widened as they turned to see her typing in the numbers. “Activation code, right?” she smirked, and with a push of a button she, Rose, and Rory disappeared into the past.

[England, 1561]

The Ninth Doctor was still scanning the door. “In theory, I can trigger an isolated sonic shift in the molecules, and the door should disintegrate.”

Ten rolled his eyes. “We'd have to calculate the exact harmonic resonance of the entire structure down to a subatomic level. Even the sonic would take years.”

“No, the sonic would take centuries.” Nine clicked his screwdriver and sat down on the bench. “We might as well get started. Help to pass the timey-wimey,” he said sarcastically. “Do you have to talk like children? What is it that makes you so ashamed of being a grown up?”

Ten was studying him with something akin to dread. “It must be really recent for you.”

“Recent?”

Eleven was still furiously scribbling into the stone. “The Time War. The last day. The day you killed them all.”

“The day we killed them all,” Ten corrected him harshly.

Eleven just looked at him sideways. “Same thing.”

Bad Wolf made herself visible to Nine again. “It's history for them. All decided. They think their future is real. They don't know it's still up to you.”

His shoulders stiffened. “I don't talk about it.”

The tenth Doctor couldn’t seem to keep his feet still, but he paused in his pacing just long enough to lean against the column which wasn't being carved into. “You're not talking about it. There's no
one else here.”

Bad Wolf had flickered over to Ten’s side, studying him without his knowledge. She spoke to Nine. “Go on, ask them. Ask them what you need to know.”

Nine bristled slightly. The war had hardened him—including in matters of the heart. It was an emotional question, and he didn’t want these two pretty boys bursting into tears on him. “Did you ever count?” he asked, trying to seem unfazed.

The way Eleven’s back stiffened said he knew what he meant, but he asked anyway. “Count what?”

“How many children there were on Gallifrey that day,” Nine answered tightly.

His carving abruptly stopped. There was a heavy silence. “I have absolutely no idea,” he spoke to the wall.

Nine squinted at his back. “How old are you now?”

His tone was flippant. “Ah, I don’t know. I lose track. Twelve hundred and something, I think, unless I’m lying. I can’t remember if I’m lying about my age, that’s how old I am.”

Nine was incredulous. “Four hundred years older than me, and in all that time you’ve never even wondered how many there were? You never once counted?”

Eleven rounded on him angrily. “Tell me, what would be the point?”

“Two point four seven billion,” Ten said abruptly, making the others turn to him.

“You did count!” Nine shouted, and Eleven shook his head, turning away from them again.

The Tenth Doctor wouldn’t let him go that easily though. “You forgot? Four hundred years, is that all it takes?”

“I moved on.”

Ten was absolutely livid. He remembers the night he counted. Vividly. It was the night they lost Alina. That’s not something he’d move on from. “Where?” he demanded, terrified of the answer. “Where can you possibly be now that you can forget something like that? “

“Spoilers,” Eleven mumbled.

Ten pushed himself off the balustrade. “No. No, no, no. For once I would like to know where I’m going.”

Eleven mentally recounted everything that has happened since he regenerated. They were a family now. They were together and happy. But that didn’t come without pain and heartbreak and unbearable amounts of loss. “No, you really wouldn’t,” he gritted out.

Ten’s eyes widened in horror at the sadness in his future self’s eyes. “Where’s Rose?”

Nine interrupted whatever Eleven was about to say. “I don't know who you are—either of you. I haven't got a clue.”

Bad Wolf spoke next to him. “They’re you. They’re what you become if you destroy Gallifrey. The man who regrets and the man who forgets. The moment is coming. You have to decide.”
Nine shook his head because he was only more unsure than he’d been in the first place. “No.”

Ten’s brow furrowed. “No?”

Nine crossed his arms. “Just, no.”

Eleven laughed suddenly, and Ten stared at him incredulously. “Is something funny?” he snapped. “Did I miss a funny thing?”

Eleven was unrepentant. “Sorry. It just occurred to me. This is what I'm like when I'm alone.” He tossed his screwdriver in the air and Ten mimicked the movement almost impulsively.

Bad Wolf leaned over to the leather-clad Doctor, whispering conspiratorially despite him being the only one who could hear her anyway. “It's the same screwdriver. Same software, different case.”

(There was a distinct impression that she wasn’t just talking about the screwdriver, but Nine ignored that bit.)

“For four hundred years,” he said suddenly, making the other two stop their tossing.

Ten raised his brows. “I'm sorry?”

“At a software level, they're all the same device,” he answered and repeated Bad Wolf’s words, “same software, different case.”

Ten stepped forward. “Yeah…”

“So?” Eleven asked.

“So, it would take centuries for the screwdriver to calculate how to disintegrate the door. Scanning the door, implanting the calculation as a permanent subroutine in the software architecture and, if you really are me, with your sandshoes and your dickie bow, and that screwdriver is still mine, that calculation is still going on.”

Sandshoes checked the sonic. “Yeah, still going.”

Dickie Bow’s buzzed. “Calculation complete!”

Bad Wolf smirked. “Same software, different face.”

Eleven was grinning like a child in a candy store now. “Hey, four hundred years in four seconds. We may have had our differences—which is frankly odd in the circumstances—but, I tell you what, boys. We are incredibly clever.” He clapped his hands together.

In immediate contradiction to that point, Clara, Rory, and Rose fell through the door.

(Ten let out a silent sigh of relief at seeing a Rose who was older than the one he’d just left.)

Eleven stared at his family incredulously. “How did you do that?”

Clara looked behind her at the door. “It wasn't locked.”

The Doctors grumbled, “Right.”

