Sequel to Time and the Trickster. Rose Tyler dares to think that maybe she's got her life under control. After all her mum knows about aliens now and her relationship with the Doctor is no longer a secret from her friends, but she's wrong. Now everything that makes her who she is hangs in the balance and even the White Guardian cannot help her. Thirteen adventures and fifth in the Guardians of the Universe.
Rose Marion Tyler was twenty years old and in her third year of university at Cambridge where she was working on a concurrent physics and computer science degrees. It was a warm sunny day in late September with just a few wisps of clouds overhead. She was sitting alone at a small table on the front patio of the most popular coffee shop near the main campus. The tall roof lines of the old gothic buildings could be seen over nearby trees and would have created a peaceful scene if not for the hustle and bustle she was the midst of. All around her, students who were just returning to school or newly arrived first years were moving about and talking on the patio of the coffee shop. In the corner of her eye, Rose noticed a young woman she’d had several computer science classes with and waved to her as Anna headed inside.

Reaching up to her ear, Rose checked that the translator she’d been given by the Imperial Princess of Dumino years ago was still in place. The mass of voices around her seemed too loud for it all be in English, but her translator was still in place. Rose glanced around and debated heading back to her apartment or finding a quieter place to read the well-worn copy of Siddhartha that she’d pulled off the shelf this morning.

Classes would be starting in two days so she didn’t have much more time to just relax, but Rose wasn’t sure if there was any place in Cambridge that would be calm and quiet during the back to school rush. Yesterday her new neighbour, a fresh doctoral candidate in the biology department, has spilt something that definitely didn’t smell right. It was one of the reasons she was spending the day outside despite the noise. Internally shrugging, Rose lowered her eyes back to her book and did her best to ignore the people moving around her, taking a sip of her drink.

“This place is beyond crazy,” a cheerful voice said in front of her. “Maybe it would have been best to look at Cambridge in a couple of weeks.”

Rose glanced up from her book, wondering if the person was talking to her. A tall young woman with long copper red hair, freckles, green eyes and a bright smile slipped into the seat across from her. The young woman was dressed for the warm weather in a short denim skirt, a blue top with a floral design and a thin scarf wrapped around her neck. A silver bracelet with an odd collection of small charms and stones jangled on her wrist. Rose didn’t recognise her, but the young woman
“I hope Rory can find me in this crowd,” she muttered in a warm Scottish accent. Then she looked back at Rose with a widening grin. “You weren’t kidding about how pretty the campus was here, the gothic architecture is wonderful. Not as good as it was back then, but it really holds up. But I’m just not sure that it’s a good fit for me. Maybe the Doctor is right and I should just look at Edinburg, it would be really nice to go back to Scotland for a few years, but I’m not sure that would work for Rory.” The woman shook her head and rested her hand on the palm of her hand, giving Rose a lazy smile. “So what brings you here? Are you checking on up me? If you are I promise that I’ve been keeping my passport close and fifty pounds in my boot.”

Blinking at the young woman, Rose became aware that her mouth was hanging open a bit in shock. She stared at the young woman trying to understand what was going on. Blinking, Rose wasn’t surprised when the girl was still there but was having trouble believing what she was saying so casually. The young woman looked a bit younger than her, barely old enough to be a student at the school. And she had mentioned the Doctor.

“Rose?” the young woman called to her, frowning slightly. “Are you alright?”

Rose nearly laughed as it finally clicked in her mind what was going on. A laugh escaped her as she closed her book and set it down on the table. “I’m afraid that you have me at a disadvantage,” Rose said carefully. Glancing around for anyone who might have been listening, Rose relaxed when she determined they were alone. “I’m certain that we have never met, in my timeline at least.”

The red-haired young woman’s eyes widened with a hint of panic. “You don’t know me yet. Of course, you don’t, you’re too young! But maybe this was supposed to happen…. You’ve mentioned things like that happening before.” Rose stared at the young woman as she took in a deep breath and forced herself to calm down. “My name is Amelia Pond, most people call me Amy, but you’ve always called me Amelia or Mia. You’re going to meet me in the future.” Amelia or Mia gave Rose a soft smile. “So thanks in advance for that.”

Amelia paused, licking her lips and Rose gave her moment to collect her thoughts. “I was born in 1989,” Amelia informed Rose with a small smile. “This is my home time. I’m actually taking a gap year before starting university.” Amelia gestured towards the towering buildings of the Cambridge campus. “I’m checking out some school campuses, your suggestion actually.”

“Wow, you’re only three years younger than I am,” Rose said thoughtfully.

“That’s my fault,” Amelia said in a rush. “You’ve mentioned to me before that you’re from this time period so I should have remembered that you’d have a young self-walking around.”

Rose watched the young woman bury a hand in her long red hair, twirling the strands around her fingers and lean her face against her other hand. She seemed more embarrassed than actually worried about their out of synch meeting which allowed Rose to take a deep breath and calm down. After all, she met the Doctor and Jack out of order all the time. It was rather interesting to be on this side of a temporal loop.

“So gap year?” Rose asked to make conversation since Amelia didn’t seem in a hurry to leave. “How is that so far?”

Amelia raised her head to look at her and Rose noticed that her green eyes were dancing with
energy and excitement. “It’s great,” Amelia said. “I got great A Levels so you said I should take some time and explore Earth a bit. Said it was one thing that you wish you’d done.”

“I suppose that’s true,” Rose remarked with a small nod. “I travel a lot, but mostly for…”

“Aliens,” Amelia finished with a wide grin. “I know all about that.”

“You do?” Rose asked, raising an eyebrow.

Amelia was grinning at Rose now and she nodded eagerly. “Bedtime stories on the TARDIS since I was just a little girl.”

“Wait so you’ve known me how long?” Rose questioned with a frown, leaning forward. She tried to hide the worry and unease that was rising in her. This encounter could either be a good thing or a very very bad paradox creating event.

“Since I was seven, April 1996,” Amelia replied, tilting her head to give Rose a slightly triumphant look.

“And did… did you travel on the TARDIS?” Rose asked, feeling a touch of alarm at the idea of such a small child in the kind of danger she and the Doctor excelled at.

“Sort of,” Amelia answered, shrugging. “You took me on trips every couple of weeks and I’d stay for a few days before you dropped me back at my aunt’s right after we left. She never even noticed that I was gone.” Amelia’s smile softened as she looked at Rose. “So like I said, thanks for that. You and the Doctor pretty much raised me.”

Before Rose had time to fully process Amelia’s declaration, a tall young man with a roman nose, light brown hair and green eyes came walking up to them, holding a to-go cup of coffee in each hand. His eyes moved over to Rose and he smiled at her before setting one of the coffee cups in front of Amelia.

“Rose,” he greeted happily. “I didn’t know you were here, I would have got you something too.”

Unsure of what to say, Rose lifted her own coffee to show it to him and took a sip while Amelia jumped up and kissed the young man on the cheek.

“Rose this is my boyfriend Rory Williams,” Amelia informed her. “He’s planning on studying medicine, I’ll have my own doctor in a few years. He travels with us sometimes too.”

“Wait,” Rory said, glancing between Amelia and Rose. “Amy, what’s going on here? Rose knows me.”

“How,” Rose said, glancing between Amelia and Rose. “Amy, what’s going on here? Rose knows me.”

“Not yet I don’t,” Rose said. She shrugged and leaned back in her chair to study him. He looked like an average bloke, but Amelia had slipped her arm through his and was smiling at him like he was the most wonderful man on the planet. It made Rose oddly happy.

“Oh,” Rory replied slowly, his mouth forming an o and he looked at Amelia with a hint of alarm. “Should you really be talking to her?”

“I’m wondering that myself,” Rose told him with a nod.
“I’m sure it’s fine,” Amelia said with a laugh. “Now she knows who I am and knows to take me on trips as a little girl despite the Doctor’s original misgivings about it and she knows that you and I end up together. Need I remind you who pushed me to give you a chance as boyfriend material rather than keeping you as just a friend? This meeting is probably just maintaining the timelines of our future.” Amelia grinned at her boyfriend, eyes twinkling. “Big ball of wibbely-wobbly timey-wimey stuff remember.”

Rory’s shoulders relaxed and Rose blinked at the sudden rush of information that she’d just gotten. “I suppose so,” Rory said slowly. “But we should still be careful, Amy.”

“A agreed,” Rose told him with a nod as she glanced around. She was suddenly very aware of how crowded the patio was and the people who could be listening in on them. “Come on.” Rose stood up and slipped her book into her shoulder bag.

Picking up her coffee, she pushed her chair in and began to navigate her way out of the seating area. A quick glance over her shoulder assured her that Amelia and Rory were following her. It didn’t take long for Rose to find a new empty spot under a tree on the campus lawn to talk. Amelia nearly skipped over to join her while Rory followed at a slower pace that betrayed his worry over the situation.

Rose took a moment to study them both further. Amelia walked gracefully and deliberately, hinting at either a history of dance or martial arts. Rose guessed it was probably the latter, she had a hard enough time envisioning a child travelling in the TARDIS, but if it did happen she was sure that she would make sure the child knew how to defend themselves. Amelia was clearly confident, Rose didn’t know if it was due to her very attractive looks or her experiences, but it didn’t seem superficial like most teenagers.

Rory, on the other hand, was less confident, but there was determination in the way he held himself. Rose noted that even when there was distance between him and Amelia, he kept an eye on his girlfriend. The offhand remark Amelia had made about encouraging them to date echoed in Rose’s mind and she filed it away. Clearly despite being so young, they both knew about aliens so clearly, her future-self saw or would see something in Rory that would make her comfortable bringing him into the messy details of her life. That or he stumbled into it and was too stubborn to leave like Rani or Clyde.

“Alright,” Amelia said, rolling the word thickly and showing off her accent. “Private conversation now.”

“So did I ever indicate that we’d met before?” Rose asked looking at Amelia in curiosity.

“Nope,” Amelia answered, popping her p in a way very similar to how the Tenth Doctor did. It was strange to think of him helping to raise a child so Rose shoved the thought away. “Afraid not.”

“Fine,” Rose replied with a thoughtful nod. “Can you think of anything else that I need to know?”

“Other than that I travel with you an adult not really,” Amelia said. “I can’t believe I thought you were your older self. I mean I know you don’t really age, but-”

“Amy!” Rory scolded sharply, looking at Rose in alarm.

“Yeah,” Rose said slowly with a look towards Rory. “I’ve met myself in the future and I don’t seem to age much.”
“Your accent is different though,” Amelia observed with a tilt of her head, causing some of her long hair to spill over her shoulder. “Wonder why the change.”

Rose barely contained a sigh at Amelia’s remark; she’d noticed the accent thing too on her encounters with her future but knew better than to ask.

“Amy,” Rory chided, “Please be careful about what you say.” His eyes darted towards Rose with a hint of worry.

“Rory, calm down,” Amelia replied, wrapping her arm around his and giving her boyfriend a sweet smile. “Like I said this must be a temporal circle. You remember-”

“I remember,” Rory said quickly cutting her off. “Just-”

The hairs on Rose’s arm suddenly began to stand on end and the air around her felt thicker. Rory fell silent and glanced around, tightening his grip on Amy. Rose sucked in a quick breath as she scanned the area, looking for anything out of place. Then suddenly a field of bright blue energy surrounded her and the world around her went fuzzy before vanishing altogether.

Everything came back into focus a moment later and Rose barely stayed on her feet as a wave of dizziness hit her. Blinking and giving her head a quick shake, Rose looked around and noted that she was in a small white bay with curving walls and a flickering platform beneath her feet. She sucked in a deep breath, noticing a change in the air that seemed familiar, but she couldn’t place.

“Head rush,” Amelia’s voice said suddenly behind her causing Rose to spin around.

Rory was supporting Amelia, rapidly blinking his eyes and looking around with confusion and worry written on his face. The expression was gone in a moment as he swallowed and looked over at her. Nodding to him, Rose turned to survey the room; there was a large arched opening in front of them. She glanced back at the others, only to find them waiting for her. With another nod, Rose stepped through the doorway and into a slightly larger domed room with pale green walls. On one side was a series of transparent pads with tall humanoid forms inside.

“What a minute,” Rose gasped as she stepped closer to the pod. A laugh escaped her as she studied the thin forms made out of a shining white metal. Their joints and connecting sections were made of a dark blue material. At the moment the eyes were dark and they were unmoving.

“I’ve seen these before,” Rose announced with a growing smile. “If these are here then I bet we’re on an Otharan ship.”

“Indeed Rose Tyler,” a deep and smooth voice said from the other side of the room.

Turning Rose grinned as a figure shorter than her strode towards them. He had blue skin accented with lines of white skin that accentuated the muscles and bone structure of his hairless head and neck. The alien’s ears were similar to a dog’s and a small rounded nose with three folds of tightly wrinkled skin near his eyes. The very human mouth was smiling at Rose.

“Councilor Markin,” Rose greeted with a widening smile. “It’s great to see you again.”

“It is pleasant to see you as well Rose Tyler,” Markin agreed, coming to a stop a few feet in front of her before his eyes moved to Amelia and Rory. “Oh dear, we were trying to simply transmat you
up to the ship. We locked onto the Artron energy in your system.”

“That’s our fault, we’ve got the same energy traces as Rose, but it’s fine,” Amelia said quickly, “We’re friends and we know about aliens. It’s no problem.”

“I see,” Markin intoned calmly, nodding to Amelia and Rory before turning his attention back to Rose. “Rose Tyler, I have come to ask for your help.”

Chapter End Notes

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“Rose Tyler, I have come to ask for your help.”

Blinking in surprise at the statement, Rose couldn’t stop the smile that took over her face. This was certainly different, being asked for help in advance of a crash, an invasion or something ugly happening. Behind her Amelia chuckled and a small snort escaped Rory. Rose resisted the urge to turn and look at them and instead nodded to Markin.

“What do you need Markin?” she asked, doing her best to sound professional. “Is something wrong on Earth?”

“No, nothing like that,” Markin assured her quickly with a nod. “In fact, it has nothing to do with your planet.” He turned his eyes back to Amelia and Rory. “I can, of course, send your friends back to Earth.”

“We’re staying with Rose,” Amelia said in a loud and clear voice, her Scottish accent ringing in the room with determination.

“Very well,” Markin replied with a nod. “Then please follow me, this is no place to formerly have company.”

The alien Chancellor turned and headed for the doorway on the far side of the room. They stepped into a long corridor with curved blue tinted walls with passages running off in either direction. Doors were visible at the end of each corridor, but Markin led them forward. Other Orthans were moving around them in different colour and styles of uniforms and most stopped to study them for a moment before giving them deep nods and moving on. Markin led them to the end of the corridor where it widened into a round room without any doors.

Glancing down, Rose noticed that the floor was different than in the corridor. It had small smooth lines just visible beneath a nearly transparent surface and small lights were flashing.

“Level two,” Markin commanded calmly once Rory and Amelia joined them in the room. “Please stay calm,” he added to them just before the floor began to move.

They lifted up slowly and Rose quickly looked up only to see a barrier of energy vanish just above them. There was one further up and that vanished as they approached it, but then the next energy barrier above them did not. The floor stopped moving and they were standing in front of a short corridor that led into a large domed room.

“This way please,” Markin said, gesturing forward and smiling slightly before he led the way.
“Nice lift,” Amelia commented, winking at Rose as she moved past her and into the corridor.

Shaking her head, Rose glanced up at the energy barrier, wondering briefly what its properties were before she stepped off the platform and followed Markin.

The domed room was large and the walls were a much darker shade of blue. One large window looked out into space and lucky for them, they were facing Earth. Rose smiled at the sight of her planet filling up the screen, soft white clouds cutting across the blue of the oceans and the green of the continents.

“I never get tired of that view,” Amelia whispered beside her.

“Neither do I,” Rose whispered back, finally tearing her gaze away from the brilliant view to take in the rest of the room.

There was a long oval table made of the same or at least very similar looking metal to the robots with small chairs all around it. Markin calmly seated himself at the head of the table and gestured for them to join him. Amelia moved the fastest, gliding straight to the table and sitting down on the far side with a big smile. Rory glanced over at Rose and raised his eyebrows while sighing softly before moving over to join his girlfriend. Looking back at Markin, Rose walked over and seated herself next to him, torn between nervous excitement and amusement.

“What is this about Markin?” Rose questioned calmly, folding her hands on the table in front of her.

The Councillor reached to the side and tapped a small button, so low that Rose didn’t even notice it built into the table until he pressed it. The metal of the table shimmered for a moment before a large hologram appeared in front of Rose, the floating form of a green and blue planet not unlike her own. Two moons orbited the planet smoothly and Rory reached out only to have one of them pass through his hand. He chuckled softly, but Amelia smacked him on the arm and nodded towards Markin.

“This is the planet Etheia, home of the sentient species the Etheians. Until recently there has been a no interference protection order on the planet upheld by us as they are in a neutral territory near our boundaries. We’ve had very little to do with them over the years, just some checks now and then to track their status. It is rare that a planet moves beyond level five without space travel but it has happened before.”

“Did they?” Rose asked, glancing back at the image of the planet.

“No, no,” Markin quickly said with a shake of his head. “In fact, they recently managed extra stellar space travel, but I’m afraid that their first encounter did not go well.” Markin paused before slowly adding, “In fact, it was a disaster. Their ship had tools for drilling into asteroids in the outer space of their star system, but when a trader ship came too close the captain panicked and turned the laser drill on the ship. All hands were lost.”

“How terrible,” Amelia gasped, frowning deeply. “Surely an apology-”

“Etheia is not a united planet,” Markin informed them seriously. “This incident has caused massive panic on their world. The ship was actually owned by a private company who did offer an apology when Etheia was contacted about the incident, but I’m afraid that the people have not reacted well
to the knowledge of aliens.”

“So why do you need Rose?” Rory asked. “Sounds like everyone should just give them some space.”

“Indeed, they have a long way to go, but the ship they attacked was from the Durmino Empire. There were over sixty citizens aboard so there are calls for war in the Durmino capitol. The Emperor has sent the Princess to form a treaty in order to satisfy the honour of his people while avoiding invading Etheia.”

“They wouldn’t stand a chance,” Rose muttered, thinking of the monstrous Durmino fleet and the militant attitude that had still followed the species even after a peace treaty. She wasn’t an expert, but a few years was a pretty short time to expect everyone to have embraced peace. “So Princess Alenica will be at the negotiations?”

“She will be. Upon discussion with her, we realised that we both knew you and felt that you might be able to serve as something of a translator.”

“Something of a translator?” Rose repeated with confusion.

“You come from a planet with very limited space-faring abilities and have experience with both my people and the Durmino Empire. We need someone neutral who knows enough about the galaxy to be informed, but also someone familiar with more…” Markin hesitated, but added, “Primitive mindsets.”

Raising her eyebrow, Rose enjoyed watching Markin squirm for a moment before smiling and nodding in agreement. She wasn’t after all under any delusions about the current state of affairs on her planet. After all, she worked for a nearly secret organisation in order to help with alien threats and after the Big Ben incident, people had been quick to dismiss everything as a hoax.

“How long are you expecting this to take?” Rose asked carefully, mindful of school. “Because while I’m willing to help get things started I won’t be able to stay more than a few days.”

“I am optimistic that this will be sorted quickly. The Etheians want technology but are afraid of it being used for war. I believe that quarantining the star system to ensure that advanced technology does no benefit any of the states on their planet will be determined as the safest option.” Markin held up his hand when Rose started to speak and added. “And of course I will see you back to Earth when you need to return.”

“Okay,” Rose agreed with a nod. “That will do. I should probably get a few things.”

“We will provide anything you require,” Markin promised her quickly. “I’m afraid that transmatting you again back to Earth and then back to the ship would draw… unwanted attention from certain parties on your planet.”

Rose didn’t need him to say anything further and nodded her agreement. Markin was tensed up with an angry expression on his face. Torchwood hung unspoken in the air. He pressed another button on the table and a voice answered, “Yes Councilor?”

“Our guests have agreed to help us, you may depart when ready. Please inform Rethilan Prime that we will require two additional accommodations and that dietary arrangement for two more humans are requested.”
When the call ended and Markin took his finger off the button, Rory nodded to him and said, “Thank you.”

“We’ll help Rose in any way we can,” Amelia added gaining a curious expression from Markin who looked over at Rose.

“They’re friends, they’ll be fine,” Rose promised glancing over at them before adding seriously. “I take responsibility for them.”

“As you wish,” Markin agreed with a deep nod and Amelia beamed at her, looking incredibly happy at her statement.

Markin pressed another button on the table and Rose heard a small chime just before a door slid open on the far side of the room. Another Orthan walked into the room, his white marking much whiter and brighter than the more faded ones of Markin and dressed in an almost sky blue robe. The Orthan walked quickly to the table and bowed to Markin before turning his attention to them. Rose couldn’t help, but smile when the alien gave her a small bow before nodding to Amelia and Rory.

“This is Rethin,” Markin introduced. “He will be seeing to your needs.”

“It is my pleasure,” Rethin told them, his thin lips forming a smile. “Sir I just received a message from the helm. They wish to know if you or your guests care to observe our departure.”

When Markin looked over at her, Rose grinned and nodded, climbing to her feet. “That sounds very nice,” she said looking at Rethin. “I’ve been on spaceships before, but never properly seen them in flight.”

“Most of the ship is built to hide the effects of movement,” Markin explained as he also stood and gestured from them to follow. “But on the bridge, the viewing screens show the view outside perfectly and allow a better sense of movement.”

“Hope I don’t get sick,” Rory whispered to Amelia behind them as they headed for the doorway Rethin had entered by.

Rose walked alongside Markin as they headed through another rather bare corridor, but more Orthans were walking about than before. Doorways were open to other rooms and Rose leaned so she could peek into them as they walked.

“I’ll be sure to give you a full tour when we return you to Earth,” Markin promised. “But I fear that we are already running late for the start of the treaty negotiations.”

“You didn’t come to get Rose early?” Rory asked in a mildly suspicious voice.

“Politics were the delaying factor as usual,” Marking replied with a soft chuckle. “Rose Tyler’s name came up almost by accident. We did consider other negotiators even the professionals employed by the Shadow Proclamation and both our government, but the conclusion was the same for all of them. The Etherias would potentially feel threatened by too many highly advanced off-worlders who lacked a perspective as to their situation.”