Nine was looking between the young girl and the Eleventh Doctor like they’d both grown an extra head. “You travel with a child?” he said the word like it offended him on a deeply personal level.
“Oi!” Clara snapped at him, and was annoyed when he didn’t shrink away but just continued to stare at her.

Ten had already put it together though (much to Eleven’s chagrin) as he said, somewhat breathlessly, “She looks like me.”

Clara flushed and stepped behind her mum because there were too many people looking at her like she was important now. Nevermind if they were all technically her father.

Rose was looking at the pinstriped Doctor like he might have personally hung the moon. “Nice suit,” she said quietly.

Ten straightened his tie happily. “Thank you.”

“Oi!” Eleven shouted indignantly, and Rose shot him a cheeky tongue-touched smile that he huffed exasperatedly at.

Rory raised his hand as he interrupted. “Hang on, sorry. Three of you in one cell, and none of you thought to try the door?”

“It should have been locked!” Eleven protested.

“Sorry, who’s the Nose?” Nine asked rudely.

“Son-in-law,” Eleven answered distractedly.


“What? No! Ew! Gross!” Rory and Clara shouted at the younger Doctor angrily while Rose laughed.

“Married to our other daughter,” she explained.

“And who would that be?” Nine asked.

Right on cue another figure appeared in the doorway, this one wearing a dress. She was either Queen Elizabeth the First, a Zygon in disguise, or Amelia Pond, depending on who you asked. “Me,” she said.

Rose followed the not-Queen-Elizabeth through the towers, worried when she ordered the guards away, and confused when she also ordered the Zygons off.

“Is it rude to ask what you are?” Rose raised her voice in order for it to carry over the woman’s shoulder. “I’m pretty sure my husband has told me that’s rude but given the circumstances…”

The ginger snorted. “Yeah my parents always told me and my sister that was rude. But I understand. I’m not a Zygon, if that’s what you’re worried about.” She through a look over her shoulder and added, “But I’m also not human.”

Rose thought it probably wouldn’t be pertinent to ask the same question twice, so she let that slide. There were plenty of human-looking aliens in the universe (her husband being one of them), and going through that mental list in the back of her mind would at least give her something to do as she was practically running to keep up with the woman who was supposed to be her captor. “Okay… so… should I be running in the opposite direction or…?”
She spun around suddenly. “I didn’t lock the door to the dungeon,” she said. “I have no intention of keeping any of the Doctors locked up. I have every intention of ending this invasion and getting back to my husband and daughter in the early 21st century.”

Rose studied her at that. “You’re a time traveller,” she said. It wasn’t a question.

“Yes,” she answered anyway.

“And you know who we are. You’re from our future.”

“Yes.” She popped the ‘p.’

Rose sighed. She couldn’t remember it, but she was positive this wasn’t the first time something like this has happened. “Can I at least have your name?”

The woman shrugged. “You’ll have to forget all this soon anyway,” she sighed. “My name’s Amy. I’m your daughter.”

“Rory!” Amy exclaimed as soon as she saw him, flinging herself into her husband’s arms. “Oh my god, I’ve missed you so much!” She buried her face in his shoulder.

“Um,” Rory started, even as he hugged her back warmly. “Exactly how long has it been for you?”

“Seven bloody years,” Amy answered bitterly as she pulled back. “Clara—” she cut herself off as she spotted her little sister, “...was two years older, last I saw her,” she finished lamely, shoulders deflating just slightly. She let out a long tired breath and turned back to Rory sheepishly.

He gave her a reassuring smile. “Well I hope I don’t have to wait so long in the future.”

Amy snorted. “You waited two thousand years. What’s a few years?”

Rory flushed. “Yeah, but... Well we wouldn’t want Melody going that long without you. Who knows how badly I’d manage to screw her up.”

Amy’s features twisted into a pained expression. “Oh,” she whimpered slightly. “I miss her so much.”

Rory pulled her into another hug while her mother, the one that knew her, squeezed her hand. Rose knew all too well the pain of being separated from your child.

The younger Rose, the one that still had no idea what was going on, stepped around the family reunion in order to join her own Doctor. She grabbed his hand reassuringly as he brushed his lips across her temple. Then she turned and met eyes with her older self. They shared a small smile.

Finally, Amy regained her composure. “All right, there’s an invasion going on. Thought you might like to see how they’re doing it.”

She led her husband, her sister, her two mums, and her three dads through the twisting corridors of the tower until they finally came to the Zygon control centre.

“The Zygons lost their own world,” Amy explained as they walked. “It burnt in the first days of the Time War.” She sent a hesitant look to her dads which went ignored by all of them. “They’re looking for a new home.”
“So they want this one,” Clara concluded. “Jeez, a whole great big universe and these aliens just keep coming back to Earth, huh? What’s so special about this place?”

Amy laughed at her sister’s cheek. “Well, they don’t want it yet,” she said. “It’s too primitive.” She picked distastefully at the dress she was still being forced to wear and thought about the regrettable lack of plumbing.

A Zygon, not disguised as anything, approached Amy slightly bowed. “Commander, why are these creatures here?”

Amy startled before remembering the Zygon still thought she was one of them. (The actual Zygon commander was tied to a tree in the forest.) She held her head up and switched back to her English accent. “Because I say they should be. It is time you too were translated,” she ordered him off, and then mumbled to her family, “Watch this.”

The Zygon put its hand on a glass cube and vanished. The onlookers switched their attention to one of the 3D paintings which had been (will be) hanging in the Under Gallery. The Zygon which had just disappeared, reappeared in the framed landscape.

“That's him!” Clara exclaimed innocently. “That's the Zygon in the picture now!”

“It's not a picture,” Nine corrected her automatically. “It's a stasis cube. Time Lord art. Frozen instants in time, bigger on the inside, but could be deployed as—“

Ten broke in, “Suspended animation! Oh, that's very good. The Zygons all pop inside the pictures, wait a few centuries till the planet's a bit more interesting, and then out they come.”

Eleven put his hands on his youngest daughter’s shoulders. “You see, Clara, they're stored in the paintings in the Under Gallery, like cup-a-soups. Except you add time, if you can picture that…” She squinted up at him amusedly and he shook his head at himself. “Nobody could picture that. Forget I said cup-a-soups.”

“And now—or actually in 2018—the world is worth conquering. So the Zygons are invading the future from the past,” Clara surmised smartly.

The Doctor, her father, grinned proudly. “Exactly!” He held up his hand for a high five which she immediately accepted, looking just as proud of herself.

The younger Rose’s chest tightened at the image. Logically, she knew this was her future. She knew that she would be standing over there with the Doctor and their two daughters and son-in-law, but the ten feet of space between them felt like a million miles away—it could be a million years away, for all she knew. The pain of losing Alina less than a year ago still stung as sharply as it did in then.

She felt her Doctor’s arm tighten around her waist as he sensed the tidal wave of conflicting emotions, and she knew he felt the same.

She looked up and again her eyes landed on those of her future self and saw her own understanding reflected back at her. She knew exactly how she felt. She had already felt it—has continued to feel it for longer. Distantly, she wondered if she might be able to get some advice from her future self on how to keep going, or if that might shatter the universe or something.

For now, at least, she had proof of a better tomorrow.

“So,” Amy said, bringing her mothers out of their little bubble. “What are we gonna do?”
“Well,” the Tenth Doctor spoke up, “seeing as we’re the only ones with a TARDIS, it looks like you’ll be following us.”

Amy had thankfully had the foresight to have the TARDIS moved from the top of the hill to the palace gardens. If any of the staff thought this weird, none of them said anything. Queen Elizabeth did a lot of weird things, but she ran the country pretty well so who were they to question her?

The Tenth Doctor and the younger Rose ran immediately to the console, not blinking twice at the layout, but the rest of them had varying reactions.

Nine, for one, wrinkled his nose distastefully at all the exposed wiring hanging from the ceiling and grating for flooring. “You’ve really let this place go.”

Eleven smirked. “It’s his grunge phase. He grows out of it,” he said, is if he was not him.

Ten made an indignant noise and stroked the cloister bell consolingly. “Don’t you listen to them.”

The younger Rose grinned at the surroundings and looped an arm through her Doctor’s. “I love it,” she said, earning what were essentially purrs from both the Time Lord and the timeship.

The older Rose had been smiling nostalgically at the coral struts, but she was now squinting at the Ninth Doctor. This was exactly how the TARDIS had looked when she first met him. If he didn’t recognise it that meant…

She was pulled out of her thoughts as the alarms started ringing and the lights flickering.

“The desktop is glitching!” Ten announced, pulling the monitor around.

Nine stomped over to another set of controls, expertly ignoring the shock he got from touching the console out of his own timestream. “Three of us from different time zones. She’s trying to compensate.”

It flickered to a mostly-white version of TARDIS, which looked like it came straight out of a 1960’s sci-fi BBC daytime special.

“Oh, very Spock,” both Roses teased approvingly.

“Hey, look!” Eleven grinned. “The round things!”

Ten held a similar expression. “I love the round things.”

“What are the round things?”

Ten’s smile didn’t fade as he shook his head. “No idea.”

A panel on the console sparked nearest Eleven and he put it out quickly. “Oh dear, the friction contrafibulator—” He flipped a few switches. “Ha! There, stabilised!”

The desktop changed into the one 5 out of 8 of them knew well. All orangey and bubbly with glass floors and enough staircases to make the Niesen Railway envious.

“Oh, you’ve redecorated!” Ten said with a high-pitched voice, and then wrinkled his nose, pulling his chin back in distaste. “I don’t like it.”

Eleven knew, logically, that he was annoyed with himself. But well… “Oh. Oh yeah? Oh, you never do!”
“Listen,” the older Rose broke in, “We’re going to UNIT HQ, 2018. The Zygons from the Gallery followed us into the Black Archive.”

With three Doctors, two Roses, Amy, Clara, and Rory piloting, the TARDIS would have had her smoothest landing yet—if it wasn’t for the TARDIS proofing.

In the Black Archive, the Zygons were perusing UNIT’s most top secret and dangerous weaponry. “The equipment here is phenomenal,” Zygon-McGillop said. “The humans don’t realise what half this stuff does. We could conquer their world in a day.”

The Zygon that had formerly been a copy of Kate Stewart nodded. “We were fortunate, then, in our choice of duplicate.”

The real Kate walked in then. “No, I’m afraid you weren’t,” she said, and then motioned between her and Osgood (the real one). “We’re not armed. You may relax.”

The Zygon smirked. “We are armed. You may not.”

“Lock the door,” Kate ordered Osgood. “I'm afraid we can't be interrupted. You don't mind if I get comfortable?” She sat down at one side of the large metal table which was centered in the room.

“You don't mind if I do?” The Zygon sat down and transformed into Kate.

Kate remained relatively calm in the presence of her own face. “You'll realise there are protocols protecting this place,” she told her. “Osgood?”

Her assistant recited what she knew from the security protocols: “In the event of any alien incursion, the contents of this room are deemed so dangerous, it will self-destruct in—”

“Five minutes,” Kate finished, hitting an alarm on the underside of the table. A siren sounded as the countdown began. “There's a nuclear warhead twenty feet beneath us. Are you sitting comfortably?”

“You would destroy London?” the Kate Zygon asked incredulously.