“Since they aren’t a united planet, who are they sending?” Rose asked as they passed through
another doorway. “Since there isn’t a ruler or a single representative body?”

“There are three representatives coming, one from each of the most powerful superpowers. One is from a democracy similar to your own, one is a religious state that is somewhat in turmoil now due to the revelation of alien life and the third is a rather strict monarchy.”

“Oh,” Rose muttered, “Great, sounds like a great mix to have all together.”

“Should be fun,” Amelia added from behind her.

Rose was about to ask more questions, but they suddenly came to a large door that opened with a hiss revealing the bridge of the ship. It was circular with a domed ceiling, gleaming white with bursts of colour from control stations and lights. A raised walkway led from the doorway to the centre of the room past numerous aliens all sitting at compact workstations. An Orthan dressed in a white robe with insignias on his upper arms turned to look at them.

“Welcome,” he greeted as he started to move towards them. “We are ready for departure.” Markin looked up at Rose once more and she nodded, barely containing a smile. “Please take a seat,” the Orthan added, gesturing to their right.

Rose turned to see a series of small white chairs fixed into the wall of the bridge. Rory gave them a doubtful look, but Amelia strode over and sat down. The chair adjusted to her, reminding Rose a bit of feather down or microbeads except much firmed. Amelia laughed and gestured from them to join her. Rose sat down quickly while Rory eased himself a bit more gently into place. The chairs widened to fit their larger forms. Sitting down next to her, Markin smiled and nodded to the officer once again. A moment later white metal unfolded from the chair down Rose’s shoulders and up her sides, meeting in the middle of her chest to form an x shape. She turned quickly to see the same restraints spreading over Amelia, Rory and Markin.

“Merely a precaution,” Markin assured them. “All the crew use them when the ship first begins to move. The initial speed jump can be very abrupt.”

“What kind of system do you use?” Amelia asked. “Constant speed or variation?”

“Variation,” Markin replied looking rather pleased with the question. “We jump to a high speed and then slow down gradually as we approach our destination.”

Rose was about to ask something, but a sudden series of three chimes filled the air and echoed around the bridge and she assumed the ship. The few standing Orthans quickly moved to seats and she noticed the restraints come out to secure them. The commanding office sat down himself and waited as his own restraints settled into place.

“Depart for Rethilan Prime, now.”

The bridge seemed to stop for a split second, the air thick and the world almost hazy to Rose’s eyes. With effort she blinked her eyes, clearing them just in time to see the stars suddenly begin to stretch out on the view screens like a visual effect out of Star Wars. Next to her Amelia laughed, the noise sounding far away and distant. Around her, she heard more sluggish noises, but then everything suddenly snapped back into place.

“That is a wild experience,” Amelia announced next to her.
Rose sucked in a deep breath. “Yes, it is,” Rose agreed looking over at the beaming teenager before looking back to the view screens.

Stars were still rushing past, the effect was less clear now. It was a blur of colours and light blending together in a strange visual mixture.

“We’re going the speed of light,” Rose observed with a soft gasp.

“Indeed,” Markin chuckled next to her, “The transition to light speed is always a bit uncomfortable the first time and can be physically jarring. Hence the restraints,” he explained just as the restraints suddenly opened and were pulled back into the chair. “It is safe to get up now and walk around. The ship’s position and speed are now being adjusted for by the space we are travelling in.”

“Right,” Rose whispered as she stood up and gazed at the view screens. “The very fabric of space and time bends around an object travelling the speed of light due to the great distances of space being covered.” Rose shook her head and giggled softly. “Einstein was good at math.”

“And you just lost me,” Rory observed as he stood up. “I’ve never been much for physics.”

Rose look over at Amelia who smiled and shrugged. “You lectured, I absorbed some of it. Honestly, I was also better at xenobiology. I loved learning about alien plants and animals when I was a little kid. I even had a pet crystalline life form for a bit.” She sighed and looked sad for a moment. “Shimmer was so pretty, but really short lifespan.”

Nodding slowly, Rose was sure her eyes were open wide and she turned her attention back to Markin.

“How long until we reach… Rethilan Prime?”

“Two hours,” Markin announced before gesturing back to the doorway. “If you’ll come with me Rose, I’ll go over the treaty outlines that have been prepared. We have seven main items that need to be addressed.”

“You already have parts of the treaty drafted?” Rose repeated as Markin led her off the bridge. “Are we talking general points that you’re confident on?”

“We fully expect the Etherias to be happy to have their star system clear of off-worlders and accept temporary restrictions on how far out they go in exchange for remaining under the protection of the Orthans.”

“Then maybe this will go easy and smoothly,” Rose offered with a smile even as she internally flinched and shuddered. Knowing her life, she really doubted that the treaty process would go smoothly and judging from the look on Markin’s face, he shared her concerns.
When the ship arrived, Rose had only a moment to look at the planet out the view screen before Markin began shepherding her, Amelia and Rory towards the transmat system. Watching Rory and Amelia walk ahead of her, Rose had to admit that they were both taking this in stride as Rory asked Rethin questions about the political system of the Orthans and their medical technology. Amelia was smiling proudly at him, hinting to Rose that she’d probably introduced her boyfriend to her alien lifestyle not too long ago. Just long enough that he’d adjusted and was taking advantage of the situation to ask smart questions, but not so long that it had become an easy thing. It was tempting to ask them about it, but a little warning about timelines and knowing her own future at the back of her mind kept Rose silence.

Maybe it was her nerves or that she knew it was coming, but the transmat was a lot rougher this time. She swayed on her feet and had to blink several times to get the world back into focus. They were standing on a transmat platform in a large room. A set of controls were set up a few feet away so that a pair of Orthans controlling the platform could see them. Another group of Orthans were standing in the corner but came forward as soon as Markin stepped off the platform.

“This is Rose Tyler,” Markin announced, gesturing to Rose who stepped forward. She was at a loss of just how to act but settled on straightening her posture, smiling and nodding to them. “And her companions Amelia and Rory.” The use of the word companion almost made Rose burst out laughing, but she held it in. Markin turned back to her and said, “I must go and see to the arrival of the Etheians and ensure that the Durmino delegation is settled. Rethin will see you to your rooms and answer any final questions you may have.”

“How soon will the talks begin?” Rose asked before he moved too far away.

“As soon as the Etheians are ready,” Markin informed her. “Now that everyone is here we could begin at any moment.”

“So Princess Alenica is here?” Rose asked eagerly, showing more excitement than she meant to.

“Indeed,” Rethin informed her smoothly. “I will alert Her Imperial Highness that you have arrived, I am sure that she would like the opportunity to speak with you.” Rethin gave Rose a small smile. “In the limited conversations I have been present for, Her Imperial Highness speaks highly of you.”

Rose couldn’t help but feel pleased with the statement and nodded to Rethin, rubbing her gold bracelet as she began to follow the Orhan from the transmat room. The complex on Rethilan Prime was relatively small Rose realised as Rethin guided them further into the centre of the complex. Apparently, each species, minus humans, had a small wing for their diplomats and staff. The Orthans and Durmino Empire each had their own transmat with a third transmat serving the
Etheians. Joining the three wings together were three large rooms, one for group discussions, one for eating and the third serving as a relaxation room. Rose expected that the Orthans and Durmino Empire would use the rooms the most, she had a hard time envisioning the Etheians being comfortable around the aliens or each other for that matter under the circumstances.

“Your chambers have been prepared over here,” Rethin announced as they passed the relaxation room. “This is neutral ground so to speak, two Orlian observers from the Shadow Proclamation are also present, but they have no part in the talks.”

Rethin pressed a button at the side of a closed doorway and the door slid open with a soft hum. He gestured them inside, glancing over towards a pair of tall, red-eyed aliens with pale skin and white hair who were watching the trio of humans with mild interest. Rose looked over and nodded to the pair, assuming them to be the Orlian observes. They nodded in return and Rose stepped inside.

It was a small white room with walls that curved gently and became the ceiling without any sharp corners. A window on the far side looked out over a red landscape dotted with dark purple plants and a violet sky. Amelia walked past Rose and sat down on the long blue sofa that stretched over half of the room. Panels were placed around the walls, some giving off light and others covered with buttons and small screens. A table and three blue chairs that matched the sofa were placed off the right. For her position, Rose could see into a pair of bedrooms opposite of each other.

“I am afraid that we were not completely prepared for there to be three of you,” Rethin apologised. “I can arrange-”

“It’s fine,” Rory told him, leaning to look into one of the bedrooms. “We can share without any trouble.”

Rethin blinked at Rory and then looked over at Rose with a curious expression. Chuckling, Rose pointed over to Amelia and then to Rory. Their guide nodded in understanding.

“Very well,” Rethin replied with a nod. “Clothing will be provided for you within the hour. If you require anything, please simply pressed this button.” Rethin informed them as he pointed to a green button on a nearby panel. “I will return shortly with clothing, your identity pins and communication devices. I must ask that you do not leave this room until I return. Moving about the complex without a designated guide or your identification bars could result in trouble.”

“Understood,” Rose promised, “We’ll stay here.”

There was a chime at the door which caught everyone’s attention. Rethin made a show of reaching over and pressing the blue button near the doorway. Rose heard the soft hum again as the door opened. A tall humanoid figure with fine features and pale skin that had a bluish gleam to it stood in the doorway. Wide and deep blue eyes looked past Rethin and fixed on Rose. Dark blue thin lips curved into a smile. Deer like ears rotated towards Rose as she gasped softly in recognition. The figure’s black hair was piled up on its head in elegant braids holding a jewelled circlet in place.

Rethin bowed and stepped out of the doorway allowing Princess Alenica into the room. Grinning, Rose stepped forward and debated bowing or curtseying to the Princess. They’d parted on good terms, but it was clear that the Princess was older and judging from her presence at the negotiations wielding more authority. Princess Alenica solved Rose’s dilemma when she swept into a graceful curtsy, her gown floating around her.

“My Lady Star Knight,” Alenica greeted formerly. “It is a pleasure and an honour.”
Encouraged by the welcome, Rose bowed to Alenica and replied, “It is a pleasure to see you once again Your Highness.”

Alenica stood up and grinned at Rose, her dark blue eyes bright with excitement. She turned and gestured to her two attendants. Both women curtsied once again before turning and leaving the room. Rethin looked over at Rose who nodded to him before he too left the room.

“Rose, it is wonderful to have you here,” Alenica told her. “I hope that we did not inconvenience you. I simply couldn’t think of anyone else who I trusted to deal with this situation fairly.” Alenica shifted a bit nervously. “And the Orthan Council had only good things to say about you. Father expressed disappointment that he could not attend the conference and meet you.”

“It’s fine Alenica,” Rose assured her, smiling as she caught a glimpse of the young princess she’d met years ago. “Not being able to grab some clothes was a bit hard, but I’m sure it will be fine.”

Alenica visibly relaxed, her ears straightening up once again and her smile returning. She glanced around the room with a doubtful look until she caught sight of Amelia and Rory.

“Oh dear,” she sighed. “I hope that I have no disturbed you.”

“Of course not,” Rose told her. “Amelia, Rory this is Princess Alenica, the Imperial Princess to the Durmino Empire and heir of the Emperor.” Rose paused and nearly laughed, she actually had no idea what the name of Alenica’s father was.”

Princess Alenica considered Amelia with a curious expression and started to reach towards her before pulling her hand back.

“What?” Amelia asked a little rudely and Rose nearly laughed knowing from whom she’d picked that up from.

“Forgive me,” Alenica said gently. “I thought I saw one of our translators behind your ear…”

Rose leaned to the side and could just see the bottom of a Durmino translator behind Amelia’s ear. From her angle slightly behind them she also caught sight of one behind Rory’s ear.

“Oh yeah,” Rory answered nervously. “We got from…”

“UNIT,” Rose explained quickly with a smile to Alenica. “They’ve been replicating the one you gifted to them.”

A smile lit up Alenica’s face and she reached towards Rose who allowed the Durmino Princess to turn her face.

“Is that the one that I gave you?” Alenica asked.

“It is,” Rose told her, nodding as Alenica released her face. “It’s been upgraded… by another alien ally of mine.”

Amelia chuckled softly, but Rory kept a straight face as Alenica nodded at the statement.

“I see,” Alenica replied softly. “I should properly introduce myself. I am Princess Alenica of the
Durmino Empire, it means light of the future.”

“I am Amelia Pond,” Amelia said warmly, giving a small curtsy to Alenica. “My name means industrious.”

“Hello,” Rory greeted with a slightly awkward bow. “I am Rory Williams, it means…”

Alenica chuckled and smiled warmly at Rory. “My apologies, Rose did tell me years ago that the meaning of names did not carry as much significance in your culture as it does mine.”

Rose caught sight of Amelia doing something with her mobile phone just before a laugh escaped her drawing everyone’s attention.

“Well Rory according to Google your name means Red King,” Amelia informed him, putting her arm through his with a smile. “A good Scottish name.”

“Funny given you’re the Scot,” Rory pointed out returning the smile.

“So you are friends of Rose from Earth?” Alenica asked glancing over at Rose. “How long have you know each other.”

Rory gaped at her, lost for an answer, but Amelia just smiled charmingly and answered, “I have known Rose since I was just a little girl. She’s been a great inspiration to me ever since.”

It was the right thing to say, Alenica beamed at them both. She opened her mouth to say something, but a chime at the door made them all turn. Rose quickly walked over and pressed the blue button causing the door to open. Rethin swept inside pulling a small cart with three large boxes on it behind him.

“Forgive the intrusion,” Rethin said with a small bow. “Here are your effects for the conference.”

“I will leave you to ready yourselves,” Alenica announced, turning to smile at Rose. “It is a joy to see you once more my friend.” Alenica leaned forward and kissed Rose’s cheek gently. “Let us hope that this conference is smooth and the negotiations a benefit to the galaxy.”

“Here here,” Rory agreed in a low voice.

Alenica swept out of the room and just before the door closed, Rose saw her attendants join her in the hallway.

“Now then,” Rethin said, calling their attention back to him. “Inside you will find clothing that is similar to your earth garments, but in neutral colours so as not to offend. They have been sized for you.”

“How did you get our sizes?” Rory asked, sounding alarmed.

Rethin seemed confused by the question but answered, “We transmated you, sensors chart the form of the being during transmat. It is a simple matter to ascertain clothing sizing.” He reached into one of the boxes and pulled out a small dark blue pin and held it up. “This is a security pin, sensors in doorways will detect them and allow you through; if you do not have the correct pin then an alarm will sound. Be sure to wear them whenever you leave these quarters. Lastly,” he held up a small device that resembled a phone. “These communicators link to the complex’s system so that you
can contact anyone. Other communication devices do not work on the planet so if you need to contact someone off-world please inform a member of staff. They can send a message by relaying it through one of the ships in orbit.”

Rose and Amelia shared a smile, both fingering their superphones in their pockets.

“I will leave you to dress. I expect that the conference will begin very shortly.”

………………

Rose tried not to tug at the high white and gold collar that rose up from her white button up tunic. She had to admit that the outfit looked great, a long formal almost military looking white coat that hung almost to her knees over a golden undershirt with white slacks. They’d even produced white boots for her to wear. Given the golden roses embroidered along the cuffs of the coat, Rose had a strong feeling that Alenia’s influence had extended to her clothing. Raising her hand, Rose checked her hair which she’d put in a simple long braid down her back. Now she was wondering if leaving it down would have helped her cope with the unfamiliar feeling of the collar.

“Wow,” Amelia said as she stepped out of the side room that she and Rory had claimed. “You look fantastic!”

Rose turned to look at Amelia, expecting to see her in something similar to what she was wearing, but she wasn’t. Instead, Amelia was in a long earthy green skirt with elegant designs on the bottom hem with a long tunic like white shirt edged with lace. A shimmering woven green scarf around her neck completed the look that did seem very Earth-like, but much more refined.

“I’m not sure about this shade of green,” Amelia admitted, but she spun around causing the skirt to swirl around her. “But it goes with my boots,” Amelia remarked showing Rose the plain black boots that she was indeed still wearing.

“Where’s Rory?” Rose asked, looking beyond Amelia.

“Oh come on!” Amelia called, “You look good and we’ll be late.”

There was a huff, but a moment later Rory joined them. His jeans had been replaced with dark slacks and tall boots with strange fastenings on the front. He wore a dark brown jacket which sort of resembled leather over a green shirt that matched Amelia’s skirt.

“You almost look like a military officer,” Rory commented as he glanced at Rose’s clothing.

“I think Alenia is showing me off as the only Star Knight,” Rose replied with a shrug.

There was a chime from the door and Rose took a few steps closer to the doorway and pressed the button to open it. Rethin stood in the doorway, now dressed in a slightly more elegant outfit of a darker shade of blue with several metal pins decorating the shoulders. He nodded in approval as he looked at each them.

“Excellent,” he said smiling softly. “Most excellent if you will please follow me.”

Amelia and Rory joined Rose by the doorway. Rose’s legs suddenly felt weak as she tried to move to follow Rethin. She suddenly felt like she was going to be sick. Then a hand slid into hers, it was soft and warm. Turning she found Amelia standing next to her and smiling gently.
“You’ll be brilliant,” Amelia whispered. “Your job is just to keep the peace and help calm things down. Markin will start the discussions and Alenica’s government will be presenting their thoughts.”

“So you’re saying I’m just the babysitter,” Rose whispered back as she finally got her feet to start moving and followed Rethin.

“A very clever babysitter,” Amelia told her with a chuckle before letting down of her hand.

As they stepped into the main room, Rose had the almost overwhelming desire to grab Amelia’s hand again. The round table looked like something out of the footage of the United Nations with small gaps to allow staff to move in and out. Nameplates were set up in front of everyone’s places alongside small viewing screens which were blank at the moment.

Rose nodded to Markin and Alenica who were already seated near each other along with another member of their species. Then she turned towards the Etheian side of the table to see the other side of the matter. She blinked in surprise but managed to keep her expression neutral. A tall humanoid being that greatly resembled an Asian man of her own species nodded to her. The difference was that his torso was elongated with two sets of arms. One pair of arms was resting on the armrests of the seat while the other two were resting on the table.

“Ah we are all here now,” Markin said as he stood gracefully. Rethin lead them to their seats, a set of three all on the far side of the table between the Durminos and Etheians and opposite the Orthans. Rose wondered if the humans and Orthans were serving as buffers between the two species that had nearly gone to war. “Let us begin.”
Rose had been under the assumption that diplomatic talks were mostly boring with diplomats waltzing around each other with words. She wasn’t completely wrong in that, but it was anything but boring watching the three sides test each other. To be fair the Durminos and the Orthans knew each other and had no interest in testing one another, instead, all their attention was focused on the Etheians who were forced to split their attention. Under the terms of the diplomatic conference, the Orthans were mostly neutral, just seeking the best solution for a world that was outgrowing their protection, but the look that Gervin of Etheria was giving Markin made it clear that he didn’t completely believe it.

A quick thought flittered through her mind, wondering how Earth would react in such a case. Her poor little level five planet had a constant alien presence, if not invaders or lost tourists then aliens actually living their lives on Earth. The Donovan twins were proof enough of that.

“You want to put us in a cage,” a younger Durmino with short, what appeared to be gelled hair snapped at the Orthans. “We have a right to explore the galaxy.”

“Then you must be prepared to accept the consequences of that exploration,” Markin said sternly sounding a lot like an irritated parent. “The Durminos have held off any retaliation on the basis that you are a newcomer and unaware of the greater scope of the universe. If you reject peace and certain rules now there is no promise that you will avoid war in the future.”

The tallest of the Etheians, a general of some kind named Vardic was sitting calmly with two of arms resting on armrests and the other folded across his chest as he considered Markin. He said nothing, but nodded, one of his hands moving slightly under the table. Judging from how the younger one slumped back in his seat Rose guessed he’d been given some kind of signal.

“You fired on us,” one of the Durmino’s remarked, Rose thought his name was Adriyn. “You are a species still unable to form peace on your planet, how can you hope to navigate the complex politics of peoples who are not like you.”

The youngest of the Etheians jumped up, raising two of his hands in fists and shaking them and the other two clutched the edge of the table.

“You are tyrants! You act as though you own the reaches of space!”

There was a sudden tangible tension in the air that made Rose tense and suck in a sharp breath. Despite a gesture from Vardic was ignored by the Etheian and Gervin stood up as well. In the corner of her eye, Rose saw Alencia raise her chin and brace herself for what was coming.
“Be careful,” Alencia declared, looking at the two standing Etheians before her eyes settled on Vardic. “Remember to whom you speak, remember the unified power that we possess while your world-”

“Hold on!” Rose called as she jumped to her feet, gesturing to the Etheian representatives and Princess Alenica. “Please let’s take a moment. Everyone sit down!”

To her relief Princess Alenica nodded, falling silent and motioned for the other two Durmino representatives to sit back down. The Etheians blinked in surprise at the sudden calm on the far side of the table and one of them glanced over at Rose, the earlier doubtful expression replaced by one of curiosity. After a moment the three Etheians sat down.

“Thank you,” Rose said nodding to both sides and looked across the table at Markin who was smiling slightly at her. “Now the Etheian question is valid and I will repeat it in perhaps a more civil manner. What will the treaty mean when the Etheians are ready to explore and trade beyond their solar system? Maybe they are not now, maybe there are issues on their planet that they need to address, but it won’t be like that forever. How can they be certain that they are not locking their descendants into a limited region of space?”

The Etheians nodded, one of them banging on the table. Princess Alenica barely hid her distaste at the gesture but nodded her understanding. Rose didn’t dare sigh in relief, watching both ends of the table carefully, but catching a small smile on Markin’s face. Slowly, Rose sat back down and felt Amelia reach over to touch her hand under the table. The tension in her shoulders eased slightly.

Princess Alenica opened to mouth to reply to the question and calm the waiting Etheians when suddenly there was a terrible crack and boom from the far side of the room. An explosion shook the building, a wave of pressure blasting through the room. With a terrible crunch, parts of the west wall crumbled inward, smashing against the backs of two of the delegates: Rethin and one of the Durmino Empire’s representatives. Rose hit the ground with a thud, the air forced from her lungs with Amelia beside her and Rory over them both. Her brain tried to process what was happening, but the strange acidic smell in the air made it hard to think and the screams and voices all around them made it impossible to focus.