Kate didn’t hesitate. “To save the world, yes, I would.”

“You're bluffing.”

She raised a brow. “You really think so? Somewhere in your memory is a man called Brigadier Alistair Gordon Lethbridge Stewart. I am his daughter.”

The Zygon scanned the other woman’s memories for a second, and when she found him her eyes widened in fear.

But then the Doctor’s voice came over the intercom of a nearby device which UNIT had never been able to figure out the purpose of. “Science leads, Kate,” he threw her own words back at her. “Is that what you meant? Is that what your father meant?”

“Doctor?”

“Space-Time Telegraph, Kate. A gift from me to your father, hotline straight to the TARDIS. I know about the Black Archive and I know about the security protocol. Kate, please. Please tell me you are not about to do something unbelievably stupid.”
Kate’s jaw clenched as she shook her head. “I’m sorry, Doctor. Switch it off.”

A different Doctor spoke up before Osgood could move to follow orders. “Not as sorry as you will be,” the tenth Doctor told her grimly. “This is not a decision you will ever be able to live with.”

In the TARDIS Eleven grabbed the mic back from his younger self. “Kate, we're trying to bring the TARDIS in. Why can't we land?”

“I said, switch it off!” she said again to someone in the room with her.

“No, Kate, please. Just listen to me!” the Doctor begged, but then the connection was severed.


Clara looked between her three dads. “How can they do that?”

Eleven shook his head in annoyance, currently glad there weren’t any humans on the TARDIS (Rory didn’t count). “Alien technology plus human stupidity. Trust me, it's unbeatable.”

The ninth Doctor’s eyes landed on the stasis cube Amy (he thought that might have been her name) had brought with them onto the TARDIS. “We don't need to land,” he said suddenly.

Ten looked at him like he’d just dribbled on his shirt. “Yeah, we do. A tiny bit. Try and keep up.”

Clara followed his line of sight to the thing in Amy’s hand. “Stasis cube!” she exclaimed, and Nine snapped his fingers, pointing at her with a wide grin. “There’s another way!” Clara ran over to her sister, grabbing the cube and tossing it into the air. She caught it, looking incredibly pleased with herself.

She ran over to the monitor, pulling it down to her height as her hands started flying across the Gallifreyan keyboard (which had two levels and three sides). “First things first, we need to call that square-looking scientist.”

“Square?” her dad repeated incredulously.

She ignored him and tossed the TARDIS phone to her leather-wearing father. “Tell him to take the Gallifrey Falls painting to the Black Archive.”

Nine had no idea what ‘Gallifrey Falls’ is, but he nodded anyway. “Take a look at your phone and confirm who you're talking to,” he said in lieu of hello.

“But that's not possible,” McGillop sputtered. “I was just—”

“You were just talking to me,” Nine cut him off, rolling his eyes. Clara was right, the scientist did sound square. “I know. I'm a time traveller, figure it out. I need you to send the Gallifrey Falls painting to the Black Archive. Understood?”

He got the confirmation and nodded to Clara, who turned to her mother. “Tell me you know where you put the painting.”

Rose nodded and ran down the stairs to the lower level, disappearing down a corridor and returning a moment later, massive framed canvas in hand. All three of the Doctors rushed to take it from her, and together they placed it on the jumpseat.

A small moment passed where they could only stare at the battlefield before them.
Rory finally broke the silence. “Now what?”

“Now,” Clara tossed the stasis cube towards her father, “we infiltrate.”

They burst through the painting of the Time War and into the Black Archive, accidentally bringing a Dalek along for the ride. It raised it’s weapon to exterminate, but three simultaneous sonic blasts had it exploding into the nearest shelf.

The ninth Doctor raised his hand in a short wave, “Hello.”

“I'm the Doctor,” Ten spoke for the three of them.

“Sorry about the Dalek,” Eleven added.

Clara poked her head out from behind her father. “Also the showing off.”

The older Rose pulled her daughter back to her, sending the room full of aliens and UNIT operatives an apologetic look. Amy looked around hopefully for the TARDIS (she really needed out of this ridiculous dress), but deflated when it was nowhere in sight.

Eleven marched up to the nearest Kate. “Kate Lethbridge Stewart, what in the name of sanity are you doing?”

The Kate that was apparently the human one—and not the one the Doctor had demanded an answer of—answered. “The countdown can only be halted at my personal command. There's nothing you can do.”

Ten raised a brow. “Except make you both agree to halt it.”

Kate snorted. “Not even three of you.”

Nine growled under his breath and shouted, “You're about to murder millions of people!”

“To save billions!” Kate shouted back, turning so that she spoke to all three of them at once. “How many times have you made that calculation?”

“Once,” Eleven answered, glaring. “It turned me into the man I am now.”

Ten started circling Kate as he spoke, and his older self mimicked the action. “You tell yourself it's justified, but it's a lie. Because what I did that day was wrong. Just wrong.”

As the two older Doctors dragged the chairs around to the far end of the table and took their seats, the youngest looked to Bad Wolf—the Rose who wasn’t completely Rose—seeking guidance, but she just gave him those wide knowing eyes again. It wasn’t her decision to make. She could only stand beside him as he made it.

Ten and Eleven crossed their arms in unison, throwing their feet up on the table for good measure. “And, because I got it wrong, I'm going to make you get it right,” Ten said.

Kate looked apprehensive, but not all that convinced of the routine. “How?”

The two Doctors began monologuing, their sentences bouncing off one another’s perfectly from youngest to oldest. “Any second now, you're going to stop that countdown. Both of you, together.”
“Then you're going to negotiate the most perfect treaty of all time.”

“Safeguards all round, completely fair on both sides.”

“And the key to perfect negotiation?”

“Not knowing what side you're on.”

“So, for the next few hours, until we decide to let you out—”

“No one in this room will be able to remember if they're human—”

“Or Zygon.”

They both stood up and hopped onto the table, aiming their sonic screwdrivers at the memory filter in the ceiling, with Nine joining in from his place on the ground. The countdown reached seven seconds. All the Humans and Zygons in the room look perplexed, and then—

“Cancel the detonation!” the Kates yell together.

It stops at five.

Rory and Amy left the Archive to track down the TARDIS so she could finally put on a pair of trousers for the first time in years. (That was a conversation they really needed to have, but Humans and Zygons were negotiating an appeal for asylum on Earth so it was put on the back burner for now.) The Roses were helping along with their respective husbands as the species worked out the logistics, and Clara was wandering about the Black Archive, secretly hoping she might be able to get out of here with a few of the things they had stored away down here.

She found the younger Doctor sitting in a high-backed leather chair, staring pensively into the middle distance. He looked up as she approached.

“Hello,” she said, taking a seat on the table in front of him.

He looked at her as though he didn’t know exactly what to make of her (Clara imagined she probably looked much the same). “Hello,” he answered.

“I'm Clara. We haven't really met yet.”

He smirked slightly. “I look forward to it.” She was still squinting at him. “Is there a problem?”

Clara shook her head. She’d never been any good at controlling her face. “The Doctor, my Dad,” she tried to explain what she was thinking, “he talks about it sometimes. The day he did it, the day he wiped out the Time Lords to stop the war…”

Nine raised his brows. “One would.”

“You wouldn't,” she said knowingly. “Because you haven't done it yet. It's still in your future.”

“You're very sure of yourself.”

Clara ignored that slight reprimand. She started speaking very quickly, determined to get it all out. “He regrets it. I see it in his eyes every day. He'd do anything to change it.”
The Doctor nodded his head towards where negotiations were taking place. “Including saving all these people. How many worlds has his regret saved, do you think? Look over there. Humans and Zygons working together in peace.”

Clara looked down to where she was twisting her hands in her lap, trying to think of what to say next. Trying to think of something that could make him change his mind.

He spoke first. “How did you know?”

She gave a small smile. “Your eyes. You're so much younger.”

The Doctor made an amused sound at that, and then let out a long breath. “Then, all things considered, it's time I grew up. I've seen all I needed.” He looked over her shoulder and spoke to someone. “I’m ready,” he said.

“I know you are,” Bad Wolf answered.

Clara just barely heard it, like a whisper from the next room over, a hint at another oddly familiar telepathic frequency. “Who's there?” she asked, looking behind her but finding no one. “Who were you talking to…?” she drifted off as she turned back. The Doctor was no longer there.

Amy was back into 21st century civilian attire, and her and Rory were sitting together on the jumpseat, reluctant to rejoin so many Time Lords back in the Black Archive.

They weren’t alone long though before the rest of their family was bursting through the TARDIS doors. Rose went to the console immediately, seeming to move effortlessly along the controls as she began piloting the ship with the sort of focus the blonde wasn’t exactly known for, her husband joining her after tripping up the stairs in his haste.

“What’s going on?” Amy asked, standing up to try and look like she was making an attempt to help her parents and little sister pilot. “Where are we going?”

“And what happened to the others?” Rory added.

“Gallifrey,” Rose answered without looking up. “The others are in their own TARDIS.”

“What, but—” Amy’s sputtering were cut off as the ship suddenly rocked violently. She fell forwards and happened to pull down on the gravitation stabilizers a second before Clara could. Further arguments were halted as it suddenly became all hands on deck to land the TARDIS on her planet of origin.

The trip had been far less exciting for the leather-clad Doctor, as he was in the correct timestream to be able to access his home planet. He stood in that barn again, just as he had as a child: afraid, but this time he wasn’t alone.

“Are you sure?” she asked.

He looked up to the Bad Wolf girl, seeing her in a new light now that he’s seen his future. How was she able to do this? She must have been a Time Lord, but he was about to kill them all—

“I was sure when I came in here,” he answered determinedly. “There’s no other way.”
“You’ve seen the men you will become.” It wasn’t a warning or a question. It was a reminder. She wasn’t there to stop him. She was there to give him hope. As she always would be.

“Those men are worthy of you,” he said, implying that he wasn’t.

“Those men are you.”

He was shaking his head before she’d even finished the thought. “Those men are the Doctor.”

“You’re the Doctor too,” she said, and it was obvious she wasn’t going to agree with him. She wasn’t going to allow him to pretend to be someone else. He had to be sure of this decision. He couldn’t make it wearing the face of another.

He smirked. “Maybe you’ll remind me of that someday.”

She gave him a sad smile, and his resolve wavered as she sent him an image. The children of Gallifrey, playing in the Valley of the Gods, red grass and silver trees which sang in the wind, they tied golden ribbons in their hair in honour of the time which has blessed them. His hearts stuttered on a beat as she came back into focus, his hand just centimetres away from hitting the button which would end it all.

“You know the sound the Tardis makes?” she asked, and he could hear it. “That wheezing, groaning… That sound brings hope wherever it goes.”

“Yes, I like to think it does.”

Her eyes glowed golden. “To anyone who hears it, Doctor. Anyone, however lost. Even you.”

The Doctor realised the sound wasn’t in his head. He wheeled around just as the two TARDISes landed. The other Doctors stepped out, both of them holding their Roses’ hand.

Clara led her older sister and brother-in-law out, standing just behind her parents. She spoke quietly, “I told you. He hasn’t done it yet.”

“Go away, all of you,” the youngest Doctor said in answer. “This is for me.” His Bad Wolf girl smirked and moved to sit on the box she’d been on when he’d first saw her.