Then there was a strange moment of quiet as everything went still in the room. Slowly Rory moved off of them and stood up slowly. Pushing off the ground, Rose saw aides and medics rushing into the room. One of them moved over to them, holding out a small scanner which beeped slowly as it passed over Rose.

“Stay still,” the Orthan ordered sternly, adjusting something on the scanner bar. There was a soft green glow and Rose’s chest ached painfully for a moment. Then she exhaled and the muscles relaxed. “Done,” the Orthan informed her before turning and repeating the process on Amelia and Rory. It took longer with Rory due to his position but after a few moments, he informed them that they had no broken bones or internal injuries.

“I’d like one of those,” Rory muttered as they climbed up to their feet. Rose noted that Amelia was gripping his hand tightly.

“Thanks,” Rose told him with a nod, receiving one in return.

She looked over towards the main point of the explosion and flinched. The medics were standing over two prone unmoving forms, one of the medics shook their head to Alenica and Markin.
“I suggest that we recess to our quarters,” General Vardic announced, rising from the floor and pushing away a medic. “I trust that security will be investigating this.”

“Indeed,” Markin agreed, eyeing the uninjured Etheians carefully. Then he glanced at Rose and eyed the gaping hole in the wall. Rose nodded her understanding.

Rory moved towards the medics, kneeling down by one of the injured Orthans without a second thought. Gently, he raised the leg of the Orhan and began to clean up the blood seeping from the long ugly wound with shrapnel and speaking with the medic. Glancing at Amelia, Rose noted a proud little smile tugging at the girl’s lips as she watched her boyfriend. Despite knowing that they needed to move and check everything over, Rose paused to give the other girl a moment.

“You did well with him,” Rose observed calmly as she watched Rory accept a device from one of the medics and start to tend to one of the other wounded.

“He’s better than I deserve,” Amelia told her, shrugging slightly. She took a deep breath and then turned her attention to Rose. “So, time to poke around yet?”

“I’d say so,” Rose agreed, gesturing towards the hole in the wall. “Security is focusing here and I want a quick look, but I think we should also check the surrounding rooms.”

“Right,” Amelia agreed with a sharp nod. “The blast was directed at this wall so in theory, the bomber could have been in a nearby room.”

Nodding, Rose led Amelia over to the carnage of twisted metal and frowned as she looked into the room beyond. Almost nothing on the far side of the room had been disturbed. The long sofa was still in place, only with a faint scattering of dust on it. A table was still in place with a decorative vase still standing and filled with strange bright red flowers.

“That wasn’t like a bomb on Earth,” Amelia remarked next to her. “All the force was in one direction.”

“Yeah,” Rose agreed with a frown. “Which made it a lot safer to plant.”

“But this is just a sitting room,” Amelia reminded her. “A public room, everyone has access.”

“Let’s check out some of the other rooms,” Rose suggested, tugging Amelia away from the carnage and the bodies that were being covered for removal. “Maybe some staff saw something.”

In silence, they moved out of the open doors and into the corridor. The staff members were still moving around quickly, rushing around and Rose was certain that the communications room was a mess. Walking a few feet they came to a small meeting room across the hall from the sitting room. It was a small room with a long table in the centre with six chairs. A long sofa was at one end and small tables were set up near the reclining furniture.

“I’m assuming that I gave you the translators,” Rose commented as she and Amelia walked into the small room.

“Recently in fact,” Amelia remarked. “We visited Durmino about ten years into the future a few months ago. They’re common within the Empire so the Great Star Knight had no trouble getting a couple for while we were travelling around Earth.”
“Good to know,” Rose muttered as she looked around. “But I missed it when I met you, I didn’t even think about how you were understanding what was happening.” Rose ran a hand over her cheek and down to her chin with a frown. “That’s not good.”

“You can’t always notice everything,” Amelia told her warmly. “Besides, you’ve been more concerned about Rory and I than little details.”

“But the details are vital,” Rose argued turning to face the young woman. “It’s the little details that make up the whole of the big picture.” Rose nibbled at her lip. “The thing is… that bomb went off just as things were at a pivotal point. I’d calmed everyone down and we were at the heart of the issue and Alenica was about to respond.”

“You think someone was watching and triggered the bomb?” Amelia sought to confirm.

“Yeah, but if for the moment we say that it wasn’t someone in the room via remote control then they were either nearby or using surveillance.” Rose paused and rubbed her jaw in frustration. “Maybe both, with those ships in orbit and the security in place for this conference I can’t imagine someone being able to use anything to too long a range, otherwise they’d be detected. But then again, I don’t know much about the technology out here.”

Rose sighed and shook her head, wondering if she’d seen something and missed it earlier. A bombing at a negotiation was certainly a nightmare on Earth and if the Durminos blamed the Etheians then Rose doubted that the Orthans would be able to keep the fleet from vaporising the planet. Moving further into the room, Rose started looking around for anything that was out of place.

“Ever had something that you couldn’t put your finger on and it just drove you spare?” Amelia asked, nibbling at her lip and glancing around nervously.

“Of course,” Rose replied as she gently titled the chairs, looking for anything out of place. “For instance, when the Silver Lord took over my mind he turned my journal of my adventures and the Doctor blank, but when it was all over everything was back. Took me awhile to even notice that. I don’t know caused that.”

“That was probably the Trickster,” Amelia told her as she moved over to the wall and ran her fingers over one of the seams in the wall. “When you agreed to the engagement he got enough power to tweak a few things, but when you withdrew your agreement then everything went back to normal.”

“So you know about the Trickster?” Rose asked carefully, unsure if she really wanted to know if the Trickster was still tormenting her in the future.

“I know of him,” Amelia answered with a smile. “That’s all I’ll say on that subject.”

“Really? You’ve been revealing a lot of things since we met,” Rose pointed out.

“I was pretty much raised by Time Travelers,” Amelia laughed. “I have a pretty good idea of what to reveal and what not to reveal.”

“But I didn’t tell you about this meeting?” Rose sought to confirm.

“You’d told me that we met when you were younger and I was older, but no specific details.”
Amelia huffed and pushed off the wall. “Your timeline drives the Doctor around the bend.”

A smile tugged at Rose’s lips despite the seriousness of the situation they were in. He rarely complained about it to her face right now, given that he was helping to make it a mess, but she could easily imagine him whining about it at a later date.

“I don’t think there is anything in here,” Amelia announced a few minutes later, pushing a chair back into place. “Our bombers may have used a different room to watch from.”

Nodding, Rose followed the younger woman out of the room, glancing over her shoulder and wondering if she was missing something. They stepped back into the corridor, but things were already quieter. In front of them, the sitting room door was open and Rose noted several uniformed Orthans moving through it carefully. Amelia reached over and tugged on Rose’s hand to guide her to the next set of doors.

Glancing into the next room, Rose caught sight of a flash of red and stopped. She peered into the room and saw a tall creature that she did not recognise. It had two legs and two arms like herself, but its head was tall and shaped like an arrowhead. Thick red skin with folds across its chest was covered in what looked like suction cups. Rose blinked in surprise and the creature moved around the corner of the small room and out of view. Without thinking, Rose moved to follow it, stepping into the room and quickly moving around the corner towards a second door, ignoring Amelia rushing after her.

She stepped out into the hallway only to find several people walking through it quickly. All of them were clearly Etheian, Orthan or Durmion with no red skin in sight. Looking around quickly, Rose frowned and looked for any sign of the mysterious alien. Something about it was familiar…

Stepping back into the room, Rose pulled out her phone and moved away from the doorway. Behind her, Amelia hit the button to close the door and waited patiently. Rose gave her a small smile and a grateful look. Hitting the proper contact, Rose brought the phone to her ear and waited.

“Hello Rose,” the warm familiar voice of Sarah Jane Smith greeted.

“Hi Sarah Jane,” Rose replied, smiling a little. “Hey, quick question. I sort of remember you telling me about a race of aliens with red skin and suction cup looking formations on their heads, down their torso and down their arms. Does that sound familiar to you?”

“That sounds like a Zygon,” Sarah Jane replied instantly. “Rose you need to be careful. I came across them in Scotland-”

“Right,” Rose exclaimed, “That was the Loch Ness monster story.”

“They are metamorphic,” Sarah Jane continued sharply, her voice taking on a serious and worried edge. “And they are stronger than humans so be careful.”

“Metamorphic how?” Rose asked her eyes darting around with worry.

“Uh…” Sarah Jane groaned as she searched her memory. “They use body-print technology. The source of the biological information and memory is kept in a receptacle. I don’t know how close it would have to be, but the Doctor did remark that in time they might improve the design.”

“Okay, thanks.”
“Wait!” Sarah Jane snapped. “What is going on? Where are you?”

“Oh this isn’t on Earth,” Rose assured her with a chuckle. “I’m on Rethilan Prime helping with some negotiations that it looks like the Zygons want to stop.”

“Rethilan Prime?” Sarah Jane repeated slowly before she sighed loudly. “Well, then one more thing that might be useful is that the Zygons were trying to get a foothold on Earth to turn it into a colony. Apparently, they aren’t very fond of their own planet or fire for that matter.”

“Actually that is helpful,” Rose told her as she thought about the information. “These negotiations could be a threat to a Zygon operation on Etheia. And I think I can work with the fire thing.”

“Wait? Rose what is you into this time?!” Sarah Jane demanded.

“I’ll explain later, but I’ve got to go. Give Luke and Johnny my love,” Rose said quickly before ending the call and shoving the phone into her pocket. She turned to Amelia and smiled slightly. “Well, I’ve got good news and bad news.”

“Let me guess: the good news is that it wasn’t any of the species here who set the bomb and the bad news is that there are uninvited guests looking to mess this up.” Amelia raised an eyebrow and added, “Oh and judging from the metamorphic comment they don’t look like other aliens.”

“You’ve got the situation pegged,” Rose agreed. “But I’ve got a plan beginning to form.”

“Right, cause that’s always a good thing,” Amelia teased earning a dark look from Rose.
Rose had to admit as she started laying out her plan that Amelia had a point and the ginger knew it judging from the smirk that had yet to vanish from her face. This had both the potential to work and the potential to crash and burn horribly. Thus reinforcing why plans were such a rare thing in the life of anyone who knew the Doctor.

“So you want to do what exactly?” Amelia asked slowly with a doubtful expression, a raised eyebrow and crossed arms.

“We need to expose the fact that we have an unwelcome alien amongst us,” Rose explained, resisting the urge to nibble on her lip. “Sarah Jane says that they are scared of fire so exposing everyone to flames may give us a way to expose them.”

“The problem is that just about every alien I’ve ever met is afraid of fire,” Amelia pointed out. “It’s a part of their biology. Fire is good in small amounts, but too much of it harms just about everyone.”

“I’m not suggesting having everyone shove their hands into an open flame,” Rose defended quickly, straightening up with a frown. “But maybe we could set up a firewall of some kind and observe. Those frightened of fire are certain to back away even if the flames are safe.”

“Maybe,” Amelia agreed carefully. “But we have to convince the others to let us do this. I know that the Princess and Markin like you and all, but there is no proof. I can’t see the other aliens just letting the humans set up something like that, even if one of them is the Star Knight. Every negotiation I’ve ever attended, well attended and paid attention to, was always trying to keep up a show of strength.”

“True,” Rose admitted with a frown, wondering just how many negotiations Amelia got dragged to. She knew the Doctor helped with peace talks from time to time, but wasn’t exactly a habit of his. Maybe that meant that in the future she got better at this and was the one doing them. Rose banished that stray though and focused. “We need to find something that gives credit to the idea that there is another species here. Something that doesn’t belong.”

“What else did Sarah Jane say about the Zygons?” Amelia asked thoughtfully.

“Their copy technology may or may not have a range, it sounds like they have to be pretty close to the person they are copying,” Rose explained, nibbling at her lip lightly as she thought.

“So the original people may be around here somewhere,” Amelia pointed out happily.
“That’s possible,” Rose agreed, “But this whole place is being searched by security so it can’t be anywhere too obvious.” Rose frowned and this time did nibble on her lip. “But something is still bothering me about the room where the explosion happened.”

“Tell you what, I’ll get Rory and we’ll start searching,” Amelia offered with a smile. “You go and poke around until you figure out what it was you saw earlier.”

Rose gave Amelia a confused look and the younger girl laughed. “Trust me on this Rose, you saw something earlier but didn’t know what it was. You always notice the important things. That’s one of the reasons you and the Doctor are so good together.” Amelia gave her a soft smile and added, “You see the small things and he uses them to see the big picture. You two are just a pair like that.”

A soft flush rushed across Rose’s cheeks and she couldn’t help the pleased smile that tugged at her lips. It wasn’t often that someone seemed so happy about her relationship with the Doctor.

“Oh, let’s try to find some evidence of the Zygons and then we’ll take it to Alencia and Markin for help in identifying the Zygons,” Rose said with a determined smile.

It was easy to say, but a little harder to do in practice Rose realised as she stepped out into the corridor. Amelia gave her a wide encouraging smile and a little wave. It was odd having someone around who knew you so well in their future, considered you so important to them and was nudging you in the right direction. Something about the way that Amelia acted towards her reminded Rose of Astra for some strange reason. Shaking her head, Rose sucked in a deep breath and told herself to focus. She couldn’t afford to be distracted, she needed to be calm and work this through.

As she walked down the corridor back towards the bombed room, it hit Rose that this was her first adventure since her almost wedding. Swallowing thickly, Rose wondered if that was why she felt slow and sluggish… was she still feeling upset about the Silver Lord?

“Pull it together Tyler,” Rose muttered, straightening her back. “Find the Zygon technology and save this conference. That will make you feel better about life, the universe and everything.”

A soft chuckle escaped Rose at her own words, but she felt a bit better and stepped into the bombed room. Not much has changed, some of the dust from the explosion had been swept up for testing and a couple of security officers were examining the hole in the wall. Rose’s eyes traced the blast pattern, but it didn’t mean much to her. All it told her was that the blast had indeed come from this room and travelled through the wall into the main conference room. A flash of colour caught Rose’s eye as she started to turn.

Blinking, Rose tilted her head slightly and stepped towards the vase. The bright red flower was still in place and shimmering slightly in the light. Nearby she heard one of Markin’s security officers grumble to a Durmino in a low voice about no evidence. Rose tried to ignore them and studied the flower carefully. It had very thick red petals that triggered something in her memory. Gasping softly, Rose pulled out the sonic pen and lifted up one of the long petals to reveal tiny suction cup looking features on the underside.

“Excuse me,” Rose called to the Orthan and Durmino. When they turned to her, Rose sidestepped to reveal the flower. “Do you know what kind of plant this is?” Rose asked carefully, trying to sound casual, but failing terribly.

“A flower?” the Orthan scoffed giving Rose an irritable look. “I am aware that Markin and the Princess hold you in high regard, but this is serious. If you want to know about the decorations
speak with the aide in charge of the complex, not with us.”

The Durmino, however, frowned at the question and stepped forward to look at the flower before glancing back at Rose. He must have read something in her expression because he shook his head.

“I am afraid that I am not familiar with this plant Lady Star Knight. Is it important?”

“Everything is important,” Rose replied as her eyes went back to the flower with a suspicious look. “It’s just odd is all,” she added quickly with a forced smile before nodding to the rude Orthan. “I’ll find one of the staff, thank for your help.”

Gaining a surprised and confused look from the Durmino, Rose spun on the heel of her boot and strolled out of the room. She couldn’t help but smile a little as a split sense of relief and urgency settled on her. Relief because Rose was certain that she’d found what the Zygons used to trigger the explosion and spy, but urgency because now she had to wonder if they had seen her discover the flower.

Rose walked through the hallway quickly until she caught sight of an Orthan in a pale blue outfit that all the aides were wearing.

“Excuse me,” Rose called speeding up to catch the aide. They turned towards her with wide eyes. In the bright light of the corridor, his white marks almost glowed against his dark blue skin.

“Yes, Star Knight?”

“In the room with the bomb did any of you put red flowers in place. Thick red ones?”

The Orthan frowned at the question. “I remember seeing the flowers, but I am not certain who put them there.”

“Did you see the flowers anywhere else?” Rose asked quickly. “Maybe in another room?”

“No,” The Orthan answered, shaking his head. “I do not believe so. I remember them because they were different than what was originally discussed.”

“How so?” Rose questioned, becoming more and more certain that the flowers were the key to this mystery.

“Well at conferences such as this we have to be careful what plants are introduced to the environment. Causing a negative reaction due to an allergy or something incompatible with a visiting species would be a disaster.”

“So why didn’t you removed the flowers?” Rose demanded, eyeing the Orthan carefully.

“I only noticed them this morning,” the Orthan insisted, cowering slightly at Rose’s expression. “And there was so much to do. I mentioned it to Yethin who said she’d check on them, but then I just put them out of my mind.”

Rose relaxed slowly and nodded. She could understand that it was strange and maybe irresponsible, but an understandable oversight. “So they are not supposed to be here,” Rose confirmed getting a nod from the Orthan. “Okay,” Rose agreed, stepping back from the Orthan in question. “Then please tell Markin, Princess Alenica and General Vardic to meet me in the other
conference room.” Rose paused and then added, “And please make sure that Yethin is present at well.”

Turning on her heel, Rose began to make her way back to the bombed room, determined to keep an eye on the flower before anything could remove it. She adjusted her wrist slightly as Rose heard footsteps behind her in the corridor. Rose could feel her bracelet thrum with energy, prepared to respond to a mental command.

“Rose!” Rory’s familiar voice called behind her. “Wait up.”

Her shoulders relaxed and Rose slowed her pace, turning to face Rory with a small smile. Amelia’s boyfriend jogged up behind her, his eyes wide and looking slightly worried.

“Rory,” Rose greeted. “Didn’t Amelia find you?”

“No,” Rory replied, shaking his head with a deepening frown. “I haven’t seen her at all. The last aide I asked said she was with you.”

“She went to find you,” Rose explained calmly. “I’m sure you’ve just missed each other.”

“How long ago?” Rory demanded, his voice becoming more frantically. “Because the aide said that they just saw the two of you heading for the lower levels.”

“But-” Rose began to protest before her expression hardened. “I haven’t been to the lower levels. I didn’t even realise that there was a lower level.”

“Then she’s-” Rory started to saw with widening eye. Rushing past Rose, Rory took off down the hall and before she thought about it, Rose was running after him.

Rory’s longer legs made it difficult to keep him in sight as he turned several corners quickly, barely dodging aides and security personnel in the corridors. They turned a sharp corner and Rose spotted a small nondescript door at the end of the corridor that Rory stopped in front of quickly.

“Rory wait!” Rose called, trying to get him to slow down and listen to her. “We have to work together.”

The door slid open and Rory vanished from her sight. Rose reached the open doorway to find a small set of stairs going down into a lowly lit room. The sound of Rory shouting for Amelia reached her ears and Rose grit her teeth at him running into danger. Sighing, Rose started down the stairs and kept her sword arm ready. The stairs went down much further than she expected and the lights were coming from circuits running along the walls alongside some kind of piping system. Rose scanned everything quickly, but nothing stood out as Zygon.

When she reached the lower level, she glanced around for Rory, but his voice had gone quiet. It was darker down here as she stepped away from the walls and her eyes tried to adjust.

“Rory?” Rose called softly, waiting for any sound of movement from the darkness. Small flickers of light nearby allowed Rose to see the far wall, but she still couldn’t see any sign of movement. “Rory?”

Then there was a strange sound that Rose couldn’t identify. It sounds a bit like how putty sounded when the kids she’d babysat for on the Powell Estates played with it. Tensing up, Rose turned
slowly to look behind her and felt her sword appear in her hand. Then there was the strange noise again followed by a thud to her right. Rose spun, something hard hit her back. There was a pinch on the right side of her neck and everything went fuzzy.

Rose felt her sword drop from her hand and then the metal flow over her wrist reforming her bracelet. She didn’t hit the ground, something had caught her and was dragging her across the room. Yet she couldn’t make her muscles move, couldn’t think properly. Then she was dropped to the floor, her back sliding down the surface of a wall. There was a small clicking sound and bright light filled the room, Rose’s eyes closed on impulse.

“That was easier than I thought,” Rory’s voice said above her.

Forcing her eyes open with great effort, Rose tilted her head and looked up at him.

He smirked at her, an expression nothing like anything Rose had seen on his face yet. Then his skin almost bubbled, it shifted over his features and slowly took on a new appearance. His height shrank and the form of his body changed. His clothing began to shift, becoming white. Rose blinked her eyes, trying to think properly. When she opened them up once again she was looking at an exact copy of herself, smirking down at her.

“This form should do,” the Zygon said, reaching up and running a hand over Rose’s face.

Brown eyes considered the real Rose for a moment before turning away and picking up a long strand piece of red vine. The Zygon touched it to Rose’s neck and the vine suddenly moved on its own, coiling tightly around Rose. Adrenaline pumped through her veins, but it was too late, as the thick red vine-tangled around her, binding her legs together and her arms to her side. In a last desperate effort to escape, Rose brought her sword arm up to her chest and pushed against the vines.

“Try all you want,” the Zygon announced. “All of our technology is vastly superior. Organic, connected to our very natures. You haven’t got a chance.” Then the Zygon paused and frowned, tilting its head thoughtfully. “So Markin, the Princess Brat and the General are supposed to be meeting you. I’d best not keep them waiting.”

Panting, Rose watched the Zygon turn on its boots and stalk back towards the stairs. Rose wondered vaguely what she’d been drugged with as her body relaxed against her will, allowing the vines to tighten. Her head was becoming fuzzier and her vision cloudy. The Zygon vanished up the stairs and Rose sighed, trying to remember what she was supposed to be doing. Her head fell back against the wall as a wave of exhaustion overtook her and her eyes slid closed. Maybe a nap would help her feel better.
“Rose!” a worried male voice called. It sounded familiar, but no name came to mind as Rose struggled to open her eyes. The voice called her name again and Rose made a small noise of irritation. She was tangled up pretty tight in her duvet, Rose realised when she wasn’t able to move her arms.