The tenth Doctor was looking around the barn in which so many of his dreams took place. “These events should be time-locked. We shouldn’t even be here.”

Eleven nodded in agreement. “So something let us through.”

“Well, the only person who could do that is—” Ten cut himself off as they both turned to look at their wives. The Roses’ eyes were glowing and they turned together to their third, seeing her for the first time

“You clever boys,” the Bad Wolf girl said, though the others still couldn’t hear her.

“A message to lead myself here,” the Roses spoke in unison, their voices soaked in the sound of the universe. “I want you safe, my Doctor.”

“But there’s nothing we can do,” Ten argued, holding his wife’s hand more tightly. He still couldn’t get over the fear that seeing her as Bad Wolf brought. That little voice in the back of his head screaming that he could still lose her, reminding him of what it felt like when he did.

Nine interrupted again, always the courageous war hero, pushing others out of the line of fire, even
at his own expense. “Go back. Go back to your lives. Go and be the Doctor that I could never be.”

“My Doctor,” the Roses spoke again. They weren’t still glowing, but just well timed (probably easier when you were all the same person).

The oldest Doctor stepped forward. “You were the Doctor more than anybody else. You were the Doctor on the day it wasn't possible to get it right.”

Ten followed his lead. “But this time you don't have to do it alone.”

The three of them stood around the device, each of them placing a hand on the button. Clara let out a small whimper and hid her face in her mum’s stomach. Amy let a tear run down her cheek before burying her face in Rory’s shoulder and reaching out to hold her mum’s hand.

“Thank you,” Nine whispered.

“What we do today is not out of fear or hatred,” Ten said. “It is done because there is no other way.”

“And it is done in the name of the many lives we are failing to save,” Eleven added grimly. He couldn’t help but look over to his family. Clara lifted her head, her eyes wide with innocence and tears.

“What is it?” he asked, because it’s not as if she didn’t already know.

She shook her head. “Nothing.”

“No, it's something. Tell me.” Every part of him wanted to take her and Amy and hide them away in the TARDIS until all this was over. They didn't need to see this. They didn't need to live this.

Clara sniffed miserably. “You told me you wiped out your own people. I just… I never pictured you doing it, that's all.”

Before he could even try to think of a response to that, Bad Wolf spoke, “Take a closer look,” and the barn around them disappeared.

The Time War raged around them. People, covered in blood, ran for shelter as bombs rained down. Daleks killed without question, without mercy. Mothers screamed as they held the lifeless bodies of their children, begging the war to take them too. Women, men, and children, murdered without discrimination. They weren’t living anymore; they were surviving, and they were struggling to do even that.

“What is it?” Amy asked, because this didn’t feel like a normal premonition.

Rory nodded. “What’s happening?”


“It’s the reality around you,” the Roses spoke together. “The truth of war.”

Clara didn’t see the war though. She saw the people. Her people, their family. “These are the people you're going to burn?”

“There isn't anything we can do,” Ten answered, and the war disappeared. They were back in the barn, on the side of Gallifrey which had already been desecrated.
Eleven walked up to his family, taking Clara and Amy by the hand as they continued to cry. “He's right,” he told them. “There isn't another way. There never was. Either I destroy my own people or let the universe burn.”

“Our people,” Amy corrected. “Melody’s too. A whole side of us we never get to know.” She sounded like she was pleading, but for what she didn’t know.

He pulled her into a hug, squeezing his eyes shut and willing away her pain as best he could. “I know. I’m sorry. I wish there was another way. You would have loved it here.”

Amy nodded in understanding. “I know,” she sniffed and let him go.

Clara was still shaking her head at her three fathers though, youthful naivety preventing her from accepting a harsh reality. “Look at you. The three of you,” she said. “The warrior, the hero, and you.” Her lip was shaking and she couldn’t bring her eyes above the bowtie.

He stepped towards his youngest daughter, pretending his hearts weren’t breaking at the hurt on her face. “And what am I?”

She finally met his eyes. “Have you really forgotten?”

He looked behind him to his other faces, over to the younger Rose who looked terrified, to the older one who was projecting all the love and support she could through her grief. She held Amy’s hand who held Rory’s. He couldn’t figure out when things had gotten so complicated. “Yes. Maybe, yes.”

Clara held her chin up. “We’ve got enough warriors, and any old idiot can be a hero. It takes a lot more to be a dad.”

The Doctor let out a long breath. “Well then, Klariztelme, my daughter, what would you have me do?”

She gave him a small smile. “What you’ve always done. Be a Doctor. You told me the name you chose was a promise. What was the promise?”

“Asnesve saeva ne skedarvi,” Ten answered in Gallifreyan, voice distant, ‘never cruel nor cowardly.’

“Asnesve pardeci`lao, Asnesve pardeci`iz,” Nine finished, ‘never give up, never give in.’

Eleven spun around to the other Doctors, rocking back on his heels, eyes wide with hope.

Ten’s brows shot into his hairline. “You’re not actually suggesting that we change our own personal history?”

Eleven shook his head. “We change history all the time. I'm suggesting far worse.”

Nine leaned forward. “What, exactly?”

“Gentlemen, I have had four hundred years to think about this. I've changed my mind.” The oldest Doctor aimed his screwdriver at the doomsday device, shutting it down completely until it was just a small unassuming box.

“There’s still a billion billion Daleks up there attacking!” Nine argued.

Eleven held his hand out, pacing around the room as his mind whirled. “Yeah, there is. There is.”
Pinstripes was going through a similar thought process (though his mind didn’t work as quickly as it will in the future). “But there’s something those billion billion Daleks don’t know…” he followed.