“Rose! Come on, you’ve got to snap out of it!” another voice called this one female and sounding more irritated than angry. It wasn’t her mother, Sharon or Shareen, but it was familiar too.

With great effort, Rose forced open her eyes and saw a flickering panel of circuits to her right. That was odd and interesting. She blinked again, this time the black flecks vanished and she could see more clearly. A male voice called again and she felt hands moving over her arms. Her first instinct was to lash out, but then she felt something holding her arms in place and that the hands were trying to pull them away.

“Rose,” the male voice called again. “Focus, come on we need you. Remember alien conference in danger! Markin and princess Alenica are counting on you.”

Maybe it was the names, that magic word in her life: aliens or just the urgency of the voice, but adrenaline began pumping through Rose’s veins and the world started to clear up a little. Her eyes focused in front of her where she found a young woman with long ginger hair tugging and trying to loosen the thick red vines holding her in place.

“Damn Zygons,” the girl muttered and Rose laughed without meaning to. Amelia, this was Amelia, a girl from her future who she apparently had a close relationship with in the future. The girl looked up to meet her eyes, relief and irritation flashing in them.
“Welcome back,” Amelia said dryly making the man, Rory, chuckle behind her.

Rose tried to shift her arms, but they were stuck tight. As she moved her wrist, Rose could feel the warm metal of her bracelet on her wrist and relaxed.

“I still have my sword,” she announced calmly as a feeling more control settled over her. “Back up and give me some room.”

“What if you fall asleep again?” Rory asked with a frown. “We don’t know what they gave you.”

“I’ll be fine,” Rose assured him, sounding more confident than she was. At his doubtful expression, Rose added, “Come on, surely you know that the Doctor does his best to keep me from getting hurt too badly.”

“Even if it means cheating,” Amelia added with a soft warm smile. It was odd, how the smile conveyed familiarity, resignation and amusement all at once. None the less, Amelia stood up and pulled Rory back.

Taking a deep breath, Rose turned her wrist as far from her face and neck as she could. The blade slid out, the metal brushing over Rose’s wrist as it changed shape. Red vines fell away as the blade sliced neatly through them. A moment later Amelia and Rory were next to her, tugging the remains of the vines off of her and helping Rose untangle herself.

“That’s better,” Rory observed with a calmer and more relaxed voice. “I’m not as much a fan of the danger when we don’t have at least you or the Doctor at the ready.”

Rose wasn’t sure how to take that remark, on hand she felt flattered that a future companion would equate her with the Doctor and also more than a little worried by the very idea. Rory held out his hand as Amelia stood back and kicked away some of the vines. Taking Rory’s hand, Rose let him pull her up and ignored the part of her that was angry and embarrassed by the turn of events. Lately, she’d been feeling that more than she liked, but reminded herself that this wasn’t the time.

“What happened?” Amelia asked glancing Rose over for any signs of injury.
“A Zygon disguised as Rory lured me to the basement,” Rose snarled as she looked past Amelia down the hall. “Knocked me out with some kind of drug, I’ll get checked over later,” Rose added quickly seeing that Rory was about to say something. “Next thing I know it looks like me now, but then I fell asleep from the drug.” Rose twisted between the two future companions and started walking towards the stairs. “Come on! Who knows that they are doing?”

“Rose! Wait let me make sure you’re alright!” Rory shouted behind her.

Reaching the doorway, Rose smirked as she noted the piece of metal that had been jammed into the groove to keep it open. Amelia’s handiwork no doubt, after all a rescue mission wasn’t worth much if it got everyone trapped. “No time,” Rose called over her shoulder. “We have got to deal with this thing before the conference falls apart.”

She launched herself forward, running down the hallway and doing her best to navigate towards the raised voices she could hear in the distance. Several aides and security guards had to jump out of Rose’s way and then press themselves against the smooth walls to avoid Amelia and Rory. Behind her, Rose could hear Rory and Amelia shouting apologies and smiled.

Rushing into the secondary conference room, Rose came to a sudden stop nearly causing Amelia and Rory to slam into her. Standing at the edge of the table was the Zygon in her form, wearing the crisp white uniform that Alenica had provided. A stray thought about if she really looked that impressive shot through Rose’s mind, but as members of the conference turned and look at her with surprise, she banished the thought.

“Ladies and gentleman that is an imposter,” Rose announced as calmly as she could. “A zygon to be exact using metamorphic powers to sneak around the conference. Earlier they caused the explosion to cause distrust amongst you all.”

“You are the imposter,” the Zygon huffed glaring at Rose. “The representatives and I have been working on outlining the need for Etheia to hold control over their own space and have privacy in their internal matters. I am helping, you, on the other hand, are barging in and disrupting the conference which we only just got restarted.”

“The Zygons like to take over planets,” Rose snapped as Markin gave her a suspicious look. “Of course they want Etheia to go the isolationist route, if there is no contact between them and the other worlds then no one will be able to help them when the Zygons move in. hence the need for mistrust, they need the best solution in the eyes of everyone to be ignoring Etheia.”

“Etheia is not ready for being a part of the galactic community,” the Zygon Rose countered.
“Maybe not,” Rose agreed, earning an odd look from the Zygon. “But they can’t act as if all of this never happened. They can’t go back to when they didn’t know about aliens for better or for worse. That ignorance is gone and pretending won’t bring it back.” Rose shook her head and let her eyes sweep the room. “I’ve seen that it doesn’t help. Maybe what’s ahead is hard, but they have to face it and their descendants won’t thank them for being cowards about it.”

Not the most diplomatic statement, Rose admitted to herself as General Vardic straightened up in his chair and fellow Etheias looked murderous. The Zygon glared at her before stepping back and gesturing to the security forced.

“Get the alien,” the Zygon ordered. “We cannot allow for foreign elements to contaminate the conference and treaty.”

“Okay, that’s something I would never say,” Rose countered with a glance at Princess Alencia.

“And we came with Rose,” Amelia added speaking up. “Would we be helping the Zygon.”

The Zygon turned sharply and glared at them. “They were part of the trap, they are Zygons too. They came to see me this morning…” the Zygon looked confused sorting through Rose’s memories with limited success based on the expression. “Yes, they aren’t really my friends.”

“Oi!” Rose snapped as the security officers moved around them slowly. “Enough of this!” Rose held out her arm, showing her golden bracelet.

“Don’t be excited,” the Zygon mocked, showing their own arm and bracelet. “Zygons copy anything that has skin contact.”

“Apparently your ability to sort my memories isn’t very good,” Rose mocked with a growing smile. “Otherwise you’d know that mine does this.” A moment later the bracelet shimmered and grew into a golden sabre clutched in Rose’s hand.

Princess Alenica jumped to her feet and pointed at the Zygon Rose who looked startled and worried. “That’s the imposter, get it and secure it…” Princess Alenica glanced around the table. “Uh, I offer my ship’s brig to hold the prisoner.”
“It was a Star Knight that they sought to impersonate,” Markin said diplomatically. “I accept your offer.” They looked towards Vardic who had a nervous and stunned expression on his face, but he nodded.

“Resume your true form,” the guards ordered as they surrounded the Zygon who was glaring at Rose. “Resume your true form,” one of them repeated as he pulled out strange looking handcuffs, “or else this may harm you.”

Still glaring at Rose, the Zygon’s form shimmered for a moment before it grew and changed shape. A moment later the tall red creature with suction cup looking skin stood in its place. Two security guards snapped the cuffs on while a third spoke into a communication device.

“Beware your Star Knight,” the Zygon growled. “There’s something in her head, something that confused me and misled me.” The Zygon’s reddish eyes seemed far away, seeing something they couldn’t. “The Bad Wolf,” it muttered just before it was pulled towards the door leaving Rose a little worried and confused in its wake.

“Was that it?” Rory asked Amelia in a low voice behind Rose. “That seemed too easy.”

“Shh,” Amelia hushed him quickly.

Rose frowned slightly, agreeing with Rory’s remark. The Zygon leaving her with her bracelet had been a terrible mistake and made proving who she was too easy. But then the Zygon’s words had her a bit worried… was there still something in her head? But the Doctor and the Blue Guardian had seemed certain that everything was fine.

Then she was aware of Amelia stepping up behind her, grabbing her hand and giving it a quick squeeze. Rose relaxed slightly at the reassuring gesture and forced a smile.

“Well the plan to expose the Zygon is no longer necessary,” Rose told the assembled diplomats cheerfully. She released Amelia’s hand and stepped closer to the conference table. “And we have our bomber. I suggest that we finish what we came here to do.”

“I agree,” Princess Alencia announced, raising her chin proudly and smiling at Rose.

“Indeed,” Markin added, “If the Zygons are interested in your planet then we should not give them
further opportunities to damage these talks.”

General Vardic nodded, but there was a hint of uncertainty in his expression. As she sat down in an empty seat and gestured for Amelia and Rory to do the same, Rose calmly suggested, “Perhaps first as a sign of goodwill you should brief the general on the Zygons so he can make sure his people are prepared.”

If Vardic was relieved at the suggestion and Markin’s nod then he did not show it. Instead, he calmly nodded and one of his fellows began to take notes. Rose allowed herself to relax slightly as Markin explained that the Zygon were a small time menace in the galaxy who kept trying to usurp planets. Rose noted he seemed more amused by them than anything else, but she supposed when you had battle cruisers like his people had that you probably didn’t feel the need to worry about the Zygons.

With the drugs still in her system, Rose found it a bit difficult to focus, but everyone was on their best behaviour. Rory kept glancing over at Rose while she did her best not to nod off. She still may have because one moment there was a potential argument brewing that she’d cut off by standing off and the next Princess Alenica and General Vardic were nodding in agreement as an aide placed a long sheet of metal with lettering in it on the table. Alenica accepted a small thin tool that she used to mark the bottom of the metal. Rose blinked, surprised to realise that they used metal to record treaties rather than paper.

Lips quirking into a smile, Rose conceded that for a largely digital culture using metal to record important agreements was probably to signify its importance. General Vardic accepted the sheet of metal and small tool as Rose leaned forward to get a better look at the document. It was shorter than then she would have thought. Then it was passed over to Markin who used the tool to mark the bottom. And then to Rose’s surprise, it was set down in front of her.

With all eyes on her, Rose quickly scanned the document and relaxed in relief. It called for the Etheias to control the space of their own star system with no external traffic into it but did establish a set time to renew or end the treaty in the future. It also established the clause for communication relays to be provided to the major Etheia powers so they could report any violations to their space or potential invasions. For a moment Rose was tempted to ask if she could get something like that for the United Nations, but this wasn’t the time.

The Orthan aide was holding out the small tool which Rose took carefully in her hand. As her fingers brushed over it, she felt a small button. Holding her breath, Rose lowered the tool down to a black space on the metal sheet. The others had signed their names, titles and planet so after a moment of hesitation Rose pressed the small button and pushed down on the metal.

There was a slight smell as the tool caused an imprint in the metal. More confident that she knew
what she was doing Rose engraved her name into the metal, an odd feeling of awe hitting her. Normally her life was stopping invasions or saving aliens in trouble like Markin, but today….

Star Knight Rose Tyler of Earth

Rose stared at her title, name and planet on the treaty for a moment before snapping herself out of her stunned silence. Smiling, she sat back to allow the aide to collect the metal sheet and tool from her. He held up the treaty and everyone began clapping which Rose joined in with quickly.

Then Rory was next to her, tugging on her arm. “Medics now,” he ordered in a low voice, pulling Rose up and out of the chair.

Too tried to fight, Rose allowed him and Amelia to steer her out of the room and down the hall to the medical centre. Rory pushed her down into one of the Orthans weird pods and told her to sleep. Normally Rose disliked being ordered around, but at the moment that just seemed like a really good idea.

When she woke up everything was much clearer, the fog at the corner of her eyes was gone. Amelia was sitting in a small green chair next to her, reading something off of a digital pad.

“Welcome back,” Amelia said warmly as she noticed Rose starting to sit up. “You’ll be glad to know that the toxin the Zygon used is out of your system and there won’t be any long-term side effects.”

“That is good,” Rose replied as she swung her feet down. “How bad was it?”

“Another hour you could have gone blind,” Amelia informed her sternly. “It’s pretty nasty stuff. Oh, and the infected boil that was forming on your arm has been cleaned up too.” Amelia paused, “Seriously Rose a Zygon’s poison can kill; you need to be more careful. You’re lucky it wanted to keep you alive for information.”

“I know,” Rose assured Amelia softly, looking down in embarrassment. “In my defence, I wasn’t thinking totally straight after it injected me.”

“Maybe, but next time you see Rory in the proper time line understand if he’s irritated with you. You’ve been asleep for thirty-six hours.”
“Just tell me that the conference went well,” Rose begged with a sigh.

“It did, you might remember the signing. The conversation you and zygon had was very insightful according to General Vardic and their threat actually helped push the Etheias into accepting that they need to be peaceful with their neighbours.”

“Good,” Rose said softly as she stood up and looked around. “Are we still on Rethilan Prime?”

“Nope,” Amelia told her, standing up. Rose noticed that she was actually back in her regular clothing. Glancing down at herself, Rose noted that she was as well and decided not to think too much about when that happened. “We’re back at Earth actually. Markin wanted to make sure that you were healthy before he returned you. I think he feels bad about you getting poisoned.”

“It wasn’t his fault,” Rose observed, rolling her shoulders. “Have you got my stuff?”

“Right here,” Amelia replied, bending over and retrieved Rose’s shoulder bag from the floor and handing it to her. “Ready to go?”

“Well I do have classes to prepare for,” Rose remarked with a smile. “And you two need to get on with your lives in your proper timeline.”

“There’s no such thing as a proper timeline around you,” Amelia teased with a smile as the medic approached them.

Rose did her best to be calm and friendly through the medical examination even as Rory scowled at her and muttered under his breath. Markin joined them but said little as he waited for Rose to be given the all clear. Smiling warmly, he offered to show them back to the transport room. As they walked down the corridors, Rose noted that she was getting odd looks. She wondered if it was good or bad. After all, she’d stopped the Zygon, but only after it captured her and used her form resulting in her needing medical attention. Rose was inclined to call it a draw rather than a victory.

The transport room was brighter than Rose remembered from their arrival. An Orthan stepped forward and handed Rose a bag before handing similar bags to Amelia and Rory. The other two accepted them without question while Rose glanced down at the small pale blue fabric bag held closed by a series of small buttons.
“Your clothing,” the Orthan said, answering her unspoken question.

Accepting the bag, Rose swung it over her shoulder and wondered when she’d possibly wear the white outfit again. Although it did look really good, she’d probably add it to the TARDIS wardrobe the next time the Doctor visited her.

“Take care Rose Tyler,” Markin told her with a soft smile as she stepped up onto the platform.

“You as well Markin,” Rose replied with a small smile of her own. “And next time, try to send me a warning.”

Markin chuckled, the sound warm and rich as it echoed in the transport chamber. He nodded to a waiting Orthan who pressed a series of buttons. A bright flash of light threatened to blind Rose as the world fell away.

The transport wasn’t so bad this time, Rose stomach flipped twice, but no bile came up her throat. Her legs shook for a moment, but she was able to stabilise herself quickly and look around. They were in the back alley near her place in Cambridge. Down the alley, she could see some traffic passing on the road. Amelia faltered slightly as she tried to walk, but Rory steadied her. The red head shook her head and straightened up, dusting off her shirt.

“So…” Rose said slowly, bouncing on her feet slightly, a bad habit picked up from her significant other no doubt. “Thanks for all your help.”

“You’re welcome,” Amelia told her with a wide smile. “It was a nice little adventure for us too.”

“If you say so,” Rory muttered only to get elbowed lightly in the ribs by Amelia. “But it was great to see you,” Rory added quickly with a nervous look at Amelia. “Even if you’re …. You know younger.”


“That’s the truth,” Amelia agreed before stepping forward and hugging Rose tightly.
Blinking in surprise, Rose nearly stumbled back, but caught herself and slowly brought her arms up to return the embrace. Amelia seemed completely relaxed and calm while Rose glanced at Rory who chuckled at her surprise and discomfort.

“Thank you,” Amelia whispered in a low voice. “For everything you’re going to do for me.”

Rose wanted to respond, but the words caught in her throat at the emotion in Amelia’s voice. Finally, the younger woman let her go and Rose heard her charm bracelet jingle lightly. It gleamed in the sun as Amelia stepped back and pushed a strand of long red hair behind her ears. Rory stepped up next to her, threading their arms together and grinning down at her. Amelia looked up at him and smiled warmly, leaving Rose frozen for a moment as she took in the two of them. A soft smile tugged at the corners of her lips as she watched them silently communicate for a moment.

“We’d better be going,” Amelia told her. “Left our luggage locked up at the train station a bit longer than I’d like.”

“Where you off to?” Rose asked them.

“Oh, just… anywhere,” Amelia replied with a laugh. “We’ve got a few more months to explore this planet.”

“So we’re going to use it,” Rory finished, tugging gently at his girlfriend’s hand and waving to Rose.

Lifting her hand to wave at them, Rose stood silently as she watched the young couple walk down the alley to the street and out of sight, smiling to herself all the while. Then she turned and headed to the main door of her building and feeling lazy entered the lift. As the lift began to rise, Rose leaned back against the wall and chuckled.

“Rory’s right though, that was too easy,” she looked upwards. “What have you got planned for me next?”
Rose Tyler smiled softly as she accepted the tiny ice cream cone from the vendor and quickly handed him the appropriate coinage. For October the weather in Cardiff was much nicer than she’d been expecting, there was a bright sun overhead in a cloudless sky. The breeze off the ocean meant that it was just cool enough that Rose was wearing a light jacket. Not content to sit down, Rose began to wander toward Roald Dahl Plass, thinking back to the books by him that she’d read as a young girl. Like most, she’d read Charlie and the Chocolate Factory which she’d enjoyed and of course Mathilda. She’d only read the Witches once after it had given her a nightmare. Chuckling to herself, Rose made a mental note to reread it now. It couldn’t be worse than some of the aliens that she’d seen after all.

Rose licked at the melting ice cream, enjoying the sugar rush and flavour. So far the visit to Cardiff had been a bust despite the lecturer being an old friend of Ian’s. She pouted slightly, Ian had probably known that the lecture on time travel was actually about why time travel was impossible and silly. This was his way of getting back at her, Rose was sure of it. Then she heard the familiar grinding of the TARDIS and straightened up. Wind whipped her hair back from her face as the TARDIS materialised a few feet in front of her near Roald Dahl Plass.

She stared at the blue box for a moment, wondering just what was happening that he was here. Then the natural question of which Doctor was going to step out of the TARDIS hit her and Rose considered slipping away until she could confirm. The door opened and out stepped the tall leather clad Doctor who was grinning as he looked around. Then his blue eyes landed on Rose and widened comically.

“For the record,” Rose said trying to fight back a manic smile. “I was here first.”

The Doctor blinked at her and then a wide manic grin appeared on his face. A moment later he stepped forward and swept Rose up in a hug during which she barely kept her ice cream from dripping on his leather jacket. Grinning herself, Rose inhaled the scent of the Doctor, noting the subtle differences. The hug lasted a moment longer than it should have and then several moments longer as neither of them made any movement to release each other. Rose closed her eyes and relaxed against him, wondering what horror he’d been forced to confront most recently. Then without warning, he set Rose back on her feet and stepped back, slipping his hands into the pockets of his leather jacket.

For a moment Rose was at a loss of what to say, the last time she’d seen this Doctor was during that incident with Section 13 and the Silver Lord. He’d said that he’d block the memories that pertained to their future, but Rose wanted to be careful just in case. Grinning at him, she took a slurp of her ice cream and brushed some hair from her face buying time to figure out what to say.
“So Cardiff Doctor?”

“Don’t judge too quickly Rose Tyler,” the Doctor replied, leaning back against the TARDIS. “Turns out that there is a space-time rift running underneath this city, perfect for recharging the TARDIS.”

“You’re making a fuel stop?” Rose repeated, slightly confused at the idea. She’d never heard of such a thing from the other companions, but maybe it only had to be done every few centuries. Or she realised it had to do with the loss of Gallifrey.

“Yeah,” the Doctor said, replying to Rose’s question. “Twenty-four hours and then it’s back off into time and space.”

Rose smiled at his energy and nodded affectionately. She stepped forward and patted the side of the TARDIS, thanking the TARDIS for her help against the Silver Lord. Rose had no idea if the TARDIS could pick up the thought, understand it or have any idea to what Rose was referring, but she’d been so overwhelmed last time that she hadn’t thought to. For a moment a surprised and confused expression crossed the Doctor’s face, but he shook his head and it was gone.

“So what brings Rose Tyler, Cambridge student and resident of London to Cardiff?” the Doctor asked.

“There was a seminar today that Ian suggested for me given my interests,” Rose told him with a cheeky smile. “Time Travel and why it is impossible,” she added only to get a raised eyebrow from the Doctor.

“Chesterton suggested it,” the Doctor repeated, crossing his arms over his chest. Rose noted that he’d gotten Ian’s surname right despite all of Ian’s complaints in the past. “Really? What did you do to irritate him?”

Rose did her best to look insulted, but couldn’t help herself as a giggle escaped her. “That would be telling Doctor,” Rose remarked with a shake of her head. “But you’ll be glad to know that everyone is doing really well. We had a little get together not long ago.”

The Doctor looked like he wanted to ask, but didn’t. Rose swallowed down the last of the tiny ice cream cone and reached out to snag one of the Doctor’s hands. He didn’t fight her and let Rose pull one of his arms loose from his crossed arm while she grinned.

“Come on then Doctor,” Rose called, tugging him away from the TARDIS. “Let the old girl start charging and I’ll buy you lunch to catch up.” Rose glanced around, spotting a small tourist booth and a few restaurants. “Got to be a place with decent chips around here somewhere.”

Her reward for her remark was a wide manic grin that helped Rose to relax. The Doctor despite being younger than the one she was most familiar with seemed honestly glad to see her. As he turned and started glancing around for a place he was willing to try, Rose snagged his right hand with her left and gave him a friendly smile. Tugging her forward, the Doctor led Rose to a small restaurant overlooking the water that was casual enough that she didn’t feel awkward heading in her jeans and jacket. Although the thought made her smile as the Doctor didn’t seem worried at all as they were shown to a small two person table and Rose was just left grateful that she hadn’t worn her own leather jacket.