Bowtie snapped and pointed at him. “Because if they did, they’d probably send for reinforcements.”

Clara bounced on her toes excitedly. “What? What don't they know?”

“This time, there's three of us,” her father answered.

Nine’s face finally lit up with understanding. “Oh, that’s fantastic!”

“Oh, oh, oh, I'm getting that too!” Ten ran around until he was picking up his Rose by the waist and spinning her around. “That is brilliant!”

“She didn't just show me any old future,” Nine realised. “She showed me exactly the future I needed to see.”

Bad Wolf laughed as the other Roses smiled. “Now you're getting it,” she said.

Amy was pretty sure she was still a few steps behind the rest of the Time Lords in the room (a feeling she wasn’t all that used to as of late) but she went along with it anyway. “So what are we doing? What's the plan?”

Nine began explaining, “The Dalek fleets are surrounding Gallifrey, firing on it constantly.”

“The Sky Trench is holding,” Ten went on, “but what if the whole planet just disappeared?”

Rory’s brow furrowed. “Is that possible?”

Ten went on as if he hadn’t heard him (a feeling Rory was very used to). “The Daleks would be firing on each other. They’d destroy themselves in their own crossfire.” He pointed his fingers at each other in demonstration.

Nine continued, “Gallifrey would be gone, the Daleks would be destroyed, and it would look to the rest of the universe as if they'd annihilated each other.”

Amy looked between the manic faces of all her fathers. “And where would Gallifrey be?” she asked hesitantly. She was pretty sure even the TARDIS wasn’t big enough to fit a whole planet inside.


Eleven laughed, “Exactly—”

“Like a painting,” the two Roses finished as they finally caught up with their husbands’ thought processes. Their eyes met and they shared a small smile.

They flew their TARDISes to just inside of Gallifrey’s air trenches, doing their best to maintain shields from the specialised Dalek army. The Doctor managed to reconnect the servers on the monitor, and grinned when the call was accepted. “Hello, hello, Gallifrey High Command, this is the Doctor speaking!”
The tenth Doctor also connected, though it was actually Rose who stood in front of the monitor while he shouted from the other side of the console. “Hello! Also the Doctor! Can you hear me?”

“Also the Doctor, standing ready,” Nine chimed in, more seriously than the first two. He was still the warrior, after all.

“Dear God, three of them,” the General said. “All my worst nightmares at once.”

Clara peeked over her dad’s shoulder to see the high-collared officials. “Oof, I see where you get your dress sense from, Dad.”

Ten ignored Eleven’s indignant response as he joined Rose in front of the monitor. “General, we have a plan.”

“We should point at this moment, it is a fairly terrible plan,” Eleven jumped in.

“And almost certainly won't work,” Ten added.

“I was happy with fairly terrible.”

“Sorry, just thinking out loud.”

Nine rolled his eyes and got them back on track. “We're flying our three TARDISes into your lower atmosphere.”

“We're positioned at equidistant intervals around the globe,” Ten explained, and then sent Rose a cheeky grin. “Equidistant. So grown up.”

“We're just about ready to do it,” Nine said.

The General looked just about ready to reach through time and space and strangle the whole lot of them. Mere moments ago this mad man had been trekking through the desert with the device that could kill them all. “Ready to do what?” he demanded.

Clara hopped up onto her toes, using the console as balance. “We're going to freeze Gallifrey!”

The General stared at the strange little girl incredulously. “I'm sorry, what?”

The tenth Doctor clarified, “Using our Tardises, we're going to freeze Gallifrey in a single moment in time.”

“You know, like those stasis cubes?” Nine glanced to the one he had sitting near the cloister bell, same as the others. “A single moment in time, held in a parallel pocket universe.”

Eleven ran around the console as something very near them exploded. “Except we're going to do it to a whole planet.”

Ten tilted his head. “And all the people on it.”

“What?” the General sputtered. “Even if that were possible—which it isn't—why would you do such a thing?”

The eldest Doctor set him with a serious look. “Because the alternative is burning.”

“And I've seen that,” Ten said.
“And I never want to see it again.”

The General shook his head, trying to keep up. “We'd be lost in another universe, frozen in a single moment. We'd have nothing.”

“You would have hope,” Eleven corrected. “And right now, that is exactly what you don't have.”

“It's delusional!” he continued to argue. “The calculations alone would take hundreds of years.”

The Doctor smirked. “Oh, hundreds and hundreds.”

Ten flipped his sonic through the air and caught it deftly. “But don't worry, I started a very long time ago.”

“You might say I've been doing this all my lives.”

Eight other screens came to life as the all other Doctors came together, positioning themselves around Gallifrey, using the TARDIS to surround the planet with a golden light strung between them. Bad Wolf appeared with all of them, lending them her heart.

The general spun in a small circle as alarms blared. “All eleven of them!”

“No, sir. All twelve!” Another monitor flickered on with yet another face. The building rumbled. “Sir, the Daleks know that something is happening. They’re increasing their fire power!”

The General had no choice. “Do it, Doctor. Just do it.”

“Okay. Gentlemen, we're ready. Geronimo!” He pulled the lever.

“Allons-y!”

Nine rolled his eyes. “Oh, for God's sake. Gallifrey stands!”

Later, the Doctor, Rose, Amy, Rory, and Clara all sat in the library holding cups of tea. The other TARDISes had disappeared almost as soon as Gallifrey had, spread back out amongst time and space, and there was no way to know if they had succeeded.

“They won’t remember any of it though, will they?” Clara asked, looking between her parents. “You won’t remember that you saved them.”

The Doctor shook his head sadly. “The time streams are out of sync. Even if they tried to remember they couldn't.”