“So,” the Doctor said once they’d placed a drink order. “How is the raggy old bunch?”
“Raggy old bunch,” Rose repeated with a smile. “Oh, they are so going to hear about that nickname.” When he just grinned, Rose shook her head and sighed dramatically. “Well Sarah Jane and Johnny are doing well, they travel a bit more than they did at first since Sarah Jane’s comfortable having Luke stay over at Clyde’s. That’s a friend of his and someone who knows the big secret,” Rose added unable to remember if this incarnation knew that. “Plus Ian and Barbara are happy to take him on weekends so he’s in Cambridge from time to time which is nice.”

Rose paused and took a sip of her cola when their waitress brought it back and placed her order for fish and chips, smiling when the Doctor ordered the same. “Ace is good,” Rose said when their waitress left, “She’s staying very busy, but has been putting some more funds towards the Jones’ family efforts and Tegan’s work for Aboriginals. Last time I talked to them Jo was planning a trip to Australia and was going to stay with Tegan to meet her kids for a few days. No real change with Jacksons, they are staying busy with their orphanage and keep inviting me to visit which I’ll get around to at some point.”

Rose took another sip and tried to think of who else she needed to give him an update on. “Victoria is doing well, I don’t talk to her as much, but she sends postcards whenever she travels with her husband. She visited with Ace last time they were in New York. Mel is… well, Mel, you know her, nothing ever gets her down. She’s been hired for some big programming development and won’t tell us anything about it, but seems really happy with it, says it’s a challenge.”

Leaning back in her chair, Rose observed the calm and relaxed expression that was taking over the Doctor’s face. His shoulders were easing slightly and he looked honestly content. “I had dinner with Kate Stewart, the General’s daughter not too long ago. He’s doing well and is enjoying his grandson’s interest in simulation games, apparently, they’ve taken to playing a lot of a War of the Rose’s simulations. Kate herself is doing well and says that she’s really enjoying working with the science department. Except I don’t expect her to stay in that position too long, she’s a natural leader and better organised than Malcolm. I suspect in the next few years she’ll get a higher position of authority at UNIT, which would be great to have some less militant minds in charge. Benton is good, he remains pretty calm and easy going, doesn’t lecture the science department for our experiments too much. He checks up on me in Cambridge every week or so just to make sure I’m okay.”

And so it continued for some time. Rose shared some of her recent adventures, edited when necessary, and she decided against mentioning her almost wedding. The Doctor may have mentioned that he’d heard of it before, but the memories were still a bit too raw to share even with him. The Doctor was especially impressed with her recounting of being called to help negotiate a peace treaty even if Rose gave him the impression that it had been Sharon and Shareen with her rather than her new out of temporal sync friends.

The Doctor had been busy as well, not that it surprised Rose in the slightest. As much as he promised that he was on his way to pick her up once she finished school the alien was certainly taking his own sweet time with it. There’d been two tyrants and a group of alien cultists two hundred years ago on Earth trying to unleash their god on the Earth, thankfully it had a dud. He smiled some as he recounted his adventures, but trailed off during one of his stories. His eyes became distant and cold as he lost himself in a memory.

Reaching over, Rose place her hand over his and didn’t mention his lapse when he came back and kept talking. Food proved to be a welcome distraction and Rose wondered not for the first time how she was going to handle travelling with this version. The day would come when she’d be done at university and this Doctor who show up to take her off into time and space. But she couldn’t kiss
this Doctor, didn’t officially know nearly as much about him as she did in reality and wasn’t someone that he was in love with. It was a temporal mess. Still, the chips were pretty good.

The Doctor hadn’t seemed very hungry at first, barely picking at his food, but as their conversation grew more energetic he started eating more and more. Rose felt another stab of guilt for delaying her travels in the TARDIS. With that leather jacket of his, it was nearly impossible for her to get a good sense if he was taking care of himself. Even after they finished their lunches the waitress was content to let them sit in their corner and talk. Rose did catch a few odd looks from the young woman and the other patrons from time to time. She smiled to herself as the Doctor started describing one of the planets that he’d gone to and played a proper tourist with red ground, gold coloured rocks and silvery water under a violet sky.

Then a large man by himself walked past and sat down next to them, unfolding a paper. A large picture on the front page caught the corner of Rose’s eye and she turned slightly to get a better look. Rose froze, her eyes focusing in on the image. At first glance, there was nothing special about it other than the woman was trying to block her face in the photo. Except Rose knew that face, remembered it from Downing Street. It was a pudgy female face with short blonde hair and small calculating eyes. She remembered that smug expression as the woman looked at her and the others in the protected cabinet post. Rising from her seat, Rose stalked across the restaurant and grabbed the paper.

“Sorry mate, emergency,” Rose muttered when the man protested. Thankfully he said nothing else to her, just grumbled something about kids and lack of respect.

“Rose?” the Doctor called with a hint of worry in his voice as Rose slowly walked back to their table. “What is it?”

“I was having a brilliant day,” Rose sighed as she sank into her seat and slapped the paper on the table. She pointed to the photo of the woman. “This is an alien, a Slitheen, who tried to turn Earth into nuclear-molten sludge to sell off for fuel.” Rose swallowed, thinking back to the Slitheen’s family method of wiping out UNIT forces. “She and her family killed some of my friends. We stopped them but out of almost one hundred people that were gathered to help with the incident only myself and one other survived.” Rose sank back against the back of her chair, frowning and shaking with angrily. “One of them had only just survived the Osirian Apep’s final attack only to be killed by that… thing and her family.” Rose swallowed thickly. “Thought they were all killed when we blew up Downing Street but looks like she survived.”

“You sure it’s her?” the Doctor asked gently as he studied the photo of the apparent mayor of Cardiff.

“See her prosthetic arm?” Rose asked, pointing the shadowed, but visible false arm on the woman. “I cut her arm off.”

“You cut off her arm?” the Doctor repeated, raising an eyebrow.

“She was in her natural alien form,” Rose defended, “and was attacking me.”

“Slitheen,” the Doctor said slowly. “I don’t remember that species…”

“That is actually their family name,” Rose informed him with a shake of her head. “They’re Raxacoricofallapatorian criminals. It’s just easier to say.”
“Well then,” the Doctor said with a nod. “I suppose we should check it out.”
Rose was tense even as the Doctor held her hand and led her through the streets of Cardiff. He seemed to know where he was going, giving Rose a chance to try and reign in her anger. The only reason she’d been so calm after Downing Street was that she’d firmly believed that her insane plan had not only saved Earth but avenged her fallen comrades. It was a bitter pill to swallow that one of them had not only escaped but manage to achieve public office. Rose had no doubt that the nuclear power plant was some new kind of plot even if the Doctor had cautioned her not to jump to conclusions.

Cardiff City Hall was an impressive stone building that had an air of importance and prestige to it. On any other day Rose would have stopped to admire it, but today she pulled the Doctor up the steps and inside, promptly checking the board for the location of the mayor’s office.

“We should check the perimeter,” Rose said to the Doctor in a low voice. “Confirm what we’re dealing with.”

He nodded and they headed back outside where she realized that he was looking at her strangely.

“What?”

“You’ve been spending too much time around UNIT,” the Doctor remarked, trying to sound casual, but Rose caught the worry in his voice.

“I… I’m sorry,” Rose replied softly as they stopped in the middle of the side walk. “I’m just… trying not to think about… everyone. They were good people.” Rose inhaled and exhaled slowly. “In my worst moments, I’m just grateful that Malcolm and my friends in UK Science Division were in the North Sea and then I feel guilty.”

The Doctor placed his free hand on her shoulder and squeezed the one he was still holding gently. “That’s normal Rose,” he assured her, his voice a little rough. “No one would think badly of you for that.” When she managed a small nod, the Doctor grinned at her and gestured towards the building. “So perimeter check?”

They circled the building, the Doctor pointing out architectural features to her, earning smiles from the people moving around them. Rose smiled to herself at how much he could blend in when he wanted to. It made this a little easier.

“That would be her office,” the Doctor said, stopping Rose gently and pointing to a large window.

“Looks like a good escape route,” Rose replied thoughtfully. “If I go in, I’ll be at the front of her
office and you’re here then she should be able to corner her.”

“She might try another route,” the Doctor reminded her.

“There’s only two of us, so I don’t see an alternative other than blocking the two most likely exits.”

“And if she gets away?”

“Call UNIT in,” Rose told him with a shrug. “I’m still amazed that she’s here. In order for the infiltration of Downing Street to work, she and her family all held pretty important positions. I know she worked in Downing Street, but still…”

“Not really that surprising, if she had good documentation then no problem.”

“Still, to go from fugitive to the mayor of a major city…” Rose shook her head. “Did her opponents not do any digging on her?”

Rose stopped as a young woman came out, she had light brown hair in a soft bun but looked confused. A folder slipped out of her hands as she tripped on the stairs, falling forward. The Doctor caught her gently with a grin and after sighing softly in relief, Rose knelt down to collect the documents. But one of them caught her attention, it was a list of people with cause of death marked next to their names.

“You alright?” the Doctor asked the woman.

“I’m fine, thank you,” she answered with a grateful smile and a nod. “Sorry, my mind was elsewhere.”

“Somewhere good at least I hope,” the Doctor said with a smile.

“Yes actually,” the woman replied with a growing smile. “I’m pregnant and on my way to see my boyfriend.”

“Congratulations,” the Doctor told her, glancing towards Rose as she slowly gathered up the documents. “That’s great news.”

“Thank you, I’m Cathy by the way, thank you for catching me. I really need to be more careful now.”

“That would be a good idea,” the Doctor agreed gently.

“Are you a reporter?” Rose asked as she straightened up the file and moved to hand it to Cathy.

“Yes actually,” Cathy agreed as she took the file. “I was here talking to the mayor about the Blaidd Drwg Project, it sounds silly but the engineers and many of the workers think the project is cursed.”

Rose tensed slightly as her translator shifted the phrase Blaidd Drwg into Bad Wolf and glanced at the Doctor with a hint of worry.

“Really?” the Doctor asked, his eyes lighting up with interest. “Where did that come from?”
Cathy looked like she was second guessing herself, but smiled. “Well, there have been a lot of strange deaths on the project. The entire team of the European Safety Inspectors died in an explosion due to a sign only being in Welsh, the Cardiff Heritage Committee were all electrocuted in a swimming pool and the architect died in a car crash with the Mayor. She walked away, but he didn’t make it. Just last week Mister Cleaver, the government’s nuclear adviser was decapitated.” Cathy shook her head and nibbled at her lip. “The thing is that he seemed really concerned about some issues with the nuclear power plant, thought it could turn out a thousand times worse than Chernobyl.” Cathy sighed and looked down at the folder in her hands. “The weird thing is that the mayor doesn’t even seem worried about it, she just wanted to know if I was going to print it.”

“Well then maybe you should get on that,” the Doctor remarked with a nod before a look of concern crossed his face. “And Cathy maybe you and your lad should take a trip out of town, just until the fuss from your article dies down.”

Cathy gave the Doctor an odd look before turning to Rose who did her best to give the young woman a supportive smile. She nodded and with a quick excuse headed off down the street.

“Well that certainly explains a bit,” the Doctor remarked calmly. “And if this Margaret isn’t worried about the article then I’d say that she’s ready to launch her plan.”

“Then it is a good think the TARDIS brought you,” Rose said with a smile before she gestured at the building. “Shall we?”

“You go in front and I’ll mind the window.”

Nodding, Rose climbed the steps and entered the government building. She popped into the loo and quickly checked her appearance. She wouldn’t pass as a reporter or anyone important, but she didn’t look like a street kid by any stretch of the imagination. As she headed for the mayor’s office Rose counted down from fifty to stay calm and collected, she’d need it. She reached the receptionist desk where a tidy young man in a suit sat typing at his computer. He glanced at Rose, clearly dismissing her jeans, well-worn jacket and young age even as he smiled.

“How can I assist you?” he asked in a charming voice.

Rose just smiled and said, “I’d like to speak with the Lord Mayor please.”

“Have you got an appointment?” The receptionist asked politely, reaching for a book on the corner of the desk.

“Afraid not, she’s an old friend of the family and my conference finished early. Thought I’d just pop by and say hello.” Rose gave what she hoped was a charming smile. “Dad would never forgive me if I didn’t.”

“Well, she's just having a cup of tea,” the man said with a hint of uncertainty.

Rose glanced down at the nameplate: Idris, interesting name. Probably Welsh, she decided. She kept her smile intact and said, “Could you please just go in and let her know that Rose Tyler is here to see her.”

Idris hesitated, but slowly rose from his seat. “Hang on a tick,” he told her as he reached for the door.
Rose dropped her arm to her side, trying to appear calm even as she prepared herself to call for her sword. It wouldn’t be great to do in a building with cameras, but Benton would probably forgive her, probably. Then from inside the room, Rose heard a tea cup shatter and couldn’t help but smirk.

Idris came out the door, clearly unnerved with beads of sweat slipping down the right side of his face. “The Lord Mayor says thank you for popping by,” he stuttered out. “She'd love to have a chat, but, er, she's up to her eyes in paperwork. Perhaps if you could make an appointment for next week?

“Out the window, it is then,” Rose remarked calmly, striding past the shaken young man and into the office.

The large window was open and Rose ran to it, poking her head out to see the heavyweight Margaret rushing down the balcony. Behind her, Rose could hear Idris moving and didn’t want to wait to see what the boy would do. She quickly manoeuvred out the window and chased after Margaret as Idris yelled at her from the open window.

“Margaret,” Rose shouted to her as the alien took off a brooch and an earring.

The Doctor was running straight for her, his long legs giving him an advantage. Rose climbed down the cleaning ladder just in time to join him in pursuit. Then Margaret vanished in a flash of blue light.

“Bloody teleport!” Rose snapped, stopping and putting her hands on her hips.

“Not to worry,” the Doctor assured her, pulling out his sonic screwdriver and holding it up with grin.

Suddenly Margaret reappeared, running towards them. She skidded to a stop with a panicked expression, turned and ran the other direction, vanishing again. Then she reappeared again and a smile began to creep over Rose’s face as her worry faded. Vanish, reappear. Vanish, reappear. Finally, Margaret stopped running in front of them, panting heavily.

“I could do this all day,” the Doctor informed her cheerfully.

“This is persecution! Why can't you leave me alone? What did I ever do to you?” Margaret snapped, her eyes darting between Rose and the Doctor.

Her eyes dropped to Rose’s hands and with a smirk, Rose summoned her sword. Raising it in front of her, Rose rested the tip on Margaret’s chest enjoying the sight of the woman squirming. She raised her hands in surrender, the prosthetic limb shining in the sun.

“Let’s see,” Rose said slowly. “You killed my comrades, tried to kill me, tried to destroy my planet and the six billion people on it.”

“Apart from that,” Margaret huffed looking very uncomfortable.

“I need more?” Rose asked with a raised eyebrow. “Okay how about several counts of planet death according to the Shadow Proclamation records and a standing warrant from your home planet of Raxacoricofallapatorius for bribery, constitutional violations and crashing the economy.”
Margaret glared at Rose and the Doctor looked at Rose slightly impressed.

“Come on,” the Doctor said interrupting the glaring contest. “Inside.”

The Slitheen didn’t run as the Doctor led them back inside, but she did mutter under her breath, probably under the impression that Rose and the Doctor couldn’t understand her. It didn’t take long for them to find a nice empty conference room with a large model on a table and a banner reading Blaidd Drwg. Silently the Doctor stepped forward and studied the model while Rose kept an eye on Margaret.

“So, you're a Slitheen, you're on Earth, you're trapped. Your family get killed but you teleport out just in the nick of time. You have no means of escape. What do you do? You build a nuclear power station. But what for?” the Doctor asked, turning back to look at Margaret.

Turning to the Doctor, Margret forced a neutral expression and said, “A philanthropic gesture. I've learnt the error of my ways.”

“And it just so happens to be right on top of the rift,” the Doctor replied, clearly not amused.

“What rift would that be?” Margaret asked and Rose glanced towards the Doctor, wanting to understand more of what was going on.

“A rift in space and time,” the Doctor explained. “Pushes and pulls energy from all over the universe. Very delicate in reality.” He turned and gestured towards the plant. “This station is designed to explode the minute it reaches capacity and when it does this planet gets ripped apart.”

“And that’s what those people found out,” Rose hissed at Margaret. “The inspectors, the heritage centre, the architect and that professor, they noticed that something was wrong so you killed them.”

“No one in London noticed?” the Doctor asked with a frown. “No one investigated the series of deaths except a local newspaperwoman?”

“We're in Cardiff. London doesn't care. The South Wales coast could fall into the sea and they wouldn't notice,” Margaret informed them with a laugh before an odd expression crossed her face. “Oh. I sound like a Welshman. God help me, I've gone native.”

“So what was the escape plan this time?” Rose asked eyeing Margaret suspiciously. “You’ve got to have one. After all, you left your family to die.”

“In a missile strike that you caused,” Margaret hissed.

“I warned you,” Rose reminded her. “I told you to leave, I told you that if you didn’t I’d stop you. You can claim all sorts of things, but never claim that I didn’t give you a chance.”

The Doctor was watching them, his eyes oddly cold and studying Rose in a way that made her a little uncomfortable. She wondered if she had disappointed him somehow, but didn’t ask. Instead of saying anything, he reached for the model and pulled up the middle section. Holding it up, he showed Rose a rather odd shaped device that was flat with lots of circuits and small lights on it.

“What is that?”
“A tribophysical waveform macro-kinetic extrapolator,” the Doctor rattled off with a smile. “I’m almost afraid to ask how you got this.”

“I have my hobbies. A little tinkering,” Margaret said with a shrug earning a doubtful look from the Doctor.”

“Let me guess it came through the rift and you collected it?” Rose snorted, giving Margaret a doubtful look. “So what is it, Doctor? Some kind of transport?”

“Very good Rose,” he replied with a grin. “Word kinetic probably gave that bit away. It’s sort of a surfboard actually. You stand on this side and it generates a protective field.” He gestured towards Margaret. “When the power plant blew and ripped open the rift it would create a shockwave that she could ride across the galaxy.”

“And it would’ve worked. I’d have surfed away from this dead end dump and back to civilisation,” Margaret huffed, gritting her teeth.

“Destroying my planet and wreaking havoc on countless others,” Rose growled, calling her sword and bringing it up to Margaret’s chest once again.

“Like stepping on an anthill.”

“Give me a good reason not to kill you right now,” Rose snapped at Margaret.

“I’m unarmed,” Margaret replied smugly, watching the emotions on Rose’s face. “You’re a warrior girl, I’ll give you that, but you have morals.”

“Oh don’t worry Margaret,” the Doctor chimed in as he walked over to stand next to Rose as she slowly lowered her sword and tried to ignore Margaret’s smugness. “We’re going to take you home. Like Rose said, there is a warrant for your arrest.” The Doctor put a hand on Rose’s shoulder, gently pulling her back from Margaret. “How about that Rose, a little side trip to Raxacoricofallapatorius.”

“Sounds good,” Rose replied, managing a small smile for the Doctor.

“They have the death penalty. The family Slitheen was tried in its absence many years ago and found guilty with no chance of appeal. According to the statutes of government, the moment I return, I am to be executed,” Margaret informed them sternly. “What do you make of that, Rose Tyler? Take me home and you take me to my death.”

“That’s not our problem,” Rose told her calmly. “You had a chance to live a quiet life and not hurt anyone, but you instead tried to destroy my planet again. I’m okay with you dying.”
“That’s not our problem,” Rose told her calmly. “You had a chance to live a quiet life and not hurt anyone, but you instead tried to destroy my planet again. I’m okay with you dying.”

The words were bitter and not completely true, but Rose wasn’t going to back down. Margaret had escaped the explosion and then apparently turned around and hatched a new plot to destroy Earth. Rose knew damn well that it wasn’t really that hard for an alien to get off of Earth, Sarah Jane had helped too many lost aliens over the years for her to buy that.

Still, her own words rattled Rose enough that she stayed quite as the Doctor escorted Margaret to the TARDIS, taking the extrapolator with them under his arm. Rose followed them out of the room, pausing to look over her shoulder at the Blaidd Drwg banner. Sighing softly, Rose really hoped that her future Doctor was right and that it was a sign that everything would be alright. The way that the Ninth Doctor had been looking at her had Rose feeling nervous, frightened and ashamed.

Night fell soon after they reached the TARDIS and to Rose’s surprise the Doctor seemed very calm about having Rose watch Margaret while he lowered himself into the bowels of the console room. Margaret circled the controls with a greedy and awed expression.

“This ship is impossible. It's superb. How do you get the outside around the inside?”

“Like I'd give you the secret, yeah,” the Doctor huffed, from his place under the controls with the extrapolator.

“I almost feel better about being defeated. I never stood a chance. This is the technology of the gods,” Margaret breathed as she reached towards one of the control only to have Rose step towards her with a warning expression.

“Sorry, but defeating you was all Rose,” the Doctor replied, sounding a bit pleased from under the console. “

“Well I did use the superphone,” Rose admitted, forcing her voice to sound lighter and more cheerful than she really felt. “And you gave that to me so I can’t claim all the credit.” Spock had helped too of course, but Rose wasn’t going to talk about him in front of Margaret, just in case.

Rose kept her eyes on Margaret as she moved closer to the Doctor. “So what are you doing with the extrapolator? Is it compatible with the TARDIS.”

“Not compatible exactly, I thought it might be,” the Doctor replied from under the grate. “But it is
still stacked with power. Hooking it into the TARDIS means that I can cut down the time we have to wait. We should only have about twelve more hours of charging.”

“We’re stuck here overnight with her then,” Rose sighed as she eyed Margaret.

“I’m in no hurry,” Margaret chimed in smugly. “So my executioners are stuck with me for the entire night.”

“We’re not your executioners,” Rose snapped at Margaret. “We’re delivering to your home planet where you will face the consequences of your own actions.”

“You like to talk tough don’t you girl,” Margaret purred moving closer to Rose. “But I can smell your fear… I hunted you before after all.”

“And I took your arm,” Rose snapped back, swallowing down the bile rising from her stomach.

Margaret laughed and Rose could hear the Doctor climbing out from underneath the TARDIS controls. She stood still as Margaret took a small step towards her, trying to keep her emotions in check, but they were a storm of conflicting feelings inside of her.

“You don’t like this do you, Rose Tyler. Waiting. I bet you’re always the first to leave. Never mind the consequences, off you go. You butchered my family and then went back to your little life, am I right? But not this time. At last, you have consequences. How does it feel?”

Glaring at Margaret, Rose hissed, “You don’t know anything about me. I live on this planet, it’s my home. What you call running off to my life means going back to school and my friends and family. And I attended the funerals of everyone you killed. I damn well saw the consequences of Downing Street, I saw the families sobbing for the people that you killed. Worst part is that one of them, a woman named Amina Chalthoum had just managed to survive an encounter with an enemy of mine. An Osirian named Apep, we watched him make someone kill himself and then I cut off Apep’s head to stop him from ever hurting another human again.”

Margaret’s glare faltered at Rose’s admission of having killed before. But she recovered quickly and smirked slowly seeing Rose’s discomfort. “And did that make you feel better?” Margaret asked sweetly. “Avenging your fallen comrades?”

Then thankfully the Doctor was next to them before Rose could react either by taking a swing at Margaret or crying, she wasn’t sure which. The Doctor glared at the smirking Margaret and with one smooth movement grabbed her arm and pulled her into the corridor away from the console room. He snapped few words that Rose didn’t properly hear and the TARDIS hummed around Rose. Underneath her hand, Rose thought that the TARDIS controls warmed slightly. The Doctor opened a nearby door, pushed Margaret into the small stark room Rose caught a glimpse of and slammed the door. A quick movement of the sonic screwdriver locked the door and the Doctor turned on his heel to face the pale and shaking Rose. He didn’t say anything, just watching Rose for a long minute.

“I...” Rose hesitated as she tried to organise her messy thoughts. "I feel like I failed them. If I'd only been even a couple of minutes faster than I could have saved them. I was standing in the doorway when they died. They were electrocuted and the Slitheen just laughed at them." Rose bit her lip and took a shuddering breath. "I've lost people before, but never that many and never like that... and at the time I just had to focus on stopping them. I thought I did and while the funerals were hard at least Earth was safe and the Slitheen couldn't hurt anyone else. At least that was what I thought.”
Rose didn’t even hear the Doctor cross the console room. Suddenly a warm strong arm came around her and she was pulled close to the Doctor's chest. Leaning her head against his leather coat and Rose took another shaky breath. “I really... I don't want revenge, but I don't want to be responsible for her hurting anyone else cause I'm weak. I don’t want to be responsible for the death of someone who isn’t actively trying to hurt me or someone else, but she hasn’t changed.” Bringing up her arms, Rose gripped the back of the Doctor’s shoulder, her fingernails digging into the soft leather.

“I know,” the Doctor told her gently as he cradled her against him. “I think about that a lot too. If I spare this person and they hurt someone how much am I responsible for that?” Rose heard him swallow and closed her eyes tightly, angry at herself for bringing up bad memories. “To stay sane you have to believe the possibility of second chances and people changing, but the fear of what happens if you’re wrong never goes away,” the Doctor admitted in a low sad voice.

Rose nodded, a feeling of relief crashing down on her. He understood and that made a difference. Breathing in slowly, Rose felt her heart begin to slow and dared to open her eyes again. Around the TARDIS hummed softly and she knew that she was safe.

"But you... we can't lose ourselves to that fear," the Doctor reminded her gently. "We're both gonna struggle with it and I can already guess that you'll be helping me with that from time to time in the future so I'll help you with that right now." He chuckled, his chest vibrating under Rose's check. "How's that."

"It's a deal," Rose replied with a sigh, shifting out of the hug. "I'm sorry," she whispered.

"Oh don't be," the Doctor said cheerfully as she stepped back. "Glad to help." He glanced back towards the door and huffed. “Do you mind going out and grabbing something? We better feed her, maybe she'll shut up for a bit.”

“Okay,” Rose agreed with a small nod of her head. “Cheap fast food or something decent?”

“I’ve got to eat it too so make it something decent,” the Doctor shook his head. “Can’t risk taking her out of the TARDIS, no way to keep her from hurting someone.”

“Is she secure in that room?” Rose asked nodding towards the door just beyond the console room.

“Yeah, just a little storage unit, usually has some bins, but the TARDIS removed them. Nothing in there, not even access through the walls.”

Rose nodded, relieved that Margaret couldn’t hurt the TARDIS or anyone else. With a final glance at the Doctor, Rose turned and headed for the main door, grabbing her shoulder bag as she passed the jump seat. It was dark, but still pleasant outside and Rose sucked in a deep breath of air gratefully. For a moment she lingered by the TARDIS after the door closed behind her and looked up at the stars. The lights of Cardiff made it hard to see more than a few, but Rose could still see many more in her mind's eyes.

She was relieved that the Doctor understood her reaction and fears. Rose hadn’t realised just how frightened she was of losing him. It was also the first time she’d managed to voice her own fears and doubts about some of the things she’d done. Swallowing, Rose thought back to Apep. He’d been defeated and unarmed when she cut his head off. Killing him hadn’t been about combat or self-defense anymore like the cutting off the Gorgon’s head had been. She hadn't realised just
how… Shaking her head, Rose shoved the thoughts aside. There was only so much she could deal with at a time. Right now she was going to focus on finding some decent takeout.

The Doctor waited in the console room, his arms crossed and watching the screen. His eyes softened when Rose turned and looked up towards the stars and he relaxed slightly as a soft smile appeared on her face. At least this hadn’t completely ruined everything. Turning on his heel, he strode over to the room where he’d shoved Margaret and pulled the door open. Then he quickly caught a dart in midair before it struck him.

“Oh dear me,” Margaret sighed from by the doorway. “Don’t know how that happened.”

“Probably has something to do with a female Raxacoricofallapatorian’s ability manufacture a poison dart within their finger,” the Doctor replied calmly. He tossed the dart into the hallway to deal with later.

“Ah yes perhaps it does,” Margaret replied with a false pleasant smile. “Where is our dear Miss Tyler?”

“Getting dinner.”

“Ah my last meal and not even at my favourite little restaurant by the bay.”

“Can’t risk you getting loose and harming someone,” the Doctor told her sternly.

“Well… that is very sad,” Margaret informed him as she came closer. “At least you should bother to ask me my real name.”

“Fine, what’s your name then?”

“Blon. I am Blon Fel Fotch Passameer-Day Slitheen. That’s what it’ll say on my death certificate.”

Margaret moved forward and lowered her voice carefully. “And just between you and me, as a final resort, the excess poison can be exhaled through the lungs.”

She began to exhale, but the Doctor quickly pulled a breath freshener from his pocket and sprayed it into her mouth. He grinned as a disgusted look crossed her face, apparently poison plus fresh mint wasn’t very pleasant.

“Nice to meet you Blon.”

Margaret stepped back from the Doctor and huffed loudly. “So that’s it then, you just ship me back to my planet to die because of what the blonde says.”

“You already admitted to the plot at Downing Street,” the Doctor reminded her. “Rose nearly killed herself stopping you and then you admitted that you were working to destroy Earth just so you could surf away from here.”

Margaret eyed the Doctor and smirked. “Bit young for you isn’t she Doctor? You strike me as a very old one, weight of worlds on your shoulders and so… hardened to the suffering of the universe.”

“Oh don’t try that on me, won’t work.”
“I’m not as bad as she thinks I am,” Margaret argued. “I’m really not. There was this girl, just today. A young thing, something of a danger. She was getting too close. I felt the bloodlust rising, just as the family taught me, I was going to kill her without a thought. And then I stopped. She’s alive somewhere right now. She’s walking around this city because I can change. I did change. I know I can’t prove it-”

“I met her,” the Doctor told her. “Just outside your office, dropped her files on you and the deaths. That’s how we knew what was happening. I believe you.”

“Then you know I’m capable of better.”

“It doesn't mean anything,” the Doctor told her seriously.

“I spared her life.”

“You let one of them go, but that's nothing new. Every now and then, a little victim's spared because she smiled, because he's got freckles because they begged. And that's how you live with yourself. That's how you slaughter millions,” the Doctor told her, his voice echoing in the empty room. “Because once in a while, on a whim, if the wind's in the right direction, you happen to be kind.”

“Only a killer would know that. Is that right?” Margaret asked with a frown. “Is that what you are Doctor? But you are right, Doctor. You're absolutely right. Sometimes you let one go. Let me go.”

“No,” he replied simply, turning to walk out the room.

“Does she know?” Margaret asked him. “Does that pretty little thing that you’ve got feelings for know what you are?”

The Doctor stopped in the doorway, the question striking a cord. Without turning around he inhaled sharply and considered the question. “Yes,” he exhaled almost sadly. “And much worse she understands.”

“What a perfect pair then,” Margaret teased vindictively. “What a lovely match.”

The Doctor slammed the door and relocked it, planning to lose himself in the extrapolator until they could leave and get this over with. Then maybe he’d put the TARDIS on random for a while, couldn’t risk Rose travelling with him just yet. Not until he moved past…. whatever the hell this was.
The TARDIS had provided a table and chair that appeared in a quick flash of darkness. Blon jumped in alarm, making the Doctor smile as he set down the drink carrier and to go bag. He turned and patted the wall of the TARDIS fondly with his free hand.

“Dinner,” he said gesturing to the other chair before sitting down in his own.

There was a huge desire to leave Blon alone to eat her meal, but he hated the idea of leaving her alone with anything, even a wooden table. This woman was very dangerous and now she was a dying creature, he’d seen far too many of those to not know how violently they could act in their defence.

She took the food, raising an eyebrow as the shrimp scampi that Rose had gotten for her, but after a moment began to eat. The Doctor watched her for a moment before he started eating the baked tortellini. It wasn’t bad; he’d forgotten what it was like to eat anything beyond nutrition bars. The only other time he’d eaten regular food with this body was with Rose and she was out in the console room eating by herself. That thought made him frown in irritation, but he hid it quickly not wanting to give Blon anything she could use.

“Public execution's a slow death. They prepare a thin acetic acid, lower me into the cauldron and boil me. The acidity is perfectly gauged to strip away the skin. Internal organs fall out into the liquid, and I become soup. And still alive, still screaming,” Blon informed him, breaking the tense silence.

“I don't make the law.”

“But you deliver it. Will you stay to watch?”

“What else can I do?”

“The Slitheen family's huge. There's a lot more of us, all scattered off-world. Take me to them. Take me somewhere safe.”

The Doctor noted her statement, promising himself that he’d warn Rose of that. He’d hate for other branches of the family to come after Rose for revenge. They’d never find him, but her… she was far too easy to find. The Doctor barely kept himself from frowning at the idea and forced himself to stay focused on Blon who was giving him a wide-eyed imploring look.

“But then you'll just start again,” the Doctor told Blon with a shake of his head. “Like you did here in Cardiff.”
“I promise I won't,” she insisted, leaning forward slightly as if being closer to him might make him rethink his decision.

“You've been in that skin suit too long,” the Doctor told her with a subtle hint of sadness. “You've forgotten. There used to be a real Margaret Blaine. You killed her and stripped her and used the skin. You're pleading for mercy out of a dead woman's lips.”

“Perhaps I have got used to it. A human life, an ordinary life,” Blon said quickly, not denying her crime of killing the woman whose skin she wore. “That's all I'm asking. Give me a chance, Doctor. I can change.”

“I don't believe you,” the Doctor said sternly meeting Blon's gaze evenly. “Yes you spared that girl today, but your entire life here in Cardiff has been built around destroying this planet. You are a killer Blon, you’ve proven that.”

“In the family Slitheen, we had no choice. I was made to carry out my first kill at thirteen. If I'd refused, my father would have fed me to the Venom Grubs. If I'm a killer, it's because I was born to kill. It's all I know,” Margaret countered angrily, her body tensing as the predator in her fought to lash out at him. The Doctor was almost impressed that she'd managed not to.

Then the TARDIS began to shake violently. The Doctor gripped the edge of the table and stood up, only to be almost thrown on his feet. A cry of alarm from the console room made him lunge for the doorway. That was Rose's voice and something was wrong with the TARDIS, she wouldn't know what to do!

“Rose!”

“Doctor!” came a shout back from the console room. “Everything just went crazy!”

Paying no mind to Blon behind him, the Doctor rushed to the shaking console and pushed a few buttons. Everything was too dark and a sickly green shade of light was all the TARDIS was managing. Sparks were flying off the console controls and with his superior eyesight, he could see small cracks already appearing on the console.

“It's the rift. Time and space are ripping apart!” He shouted to Rose, “The whole city's going to disappear!”

Rose’s eyes widened at his and she looked down towards the extrapolator. Following her gaze, the Doctor jumped below the controls and with several sharp movements disconnected the extrapolator, but the shaking didn’t stop. There was too much raw power running through the TARDIS right now, she was linked up with the rift and now the extrapolator. He was an idiot to not have expected something like this, Blon was far too clever.

“Never mind Cardiff, it's going to rip open the planet,” the Doctor shouted to Rose.

“What can we do?!” Rose yelled back to him as sparks flew off the TARDIS controls. She had a tight grip on the console, she was scared, but she wasn’t panicking.

Rose was too busy to even notice Blon coming up behind her. As the Doctor came up from under the grating, Blon freed her remaining arm and snatched Rose up around her neck. Gasping for air, Rose was lifted off the ground, her shoulders aching as she grabbed onto Blon’s arm trying to keep
her neck from snapping. Blon laughed and in the corner of her eye, Rose could see the Doctor staring at them with a horrified expression.

“One wrong move and she snaps like a promise,” Blon told the Doctor with a smirk.

“I might have known,” the Doctor growled.

“Oh shut it, Doctor. Put the extrapolator at my feet.”

Rose wanted to shake her head, but the Doctor moved forward slowly and lowered the extrapolator down by Blon’s feet. His eyes moved up to Rose as he stepped back.

“I thought you needed to blow up the nuclear power station,” Rose gasped even as she lowered her hand and tried to summon her sword.

“You call that blasted sword and I break your neck,” Blon growled fiercely. “You aren’t fast enough to stop me and you know it.”

“Rose, don’t,” the Doctor said sternly from where he was waiting a few feet away. “So this was the backup plan. The extrapolator locks onto the nearest alien power source and open the rift.”

“Exactly Doctor, and what a power source it found. I'm back on schedule, thanks to you.”

“You’ll destroy the entire planet,” the Doctor reminded her with narrowed icy eyes.

“And blonde and you with it,” Blond cheered as he carefully stepped onto the extrapolator, her heels fitting awkwardly into the openings. “While I ride this board over the crest of the inferno all the way to freedom. Surf’s up.”

The TARDIS shuddered, the console cracked open spilling bright light out into the console room. Rose’s eyes were drawn towards it, somehow it was familiar. There was a soft melody in her head that she couldn’t quite remember. Flashes of colour and gold danced across Rose’s vision and a shock of electricity raced up her spine making her shiver.

“Of course, opening the rift means you'll pull this ship apart,” the Doctor announced, his eyes locked on Blon. Rose wanted to look at him, but couldn’t bring herself to look away from the light spilling out of the TARDIS.

“So sue me,” Blon chimed with a shrug.

“It's not just any old power source. It's the TARDIS. My TARDIS. The best ship in the universe.”

The song was becoming louder, echoing in Rose’s head with a haunting familiarity and Rose suddenly remembered it. She’d heard this tune while looking into the schism that Thane had made on Earth. That realisation frightened Rose enough that she slammed her eyes closed. The song quieted a little, but she could still hear a soft melody in her head.

“It will make wonderful scrap,” Blon mocked even as her eyes were drawn towards the light.

“That light is the heart of the TARDIS,” the Doctor told Blon his voice strong and loud in the shaking room. “This ship's alive. You've opened its soul.”
“It’s so bright,” Rose heard Blon say in awe, but she didn’t dare open her eyes.

“Look at it, Margaret,” the Doctor urged, his voice becoming gentler.

“Beautiful,” Blon sighed, sounding almost happy.

“Look inside, Blon Fel Fotch. Look at the light.”

Then the hand holding Rose relaxed and she slipped from Blon’s grip. Her legs shuddered as she dropped to the ground, but she stayed up. Without opening her eyes, Rose backed away, feeling her way around the console before she finally risked a look.

Blon was smiling at the Doctor, her human features relaxed and calm. “Thank you,” Rose heard her breathe. Then she was gone and the empty bodysuit crumpled onto the extrapolator.

The Doctor jumped forward, closing the console before looking over at Rose. “We have to shut down! Rose, that panel over there, turn all the switches to the right!”

Moving to the panel, Rose obeyed the order, vaguely aware of the Doctor rushing around and pressing buttons and flipping levels. Then the shaking stopped and the TARDIS lights dimmed. The Doctor stopped moving and sighed loudly.

“Nicely done,” the Doctor said looking over at her and nodding. “The energy transfer has stopped.”

The Doctor laughed and tapped on the central tube of the console. “Positive thing is that the TARDIS doesn’t need to recharge.”

Rose nodded, but walked over to the body suit, eying it carefully. “What happened to her?”

Then the Doctor was next to Rose, kneeling down to examine what was left. “She looked into the heart of the TARDIS. Even I don’t know how strong that is,” the Doctor informed Rose, sounding excited. “The ship’s telepathic, but maybe she doesn’t just translate languages. Maybe the raw energy can translate all sorts of thoughts.” He pulled out a strange looking egg, greenish-brown in colour with several odd little hairs growing off of it on one end. The Doctor was grinning. “Here she is.”

“It regressed her?” Rose asked, her eyes wide and her mouth hanging open in shock.

“Exactly,” the Doctor replied. “She can start again. Live her life from scratch. If we take her home, give her to a different family, tell them to bring her up properly, she might be all right!”

“Or worse,” Rose muttered as she reached out and touched the egg quickly before sighing. “But I suppose that will be her choice won’t it.” She looked up to find the Doctor grinning at her and couldn’t help but smile back. “So next stop Raxacoricofallapatorius?”

Nodding the Doctor stood and held out one hand to Rose. She accepted it with a smile and the Doctor pulled her to her feet. “We’ll just stop by and pop her in the hatchery,” the Doctor said as he handed Rose the egg and turned to the controls. “Margaret the Slitheen can live her life again. A second chance.” He turned to Rose and asked, “You coming?”

Rose smiled in return and nodded. “Yeah,” she replied as she looked down at the egg. “Not often you get to see someone get a second chance.”
The Doctor nodded in understanding and flipped a switch. The TARDIS shuddered and Rose heard the wheezing noise of them dematerializing.

The Doctor hadn’t been joking when he said they’d pop by the hatchery on Raxacoricofallapatorius. They materialised straight into a large chamber with a beautiful vaulted ceiling that looked similar to mother of pearl. Rows and rows of elevated platforms held eggs similar to the one that the Doctor was carrying, but with small coloration differences and slight changes in the arrangement of the offshoots. Humming softly, the Doctor moved into the chamber towards a Raxacoricofallapatorian that was staring at them with wide black eyes.

Rose was thrown by the creature, fighting the instinct to protect herself and the Doctor. Instead, the Raxacoricofallapatorian stepped up to the Doctor and calmly asked what he was doing and what he needed. Rose saw the alien’s eyes flicker over towards and the TARDIS. Stepping out with a forced smile, Rose leaned calmly against the TARDIS, doing her best to appear completely calm as the Doctor handed the egg to the alien.

“Found this egg, poor thing was abandoned,” the Doctor told the Raxacoricofallapatorian with a wide grin. “Thought you might be able to place her with a good family.”

“Her?”

“Just a hunch,” the Doctor replied with a shrug. “Well that’s all, have a good day.”

It was really really hard not to laugh at the look of utter shock and surprise on the Raxacoricofallapatorian’s face. The Doctor turned back towards Rose with a grin and without a word they stepped back into the TARDIS.

The TARDIS doors closed with a soft muted click behind them and Rose exhaled slowly. Moving past her, the Doctor flashed Rose his manic smile and moved to the console. The ship hummed and the Doctor fingered the console where it had split open thoughtfully. His expression was pensive and Rose wondered what he was thinking. But the moment passed and the Doctor began flipping switches and twisting knobs. A shudder from the TARDIS was all the warning she got. Stumbling forward, Rose gripped the console just in time for the Doctor to tell her to hold down a button.

“So Rose Tyler,” the Doctor called, drawing her attention back to him. “What now?”

“Well…” Rose glanced towards the cold to go container that somehow hadn’t spilt all over the place. “We didn’t get much time to eat, how about chips?”

“Chips?” the Doctor repeated with a surprised expression before he grinned widely. “Chips it is then.”

A quick stop for chips later, but in Bristol rather than Cambridge and the Doctor took them back into the time-space vortex. Rose was expecting him to drop her off somewhere, but the TARDIS shook softly and came to a stop. With a wide smile, the Doctor gestured towards the doorway. Rose knew that smile even if he didn’t know she did. Keeping a tight hold on her chips, Rose walked over to the doors and opened them both.

Just below them was the Earth shining in a rising sun, gleaming blue and green. A soft laugh escaped Rose, glee rising through her at the sight. She glanced back at the Doctor giving him a wide smile before she knelt down and sat down in the doorway, her feet hanging out of the TARDIS, but still in the protective bubble around them. Delighted laughter filled the console room
as Rose calmly took out a chip and popped it into her mouth. A moment later she heard heavy footfalls behind her.

“Make you wonder a bit,” Rose observed calmly as she munched on the chips and looked out over the Earth. Behind her, Rose could feel the warm presence of the Doctor leaning against the side of the TARDIS door just behind her.

“Wonder about what?” the Doctor asked between bites of his own chips. “Have to be a bit more specific.”

“The TARDIS,” Rose replied softly. “Did she turn Marg-Blon into an egg because she really did want to change and do better or did she do it for us? To spare us from having to make the decision this time?”

The Doctor was silent behind Rose and for a moment she was afraid that she’d poked one time too many at his wounds. Then he laughed softly and Rose leaned back to catch a glimpse of him. He was staring out at the Earth and smiling.

“I don’t know,” the Doctor answered with a soft laugh. “I really don’t know.” He sounded very pleased by the notion of not understanding what had happened.