Clara looked down to her tea thoughtfully, but smiled suddenly as she raised her head. “Still, bet you’re glad I was there.”


Amy leaned forward. “But what do we do now?”

They all looked up to the painting which was now sitting atop the mantel.

“Gallifrey Falls No More,” Rose whispered. It seemed they were meant to save it, retrieve the lost planet. But it was trapped in another universe. If they knew how to do that, Jackie Tyler would
know her grandchildren. She let out a long breath and looked back to her eldest daughter. “How did you get it?”

Amy blinked until she remembered the note and the instructions she’d left in the vault. “Oh, uh. It was just there already. I could tell it was yours.”

The Doctor nodded. “Then what we need to do is bring that painting to the 16th century.”

Amy wrinkled her nose. “I never want to step back in that century again. I don’t care if it’s the 16th century of Barcelona. I’m not doing it.”

Clara tilted her head. “Would that be Barcelona the city or the planet?”

“Either,” Amy answered quickly.

“Queen Elizabeth I still has 42 years left on the throne,” her father reminded her.

Amy would not even entertain the idea of going back, history be damned. “I don’t care.”

He smirked, expecting that. “Don’t worry. I’ve got an idea.” He jumped up and started heading towards the door, calling over his shoulder, “Meet me in the console room in ten!”

His “idea” ended up being the old teselecta he’d disabled in Berlin. Just a few adjustments and the hunk of metal was back to a perfect imitation of Amy, this time only in period dress and capable of functioning on autopilot (no miniaturised people required!). After dropping off the painting to before Amy arrived the first time, they sent the robot (armed with every available detail of Queen Elizabeth I’s reign) off to rule England for a few decades.

“Guess we know why she was the virgin queen,” Rory quipped as he shut the TARDIS doors, earning amused laughs from the rest of them.


“You can finally tell them you lived today,” the Doctor said in answer.

Amy’s eyes widened as her brain was finally able to connect a lot of dots—bits of conversation which she’d never fully understood until now. “Oh gods, you will have to keep all this from me for the next two years, won’t you?”

The Doctor laughed and ruffled her hair. “Teach you not to steal the TARDIS.”

“It was—” Amy started.

“Sorry, what?” Clara interrupted.

“Nope,” Rose cut off whatever impending argument she could sense coming, and hugged Amy goodbye. “Go see your daughter,” she told her. “I know you’re dying to.”

Amy blinked back tears at the reminder and hugged her mum back tightly, feeling like she understood her on a deeper level now. She hugged the rest of them as well, even though she was about to see them all again.

She left the TARDIS and watched it go before sprinting to her front door. She came in right behind
Rory, the Doctor, Clara, and Melody, apparently, as they were all carrying shopping bags. She scooped up her daughter immediately, holding her close.

“Oh, back from saving Gallifrey, are we?” her father asked with raised brows.

Amy looked down to Clara who had the decency to look guilty. “Sorry,” she said.

Amy couldn’t find it within herself to care though, she just laughed and shook her head, using her free arm to hug her younger sister. “That’s okay. It all worked out, right?”

“Yeah,” Clara grumbled, “If ‘worked out’ means three months grounded on Earth with you.”

Amy grinned. “Worked out perfectly then!”

She turned the corner to find Rose sitting on the sofa, holding her month-old baby in one arm with her mobile pressed into her chest to keep whoever was on the other side of the call from hearing. Amy tilted her head curiously and put Melody down so that she could take her baby sister from her mother.

“Who are you talking to?” she asked as she adjusted the floppy infant, careful not to wake her up.

“You,” Rose answered quietly, using her now free hand to better cover the receiver. “From 2009.”

Amy’s eyes lit up as she remembered. “Oh please mum, give me the phone! I wanna talk to myself!” she begged, chasing her as Rose stood up and crossed to the other side of the room.

The Doctor overheard the conversation from the kitchen. “Amelia, that’s a serious risk to the timelines and you know that!” he called, and Melody squealed as she begged her father to have an ice lolly before dinner.

Amy pouted as her mum started talking to her past self again. “Amy, I love you, but I have to go,” she said.

“Oh that’s just not fair!” Amy complained with a slight sense of déjà vu. After the day she just had? What hypocrites!

“Oh my god it’s in surround sound,” Rose laughed. “I have to go. Knowing you you’ll tell yourself the next ten years of—” She cut herself off with a wince, and Amy remembered jumping up in excitement when she’d heard that. “Oh, time to go. I promise I’ll see you soon. Or you’ll see me. Whatever. Gotta go. Love you.” She let out quickly, and ended the call before she could mess up any more.

She sighed and turned to see all three of her daughters looking at her. “You’ll all be the death of me,” she said, shaking her head and taking her now-awake baby back.

“But you love us!” Amy and Clara called together as Rose entered the kitchen.

Rose met the Doctor’s eyes and they shared a small smile. “But I love you,” she agreed.

The Doctor walked over and placed his hands gently on her hips, careful not to squish their baby between them. “I love you so much,” he whispered, “thank you.”

She tilted her head. “For what?”

“For everything,” he answered, and kissed her softly.
Chapter End Notes

I honestly can't believe that this is over. I've been writing this story for two years now, and it has helped me through so much. I cannot thank all of you enough for your support, whether you've been here since chapter 1 or just started reading today. The comments left here and on tumblr have meant so much to me throughout this entire process — you all are honestly so incredible. I am so thankful to this story for how much it has allowed me to grow as a writer and a person, and for offering me an escape when things got too difficult (I first started writing MBF while in the hospital). All of that is made possible by you guys. A story is only as powerful as the people reading it, so thank you for reading. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to write you this story. I hope it's meant as much to you as it has to me. ❤

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!