“That’s okay though isn’t it,” Rose told him with a soft smile of her own. “Little mysteries making life go around.”

“You are a strange girl Rose Tyler,” he remarked, but his voice was warm, familiar and pleased.

“You like me that way.”

For a moment Rose didn’t think he’d actually reply to that remark, expecting a laugh and an announcement that it was time to go. Instead, he nodded, his lips slightly pursed and he said, “You’re not wrong there.”

She had a strong desire to stand up and kiss him, to wrap her arms around him, but they weren’t there yet. She loved him, god did she love him, but now things were reversed again. Now she was the one in love and waiting for him to fall in love with her. He would in time, Rose knew that both intellectually and in her heart, she just had to give it time. And sooner or later he’d stop knocking about going to get her when she finished school and they could get started on their future properly.

Grinning, Rose turned her attention back to the Earth and pulled another vinegar drenched chip from her newspaper, popping it into her mouth happily. Below them the Earth turned slowly, filled with billions of people going about their day to day lives. Rose would join them again once they were done with their chips and the Doctor would return to bouncing around time until he decided to come and pick her up after university, but not just yet.
Rose Marion Tyler stepped into her apartment with a grateful sigh, stretching out her arms and rolling her shoulders. Her long blonde hair was tied up in a ponytail and she was dressed in light running gear. Grabbing a small towel from her coffee table where she’d left it before leaving, Rose pat dried her face and sucked in a deep breath to relax. It was nice outside now, but there was already a hint of the chill to come in the air. Soon it would be raining all the time and not even decent thunderstorm rain.

Toeing off her sneakers, Rose kicked them over by the door and grabbed a glass of water from the kitchen. She mentally checked off her to-do list for the weekend. School was still barely in session so there weren’t any papers due, although Rose had already started her research project for Ian’s class and two midterm papers just to be on the safe side. Glancing around her apartment, Rose was debating spending some time cleaning when her phone rang.

“Hello this is Tyler,” Rose greeted professionally and calmly. Very few people her own age had her mobile number so it was mostly the former companions of the Doctor and UNIT officials who called her phone nowadays.

“Tyler this Doctor Matthews,” a familiar female voice said on the other line.

Rose’s back straightened on its own at the voice of the United States’ Section 13 leader. She remembered the intelligent and driven head of Section 13 and how the woman had helped Rose investigate the strange mutations occurring in New Mexico.

“Hello Doctor Matthews,” Rose replied calmly. “How can I help you?”

“I need you back at Section 13 immediately, a car will be at your apartment in an hour and a jet is waiting at Cambridge Airport to bring you over.”

“What’s going on?”

“I know it is short notice, but UNIT headquarters in Geneva has cleared you working with us again.”

Tensing up at the tone of Doctor Matthews, Rose repeated her question. This time Matthews sighed and slowly answering. “Something very strange is happening in Utah by Lake Silencio, time isn’t working properly around it. It’s like… time is still all of a sudden. It’s like it's waiting for something.”

“Time is still…” Rose frowned and after a moment asked, “Can you explain that a bit better.”
“I don’t really know how to explain it. Time is moving forward, but the closer a person or a thing is to the shore the slower they move. The people we sent in to check took hours just to walk a short distance. And it isn’t a gradual effect, we’ve been able to draw a line that indicates where the effect starts.”

“Alright then,” Rose said with a nod. “I’ll be ready when your car arrives.”

“Thank you, Tyler,” Doctor Matthews replied with a sigh of relief. “We’ll be ready for your arrival here.”

“And if anything changes-”

“We’ll keep you posted in transit,” Matthews promised her quickly. “Be safe Tyler.”

With that call ended and Rose was left standing alone in her living room with a slight frown. This was big, this was something out of her league. Hitting the speed dial for the TARDIS, Rose raised the phone back to her ear and waited.

“Hello Darling,” the cheerful voice of the Eleventh Doctor answered.

“Hello Doctor,” Rose replied, suddenly feeling happier and smiling. “I just got called in by Section 13, something is wrong with time around a place called Lake Silencio.”

“Lake Silencio,” the Doctor repeated, his voice taking on an edge. “I’ll be there,” he promised without Rose even asking. “The temporal effects may delay me, but I’ll be there.”

“I love you,” Rose added quickly, a sense of worry and dread rising through her. It felt important to say it all of a sudden.

“I love you too Darling,” the Doctor replied gently, his warm voice soothing the nerves a tiny bit. Then the call ended and Rose was left standing alone in her living room. Her stomach was knotted with nerves and a hint of real fear.

The last time she’d flown overseas to help Section 13, she’d gotten the phone call while the Doctor was with her. They’d stayed in bed a little longer and he’d made her breakfast, apparently putting boosters in it to protect her from the radiation that she’d be exposed to during the adventure. This time there was none of that warmth surrounding her departure and she felt a little lost. Shaking her head, Rose shuddered and headed for the toilet. She needed a shower and to get packed, she didn’t have much time.

Rose made it downstairs just as the car pulled up to her door, a small suitcase in hand and a backpack slung over her shoulder. The driver was a UNIT soldier that she’d never seen before, but he stepped out and saluted Rose. Deciding not to stand on ceremony, Rose opened the back door herself and climbed in. The soldier pulled the car away from her building and headed towards the airport without a word. Watching out the window, Rose saw the other students beginning to head out and about for the day. She pulled out her phone and went down the list of contacts, debating if it was still too early to call.

They were nearing the airport when Rose finally pressed the call button and raised the phone to her ear. A moment later Ian’s voice answered the voice and Rose gathered her courage.
“Hi Ian, it’s Rose. I’ve been called to the United States and with the time zone changes and travel times I doubt that I’ll be in class Monday.”

“I see,” Ian huffed, sounding a little irritated. “Rose are you okay, you sound a bit off?”

“What’s happening sounds really bad,” Rose admitted. “But the Doctor is going to meet me there to help.”

“It must be bad then,” Ian muttered thoughtfully. “Okay, if you’re not back then I’ll report as your advisor that you are ill or something like that to cover for you. Just be careful.”

“I will be,” Rose promised seriously. “Thank you and give my love to Barbara.”

In a rush of activity, they arrived at the airport and Rose was quickly escorted through security with no one even poking at her sonic pen or translator. The jet was small and sleek with stairs leading up into it that folded out of the plane. Rose climbed the stairs as the UNIT personnel waited below at the bottom of them. Stepping inside, Rose was greeted by an older balding man in a black suit who had a slight smile on his face.

“Welcome aboard Miss Tyler,” the man greeted, gesturing her to come further into the ship.

Behind Rose, the stairs came up and sealed the doorway of the plane as she stepped further into the plane.

“I’m Agent Peters with Section 13,” the man introduced himself with a polite nod. “Please take a seat and we’ll be on our way.”

“How long do you expect the flight to take?” Rose questioned and Peter’s smile widened.

“This is one of our newest plane, fitted with some interesting technology that was salvaged from that wreckage you found last time you were with us in New Mexico. The flight time here was only six hours.”

“Impressive,” Rose remarked with a raised eyebrow. “Why were you already here? You could have given me more warning.”

“Actually myself and the plane were here to show the plane modifications to UNIT and exchange some recent research files,” Peters explained. “I was originally scheduled to spend some time at UNIT today as part of the effort to partner our organisations more effectivity, but this took priority and you’re needed in New Mexico ASAP.”

“Okay,” Rose agreed with a nod, moving and sitting down in one of the very comfortable seats surrounding a small table. Peters grabbed and stowed her bag while Rose kept her backpack on the seat next to her.

Peters watched her put on her seatbelt and then reached over and pressed a button on the wall which looked like a small intercom. “We’re ready captain, let’s be on our way.”

“Yes sir,” a crisp female voice replied.

The plane began to move slowly and Peters sat down in the seat across the table from Rose and fastened his own seatbelt. At that moment Rose’s stomach growled and Rose couldn’t help, but
“Uh, I didn’t have time to grab my stuff and eat more than a breakfast bar.”

“Don’t worry,” Peters assured Rose with a chuckle. “This is a fully stocked plane, once we’re up in the air I’ll get you some breakfast and show you what we have so far.”

Pleased, Rose nodded and glanced out the window as their plane smoothly moved in front of a waiting jumbo jet to use the runway. A few moments later they were rushing down the runway and then there was the soft jerk of the front wheels leaving the ground. Rose started to swallow in preparation for the pressure change. They climbed into the air very quickly and despite her efforts, Rose felt her ear pop as the plane turned in the air letting Rose see Cambridge down below them for a moment before they went above the clouds.

Peters kept his promise, vanishing into the back section of the plane for several minutes. Rose stood up and stretched, looking around the very comfortable, but rather stark seating area. Her eyes landed on a briefcase and a file folder sticking out of it. Her fingers itched to grab it and start reading, but she contained herself and sat back down. Peters returned a few minutes later with a plate of eggs and a small steak. He handed it to Rose and she gave him a grateful smile in return. It smelled a lot better than she’d been expecting and Rose tucked into the meal gratefully. As she expected, Peters retrieved the file folder in question and brought it over to the table. He set it in front of him and opened it with a solemn expression.

“The situation is very strange,” Peters informed Rose. “The strangest that we’ve ever seen. It came to our attention after a family went missing after going on a picnic to Lake Silencio only to return after a couple of days. To them they’d only been gone for a few hours, time literally slowed down for them.” He showed Rose a photo of a very ordinary looking family and she nodded to show her understanding.

“Since then we’ve been trying to monitor the area, we’ve sent in a few people who have returned. They don’t show any signs of physical changes and every one of them checked out with the doctors mentally and emotionally. Additionally, our instruments are still working, but thus far there isn’t a set rate to the slowdown. The family experienced hours to days, but the last test had a much closer rate of time.”

“Is it consistent around the Lake?” Rose asked with a small frown.

“We’re not sure yet,” Peters admitted. “For obvious reasons, we’re having trouble observing whatever is happening, but we have determined that the lake is the centre point. The effect lessens the further away from the lake a person is. We’ve been able to literally draw a line in the sand to mark where the effect begins. That hasn’t changed, but the rate of the slowdown keeps changing and we’re not sure what to look for.”

Rose pushed aside her plate and Peters slide the folder over to her. At the top of the pile was a photo of a lovely sandy beach next to a medium sized lake with rocky formations on the far side. It looked very pleasant, but as Rose glanced at the charts of the temporal distortions and the time that was being lost by anyone who went too close it was very clear that there was something very wrong with Lake Silencio.

Nibbling on her lip, Rose wondered just what it was about the lake that the Doctor knew that had him so concerned. She flipped the pages and caught sight of another photo of people who had gone too close to the lake. Leaning forward, Rose studied the picture, a soft gasp escaping her.
“What is it?” Peters asked with a hint of alarm.

“This man’s eyes,” Rose said as she turned the photo so Peter’s could see it. “Look at his eyes.”

“They look silver,” Peters muttered before shrugging. “That’s probably a bad exposure.”

“Or maybe it’s the Silver Lord,” Rose paused and nodded to herself. “Actually I’m sure that’s the Silver Lord. He’s part Chronovore, he has some power over time.”

“And you think he could do this?”

Rose shivered at the memory of the Silver Lord and nodded. “Peters there isn’t a lot that I think he can’t do.”
The flight was smooth and pleasant for the most part. It was nice to not have to stop over in New York City this time and she learned a bit about Peters. He wasn’t a pleasant and talkative about his family as her first escort Peterson had been. However Rose did learn that he was a bachelor and married to his work which he loved with a rare passion. Rose hoped that he’d have time to get to know Malcolm a bit, she imagined that the two of them would become easy friends.

Two phone calls came in while they were in flight, both reports on the passage of time in the bubble that seemed to have formed around the lake. Peterson informed Rose that an effort to fly over with helicopters had observed the same effect. They’d even been sent a short video of the helicopter flying over the lake and almost stop moving. The second phone call when they were nearly to Lake Silencio that had been taken over was the report that the helicopter had finally left the bubble and all the crew were safe.

Swallowing and yawning, Rose forced her ears to pop as they descended over the desert. She looked out her window and across the expanse of pale sun bleached ground and tufts of vegetation. Somehow it seemed even drier and the ground looked redder than she remembered New Mexico being. Even from the plane she could see giant rock structures and made a mental note to have the Doctor bring her here under better circumstances, it looked amazing.

The plane bounced as they touched down and Rose gripped the armrests calmly. Peters looked less comfortable, but then he didn’t have travel in the TARDIS to compare the landing to. Of course, the TARDIS travelled through time and across planets in moments so she was always superior. They moved across a small airstrip and into a large hanger. Rose watched out the small window as men and women in United States Air Force uniforms moved around the plane.

“Well, here we are,” Peters observed as he stood up and straightened his suit jacket. “Welcome to
the old Silencio Air Force Base, it’s been used only for training exercises in the last decade, but it has most of what we need.”

Nodding, Rose unbuckled her seat belt and stood up. She grabbed her bag as the plane’s interior door was unfolding and opening the stairs. Peters reached up and pulled out her rolling bag with a small smile. He turned and headed for the stairs, pausing to say thanks to the pilot that Rose had not even seen. A few moments later they were outside the plane in the hanger as Rose sucked in several deep breaths. The air was hot and dry and the heat rolled over her whole body within seconds.

“You alright?” Peters asked with concern.

“Yeah, just trying to breathe. There’s a big difference between living in England and the Utah desert.”

Peters chuckled and nodded his understanding. “I see, well come on Miss Tyler. Doctor Matthews is waiting for us inside.”

The base was fairly small by Rose’s standards with only a few small main buildings standing a ways away from the hanger. The closest of these was only two stories high with small Spartan looking windows and made of grey stone. It was distinctly unwelcoming in Rose’s eyes. There were three main building in total with a few small housing buildings visible nearby. The entire area was surrounded by a tall fence with barbed wire around the top and she could see a guarded entry gate. As Peters led her towards a small green jeep, Rose noticed that they were being stared at by the uniformed personnel moving around the base.

“Please excuse them,” Peters told Rose as they walked over to a small parked car. “This is usually a simple training base, nothing interesting happens here most of the time. I’m afraid the sudden arrival of so much equipment and outside personnel has made things a bit strange here.”

“I understand,” Rose replied politely. It made sense she supposed, after all, if UNIT or Torchwood ever had to bunk up with the normal British military forces things might get a little tense and strange. Especially if it was Torchwood, Rose couldn’t imagine Hartman being anything but a nightmare to the poor Colonel stuck with her. The thought nearly made her laugh.

Peters lifted Rose’s suitcase into the back of the jeep and gestured for Rose to climb in. Without a word, she hoisted herself up into the passenger side of the jeep and couldn’t help but smile a little. She suddenly felt like she was in one of the old World War II movies. UNIT had jeeps, but none without roofs like this one. Peters climbed into the driver’s side a moment later and then they were
off, following the large roadways towards the largest of the buildings.

The closer they got the building the more nervous Rose felt. It was a large square building with small stacked and racked windows that were not at all friendly. The grey colour of the building almost seemed to fade all the colours around it and with red and blue mountains in view behind it that was saying something. Peters parked the jeep in front of the building and Rose saw more uniformed U.S. Airmen standing guard outside the main doors. Paying them no mind, Peters pulled Rose’s bag out of the back and waited for her to climb out. He said nothing as they walked past the guards, one of which leaned over to open the door for them.

Stepping inside, Rose took a deep breath of relief as the cool air-conditioned air hit her face. Then she took in the main room, it was fairly large, but the floors looked like concrete and the walls were grey and dull except for the splash of colour added by the U.S. flag and a photo of the U.S. President. There was a heavy wooden desk in front of the doorway where another man in a suit was sitting. He nodded to Peters and glanced at Rose with a hint of curiosity.

“This way,” Peters said, his voice low and professional to Rose.

Nodding, Rose followed him as Peter led her into a corridor leading off the main room. It seemed to go on forever before they came to door with a guard standing in front of at the end of the corridor.

“Doctor Matthews is waiting inside,” the man guarding the doorway said formally. He was dressed like Peters, wearing a suit instead of a uniform so Rose guessed he was with Section 13. “She wanted to see you as soon as you arrived.”

“I’ll deliver your things to your quarters,” Peters informed Rose gently. “Good luck Miss Tyler.”

“Thank you, Agent Peters,” Rose replied politely with a small smile.

Stepping forward, Rose pushed open the door and stepped into the office. It was odd seeing Doctor Samantha Matthews in the small cramped office, the woman was a little taller than Rose with olive skin, shoulder length wavy dark hair and brown eyes and had a presence that made the office seem confined.

“Rose Tyler,” Matthews greeted with a relieved smile. “Welcome back to the States. I hope the flight was pleasant.”
“Yes it was, your new plane is very impressive,” Rose replied politely.

“Thank you, we’re hoping that we can make it more energy efficient in the next couple of years and then release the design. Making air flight faster and cleaner would certainly be a good step forward.”

Rose had to smile, she liked Doctor Matthew’s down to Earth concern for the entirety of the world. Like Hartman, her loyalty was officially to the United States of America, but unlike Hartman, she had the good sense to recognise that arming the nations of the world with alien technology was a bad idea and recognised that invading aliens rarely worried about borders.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Rose told her with a smile before she turned serious. “Where do you need me?”

Doctor Matthews smiled slightly and nodded to Rose. “Follow me please.”

They stepped out into the long grey corridor Rose had just come down, the only colour in the place seemed to be the red white and blue of the U.S. flags scattered around the place. Even the maps hanging on the walls seemed devoid of colour.

“Swanic is here, but Danielle and Michael remained in Las Vegas for school,” Matthews informed Rose calmly as they stepped into a larger conference room. This room had a little more colour with a large polish wood table. A large window on the far side opened out over the desert. In the distance Rose could see a shimmer of blue, guessing that it was Lake Silencio.

“Give them my regards,” Rose told Matthews with a smile, turning her attention back to the older woman. “Once this is all over.”

“Once this is over,” the deep voice of Swanic huffed behind them. “Once this is all over!?”

Rose turned to see the tall alien male with unusually pale skin and violet eyes stomping into the room. He had a long lab coat on, a pair of glasses perched on his nose and his hands in his pockets. For a moment he reminded Rose of an irritable child she babysat for on occasion at the Powell Estates.
“Hello Doctor Donovan,” Rose greeted with a small smile.

“Tyler,” Swanic replied with a nod, but no smile. “Any chance that Doctor of yours is coming this time?”

“He’s supposed to meet me here,” Rose replied with a glance towards Matthews whose shoulders visibly relaxed at her statement. “But it’s hard to say when exactly he’ll arrive. That sort of depends on the TARDIS.”

“But he’s coming,” Swanic said with another nod, pacing slightly in the small open space of the office. “I not sure if that’s a good sign or a bad one. On one hand, it means we get his help dealing with whatever this is, but it also means that it’s bad enough that he needs to come and help.”

“Have there been any new developments?” Rose asked looking at Matthews.

“Not so far, we’ve cleared out the area a bit to give the bubble some room, but it doesn’t seem to be expanding any further. Honestly, I’m suspecting that there is some kind of alien technology at the heart of this,” Matthews informed Rose. “I understand that there was something similar to this at the Gate of the Sun in South America some time ago.”

“Yes,” Rose agreed, shivering slightly at the memory. The Silver Lord had been there too. “That is correct, but that time bubble was meant to hold a dangerous creature in place until the full cronovore could be locked away again. Rose still wasn’t certain as to just what had happened to resolve that situation. “Unfortunately, I think that they may be the work of the powerful alien, the Silver Lord.”

“The Silver Lord,” Swanic repeated with a frown. “Isn’t that one you almost married?”

Rose’s eyes widened and Matthews flinched in the corner of her eye at Swanic’s blunder. She guessed that Swanic wasn’t supposed to reveal that he knew that. Rose suddenly felt very exposed and vulnerable, something she didn’t like at all.

“Yes, he used an advanced form of mind control on me,” Rose explained as she clenched her teeth. “Does everyone know about that?”

“I’m afraid that when it comes to you the international rumour mill tends to work overtime,”
Matthews confessed. “Especially since after that happened your Brigadier Benton requested to review our files over your last visit here since that was one incident of your exposure to the Silver Lord.”

“Great,” Rose muttered, rubbing the back of her head. “Just great.”

“Anyway,” Swanic said, his violet eyes darting between them. “I was about to head down to the lake again, would you like to come, Tyler?”

Rose glanced over at Matthews who made a small nod of agreement. Turning back to Swanic, Rose nodded and forced a little smile. She followed Swanic out of the room and down another corridor, wondering how he kept the small labyrinth that was this building straight. They found another door, also guarded with a jeep outside, this one covered.

“Come along then,” Swanic huffed as he climbed into the driver’s side and started up the jeep.

Without another word, Rose jumped into the passenger side of the jeep and buckled up, unsure of how good a driver this particular alien was. Swanic didn’t seem concerned about it, turning the jeep and heading for the rear gate of the base. It only took them a moment to get through with the guard stopping them for a moment to take a quick photo of Rose.

“We’ll have a badge ready for you when you return,” the man promised before snapping a salute.

Rose decided against informing him that she was British and saluting was a bit much. Swanic pulled out onto the road around the base and they began to drive towards the body of water that Rose could see shining in the distance. As it turned out Swanic was a very good driver and didn’t talk much as they navigated their way around five turns. Finally, they were on a long stretch of road that ran alongside the lake and Rose could see several military vehicles parked just off the road with the area taped off. Beyond them was a large dark green RV that looked a lot like the mobile science and command units that Rose had seen before. More vehicles were placed all around the lake, guarding it against outsiders. As she climbed out of the jeep, Rose noted the long black rope that had been placed in the sand around the lake with no one going near it, the marker for the boundary of the strange effect.

“There’s been no danger to anyone going in so far right?” Rose asked Swanic without looking at him, her eyes fixed on the completely still looking lake in front of her.
“Not so far, everyone has been fine once they got out. We’ve been putting harnesses on them so we can pull them out of the bubble safely. That’s worked every time.”

“Doctor Swanic,” a younger female voice called from the doorway of the large trailer. “The atomic clock you requested is here.”

“Ah, excellent,” Swanic exclaimed, clamouring out of his chair and moving towards the doorway.

“Atomic clock,” Rose repeated with a small smile. “You want to see how the bubble affects it?”

“Indeed,” Swanic explained. “I’m still not completely convinced that time is actually stopped inside or even slowed down. It is also possible that is the movement of molecules that has slowed down.”

“I’m not sure that is a valid theory,” Rose remarked with a slight frown.

“Miss Tyler, your experiences make you far more inclined to look at time as the potential problem, but we need to explore other possibilities as well.”

“But will the atomic clock even pick up the effect if it just molecules being held in stasis?” Rose questioned. “Atomic clocks use an electronic transition frequency in the electromagnetic spectrum. They’re based on atomic theory.”

“True, but if the restriction of movement is tied to only one aspect of molecules then it may still pick up something,” Swanic suggested. “And until the Doctor arrives I refuse to just sit here and twiddle my thumbs.”

“But you’ve been able to pull people out of the bubble, that’s movement.”

“Yes, but that movement, the force of the pull was coming from outside of the bubble.”

“But it still impacted the object inside of the bubble,” Rose countered. “That means that physical laws of motion do still have an impact within the area.”
Swanic looked at Rose for a moment before he made a sad little shrug with a nod. “I’m aware of that. I ordered the clock when we first discovered what was happening. These aren’t the easiest things to transport.” Rose followed Swanic outside and he smiled as he walked over to a large grey metal box with instruments and dials on the front. He patted the device fondly. “And let’s be honest Miss Tyler, we need to be seen trying something. The soldiers are becoming very frightened of this effect.”

“Fair point,” Rose remarked, glancing around with worry, the TARDIS still nowhere in sight. “Then I volunteer to take the atomic clock into the bubble,” Rose said before she could think about what she as saying.
Hole in Time: Visions of Reality

The Tyler Factor
By Lumenda
Chapter Thirteen: Hole in Time: Visions of Reality

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

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Taking a deep breath, Rose eyed the heavy black rope that had been placed on the coarse ground to mark the outer edge of the bubble nervously. Her eyes lifted and she stared at the air in front of her. Rose almost thought that she could see it shimmer, but wasn’t sure if it was the bubble, her imagination or just the heat off the sand. Stretching out her hand, Rose took a tiny step forward and tapped with her fingers, waiting to see if she felt something.

It was silly of course and she chuckled to herself as air filtered over her fingertips. In her other hand, she was carrying the metal case. It was lighter than she’d expected, but still heavy enough that she wasn’t going to forget that she was carrying it. Looking back over her shoulder, Rose spotted Swanic shifting nervously between his feet.

Refused to be deterred, Rose stepped forward. She could almost hear the people watching sucking in their breaths. The urge to snap at them rose sharply through her, but Rose settled for rolling her eyes and stepping forwards again. She didn’t feel anything, but the sounds behind her began oddly muted. Then the lake suddenly changed, a ripple of water appearing in the middle as something rose out of the water. It was long and narrow, like a needle tower at the top of a building. There was a flash of light and the air around Rose shuddered against her skin as the air was pushed out of her lungs.

A sharp hot pain seared through her head, her entire body shivered in pain. Her shoulders ached, her knees buckled, her neck was screaming and she could barely feel her hands. Rose screamed, her fingers unclenching and releasing the atomic clock from her grip. She barely heard it hit the sand as her hands came up to her head, digging into her hair. Her legs gave out and she fell forward, her knees hitting the moist sand and her hands falling into the cool water. She couldn’t see anymore as darkness faded over her eyes and then she couldn’t hear anything. It was like slipping off to sleep, Rose suddenly couldn’t keep track of where she was.

Her mind was a haze, images kept flashing through it. There was so much noise: crying, laughing, talking, shouting, whispers, crashing and music all jumbled together. Her chest tightened, she didn’t know what to feel. There was joy, sorrow, fear, anger, disgust, anticipation, surprise, shock, pity, compassion, amusement, pride, envy and love all wrapped up in the sudden blast that Rose had no defence against. Desperately, she grabbed hold of one of the feelings, one of the sounds and one set of images bursting through her mind.

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The red alert was going off, filling the small metal corridors with noise and bright light. She didn’t think, her feet moving on their own and carrying her down the corridor towards the engine room.
“Tyler!” a tall dark skinned woman shouted as she rushed into the large noisy room. Pipes ran all over the walls and large machines filled the space, only small walkways between them that she could barely squeeze through. “Leak in section 4, plug it up and get the system normalised.

The words meant nothing to her, but she moved sharply and twisted around a large piece of machinery. It clanked loudly behind her and she stepped through a wave of steam, feeling it cling to her skin. Her fingers found a large switchboard and danced over a series of small switches, turning them and flicking them in a seemingly random order. The whirling noise surrounding her slowed and she moved forward, leaning down and pulling a box filled with tools out from the grate under the controls. Some of the tools she recognised, others were very strange, but she moved quickly over to another panel, pulled it open, picked up a tool and started to work on a series of smaller pipes.

A blast of hot steam rushed over the side of her face and back. She could feel her jumpsuit becoming damp and sticking to the skin of her back. It was uncomfortable, so were the droplets of water spilling down her face as the steam condensed on her skin, but she ignored it. The blaring of the alarm echoed around her, threatening to drive her to distraction, but years onboard the ship had conditioned her too well and she ignored it. This was known, this was familiar and yet somehow it wasn’t.

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The baby was crying and she rolled over with a groan. Her feet hit the floor, coming into contact with a thick rug which helped warm her feet. There was a grumble from the other side of the bed and a muffled voice that she couldn’t make out. She walked forward to an open doorway and into a small room. Soft blue walls met her eyes were she reached over and turned on a small light. A crib in the centre of the room with a veil over it caught her eyes as the crying intensified.

She made soft sounds and stepped forward, reaching to pull back the veil. A baby with brown eyes and warm cocoa skin stared up at her for a moment before closing as the baby screamed again. Reaching down, she gently picked up the infant, held it to her chest and rocked it gently as she headed out the doorway and into a small kitchen.

In a familiar rhythm, she retrieved a bottle from the refrigerator and started it heating in the microwave. Rocking the infant gently, she made small cooing sounds even as she glanced around the room. A stack of unwashed dishes was piled in the sink, the small card table at the side of the kitchen with two chairs and a high chair had a small stack of bills waiting to be paid. Sighing, she took her hand off of her daughter’s back and pushed a strand of hair behind her ear. When the microwave beeped, she pulled out the bottle, tested that it wasn’t too hot and walked out into the small living room. She sat down on the sofa and carefully repositioned the baby to feed her.

When that was done, she left the bottle on the coffee table and carried the now groggy infant back towards the bedroom. Her husband was still snoring soundly as she crept past him and back into the small room that served as the nursery. Setting the infant back down in the crib, she smiled gently at the child and whispered a few words in a strange language that rolled off her tongue easily, but she couldn’t seem to understand.

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She was walking out across an empty and cold beach, waves crashing onto nearby rocks as she looked around. Desperation gathered in her chest, the soft voice of the Doctor calling to her. His voice was welcome, sounding wonderful to her ears and hope was rising in her chest along with a
lingering fear that this was going to be the last time she ever heard his voice.

Then he appeared in front of her. The Doctor, her brown eyed Doctor in his pinstriped suit was standing in front of her on a strange beach. Her hair spun around her and she could feel tears rolling down her face. She wanted to ask what was happening, but different words came from her mouth. A sense of total loss and helplessness threatened to overwhelm her. The Doctor looked almost as bad, a dark sadness in his eyes, surrender and defeat.

They talked about her being dead ‘back home’ whatever that meant. People were missing, something horrible must have happened. He looked past her nodded behind her, she was vaguely aware that her mother was nearby with Mickey, but nothing else made sense in her mind. The conversation seemed too long and too short, they were avoiding something. She couldn’t take it anymore, the grief was piling up too high and she couldn’t bear regret as well.

“Love you,” she said around a wave of tears that she just couldn’t control. Her heart ached and she felt ready to drop in exhaustion.

“Quite right too,” the Doctor replied, a slight waver in his voice. “And I suppose if it’s my last chance to say it… Rose Tyler-”

He vanished, his image just disappearing, words left unsaid. She thought he’d say them, she thought she’d heard them before. He loved her, she knew he did, but he hadn’t said it and now he was gone. Her heart ached and the tears became to fall freely. Turning around, she saw her mother and Mickey standing next to a man who looked like an older version of her late father Pete Tyler and could barely breathe.

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Blood oozed gently out of the small incision in the pale skin in front of her which was only a few centimetre’s long, surrounded by sterile white cloth. A hand reached forward and a small pad gently dabbed up the blood. Around her, there was the sound of several machines and a few low voices. Across her face, she felt some kind of surgical mask and her hair felt short underneath some kind of cap. Rose raised her hand, bringing a small metal tube that looked vaguely familiar up in front of her. She placed the slightly pointed tip of the metal tube into the small incision.

“Releasing nanos,” she said calmly, her voice slightly muffled. “Establish connection.”

“Connection established doctor,” a female voice replied. “Communication and controls fully functional.”

“Excellent, let’s clean up those arteries,” she replied as she turned away from the human being that was sleeping on a long white table, looking very peaceful. “Monitor vital signs for any distress.”

“Yes doctor,” came a reply from several voices as she looked towards a large visual screen that was showing her the inside of a blood vessel.

Instead of feeling impressed by the sight, she calmly picked up a small game system like remote from under the screen and started pressing buttons.

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The controls shook violently in her hands and the control screens were flashing. Filling the viewer
directly in front of her was the rapidly approaching ground of a red and blue planet that normally would have left her smiling in awe. But now the controls were flickering, the warnings for the various systems were going off and she could hear crying and screaming behind her as the passengers were overtaken by their fear. In the corner of her eye, she could see her co-pilot pressing multiple buttons and using the communications centre.

“We’re not going to make it,” he insisted, fear filling his voice.

Her fingers tightened even more around the controls as her eyes darted up to one of the view screens. They’d lost one engine, only one left and a long way to go. Her mind raced, turning everything she knew about the systems over in her head. With a flash of inspiration, she pulled up sharply on the controls, raising the nose of the shuttle away from the planet. The planet all but vanished from their view and the shuttle started to shake, but the pressure in the second engine began to ease.

“The heat shield can take it,” she heard herself reply in a thick, almost pained voice. “We just need the engine to hold out a little longer.”

“I hope you know what you’re doing,” the co-pilot exclaimed, pressing several more buttons as the communication system beeped on and frantic voices came through from the other end.

“So do I,” she muttered, carefully adjusting the angle of the shuttle.

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Doctor Matthews leapt out of the jeep and ran down the beach towards Swanic. Ahead of her, the once invisible dome was glowing all different colours that were just bright and solid enough to obscure her view of the lake.

“What the hell happened?” Matthews demanded as she stalked towards Swanic, her eyes scanning the beach for Tyler.

“Tyler volunteered to take the atomic clock inside the bubble,” Swanic replied, his voice remarkably calm as he tapped on the small handheld computer he was holding. “This occurred just after she stepped into the bubble.”

“Was it the atomic clock?”

“No, I doubt that the clock had any parts that would set off this kind of reaction,” Swanic replied with a sad chuckle. “If Tyler was right and the Silver Lord had something to do with this then I’d say that this is a trap being sprung.”

“Damn it,” Matthews hissed, shielding her eyes and looking back out at the bubble. “Any ideas?”

“I’m trying to reestablish the connection with the instruments we set up earlier, but so far I can’t access them.”

“The connection is down?”

“Actually it’s worse than that,” Swanic replied, gesturing down towards a cable lying on the beach. It was cut at one end. “Everything that was wired out here, which earlier had a delay in any communications, now looks like it has been cut off.”
“By what? That bubble?”

“I’m not sure,” Swanic admitted, his face showing a hint of fear and worry. “But it is almost like everything in that bubble was suddenly cut off from us. Like it isn’t there anymore.”

“What do you mean?” Matthews demanded.

“Try touching it,” Swanic offered, gesturing towards the bubble. “It’s safe, I promise you that.”

Giving him a confused look, Matthews took a few steps closer to the bubble and reached out and touched it. It felt like gel against her hands and after a moment of hesitation, she pushed her hand forward, watching it sink into the surface. Then there was a hand on her back and she was suddenly pushed forward.

Stumbling forward, Matthews coughed and shivered, her body feeling cold. A hand grabbed her arm and helped her stand up. A soldier was standing in front of her and blinking in surprise, Matthews looked around for the bubble. It was behind her and she turned just in time to see Swanic step forward out of the bubble, the strange gel slipping around his body.

“What was that Swanic?” she demanded sharply.

“We’re on the far side of the bubble, we passed straight through it in less than a second,” Swanic informed Matthews with a stern expression. “Everything inside that bubble cannot be accessed and that bubble is cutting Lake Silencio off from everything else. It started off as the Lake being cut off from time, but I think it is starting to be cut off from space as well.”

“And what will that mean for Tyler?”

“I’m sorry Doctor Matthews, but this is beyond me… but… my theory is that the bubble is capable of completely cutting the lake off from both space and time. It is already distorting time and space, but if it can be completely sealed off then…. Rose will vanish from reality completely. Once that happens… I’m not even sure if we’ll even remember any of this.”

Doctor Matthews gasped painfully, staring at Swanic with wide eyes, but was saved from having to answer by the sound of grinding and wheezing echoing around the lake. They both turned and looked around for the source of the noise. Swanic grabbed Matthews hand and tugged her back through the bubble. They arrived back on the other side in time to see the Eleventh Doctor with his tweed coat, bowtie and fly away hair step out of the TARDIS. Another man with dark hair and wearing a long World War II era trench coat stepped out behind him, both of them glaring at the bubble angrily.
The personnel of Section 13 moved about the bubble on small jeeps and followed the Doctor’s orders with a precision born of both respect and fear. Doctor Matthews and Swanic were sticking close to the main science vehicle and after a few minutes of debate Matthews had phoned UNIT UK. Benton hadn’t been pleased to learn about the danger Rose was in but expressed a faith in the Doctor that surprised Doctor Matthews.

It was staggering to think that a man that had almost no contact with the Doctor still trusted him so absolutely, but then again Matthews herself carried a great deal of gratitude for his help in rescuing the Donovan children. But there was a small voice at the back of her mind that was worrying about the relationship that was very apartment between Rose Tyler and the Doctor. She was young and very human while he was neither. The second man who had arrived with him, Jack Harkness, was a mystery as well. He was apparently one of the Doctor’s infamous companions and yet talked to the Doctor with an unusual ease and seemed just as worried about Rose as the Doctor was. Shaking her head, Matthews forced her curiosity to the back of her mind and headed out of the mobile science vehicle to rejoin the Doctor and Jack.

The Doctor leaned over the sensors, his green eyes darting over the readings quickly before rising to look at the shimmering time bubble. The soft ripple of colours was still blurring out the lake, but every so often there was a moment where they could see the lake and they almost caught sight of Rose.

“How do we bust it open?” Jack pressed next to him, shifting nervously on his feet. His expression was stern and blank, his worry only showing in his eyes.

“I’m working on that,” the Doctor answered tensely without looking at Jack. “The problem is closing the hole in time that the Silver Lord has opened without destroying Rose.”

“Then this could….”

“In theory yes,” the Doctor replied with a quick nod, his hand coming up to play with his bow tie. “This lake is a still point in time, a point in time and space where nothing important has ever or was ever supposed to happen. They are very rare, almost every other place in the universe has something at some point. But this lake… it’s silent. I’d say the people who named it even felt that somehow.”

“But how does that-” Swanic began to ask from behind the Doctor only be cut off.

“A still point in time also has nothing protecting it, there’s no… time around it and over it if you will.” The Doctor spun on his heel and glanced at Swanic, Matthews and Jack. Bringing up his
hands he moved them around as it talked. “Imagine several layers of wood, a nail and a hammer. Now those pieces of wood are all stacked on top of each other and they are protected by a thick concert vault, all except for one small area that is exposed.”

Jack tensed, understanding where the Doctor was going as Swanic and Matthews nodded nervously. “Now Rose is the nail and the Silver Lord is the hammer. He just trapped her, hammered the nail down all the way through all those layers. Those layers are the different alternate realities that surround our reality. Together these realities keep a cosmic balance and will one day, billions of years from now, collapse into each other to trigger a new big bang and a new universe.”

“What does that have to do with Tyler?” Swanic asked urgently.

“Rose is important,” the Doctor huffed, his green eyes fixing on the man. “This trap has linked Rose and all her alternates together. The nail as it was is now much longer, going through all the layers at once. But when the Silver Lord pulls it out, it is going to leave a hole in all those boards. She will cease to exist not only in this reality but in all of them, all at once.”

“Shit,” Jack hissed. “Can the Guardians help? This is what they are supposed to guard against.”

“I tried calling them, but nothing so far.”

“But aren’t you from Rose’s future?” Matthews asked in confusion. “Doesn’t that mean that things will be just fine?”

“Normally you’d be right, but this is different. What is happening now isn’t anchored to properly to time. There aren’t many events in my history and Rose’s that are easy to change, but erasing her isn’t changing the past. It is erasing her. If this fails then she’d gone and my history with her no longer exists. She’ll have never been born, never met me, never saved the Earth or anything. We won’t even remember that we lost her.”

“What do you need from us?” Matthews asked, raising her chin in determination.

The Doctor smiled, a dark and sharp expression that made the hairs on the back of her neck stand on edge. However, the man standing next to him only seemed to relax at the dark look and Matthews tried to take some confidence in that. Whatever the Doctor was planning, however bad wasn’t directed at them. She didn’t care if the rumours about Tyler marrying the Doctor or something were true, she’d be putting a warning on Rose Tyler’s file that she was never to be harmed. Matthews never wanted the ideas and anger behind that look intended for her.

Then the Doctor answered her question, rattling off a long list of different kinds of cables, some kind of generator and a few other things. His speech was so fast that she nearly missed it, but Swanic nodded, a pen and notepad in his hand.

“You’ll have all of it in half an hour at most,” Swanic promised.

“Bring everything you have to me now,” the Doctor ordered Swanic.

“What’s the plan Doc?” Jack asked calmly, his eyes moving back towards the bubble.

“We’re going to link the TARDIS to that bubble,” the Doctor informed him. “If we can pump some time into the bubble then we can keep things stable for a little longer.”
“And beyond that,” Swanis asked. “What is your plan? How can you free Tyler?”

“I’m a Time Lord,” the Doctor replied, a sense of calm falling over him as he smirked. “My people began our history with playing with alternate realities.”

“I hate to point out that it only got them into trouble,” Jack muttered, earning a look from the Doctor.

“Don’t worry,” the Doctor said, a small more cheerful smile appearing on his face. “This is going to work.”

…………………….

Rose couldn’t see or hear anymore. The flow of images and noise had become a blur of colours and a mess of sounds that she could no longer understand. There was a pressure building in her head, worse than anything she’d felt even when…. She couldn’t think, couldn’t remember. It felt a lot like falling, except only part of her was falling. Somehow, some part of her was in place while the rest was just falling.

She thought her fingers might be moving as another series of images pushed forward in her mind. There was someone standing in front of her, talking while her fingers moved on some kind of keyboard. But she couldn’t hear them talking, instead, she was hearing the sounds of a crowd clapping and cheering over loud music.

It hurt so much, the pounding in her head and the assault of too much information all at once. Her eyes might have been closed, but she couldn’t tell anymore and it didn’t seem to matter. Everything was becoming more and more distant. She felt things touching her hands, but it was fleeting, like the touch of a ghost, there one moment and not the next. Nothing seemed real anymore. She thought she felt tears running down her cheeks, but her face also hurt from smiling so hard. She thought she had long hair blowing in an icy breeze, but then it was short cropped hair with the hot heat of the sun on her neck.

Trying to make sense out of something, she tried to focus on her name, but there were too many. Rose seemed the most familiar and she thought she heard a warm, smooth and gentle voice calling her that. Then it was Emily, then Hilda, then Astrid and many more. There was a voice shouting at her full of anger and a jolt of fear shot through her. She wanted to run, but her body didn’t seem her own. She could move and the fear spiked, turning into a raw terror.

There was the shot of a gun ringing through her ears, suddenly blocking out everything else. A sharp pain in her stomach was suddenly crystal clear and she felt her fingers gripping at her own gut. Warm sticky fluid was spilling out over her fingers and looking down she saw red blood.

The pain didn’t fade, but the sight began to change. She was sitting in a row of tight seats and the entire place was shaking, an airplane she realised as her head lowered. Around her she could hear people crying, a few screaming and several praying. There was a dull hum of the engines and metallic clanking as they sputtered out. Her ears popped as the altitude began to change rapidly and she began to feel faint. There was a dull pounding in her head as blackness began to seep into her vision.

She was dying, over and over again, somehow. One death led into another, creating a parade of pain, shock and sorrow all around her. The images, feelings and even the pain was blurring
together. Her limbs were heavy, the pain was weighing heavily on her and despite the sense that this wasn’t right that she could give up; Rose just wanted it to be over.


Jack stepped closer to the bubble, the heavy length of tubing held tightly in his hands. Swanic was rubbing his hands together nervously nearby and looking between the bubble and a screen hooked up to what sensors were still working. He looked back over his shoulder, into the TARDIS where the Doctor was rapidly flipping switches and adjusting toggles.

“This isn’t going to kill me is it?” Jack yelled back to the Doctor, shouting to be heard over the loud thrum that was coming from the TARDIS.

“No,” the Doctor shouted back. “Well I don’t think so,” the Doctor amended a moment later. “There isn’t much of a chance, but there is a chance,” the Doctor admitted, moving his hands in front of him and adjusting his bow tie nervously. “I haven’t dealt with kind of thing very much after all.”

“Great,” Jack muttered even as he nodded. He sighed loudly and looked back at the bubble, glaring at it. “I’d better come back from this. I’m connected to the whole universe, even if you do kill me, I should come back.” Shaking his head, Jack pushed the end of the tube into the side of the bubble.

Unlike the earlier demonstrations of things just moving through the bubble’s outer edge, the bubble’s colour began to change the moment the end of the tube connected with it. The translucent colour darkened rapidly, going from a shimmering pinkish and blue colour to a dark violet.

“Doc,” Jack yelled back without turning around. “Something is definitely happening.”

“That’s a good sign,” the Doctor answered, a hint of glee in his voice. “Just keep the tube right there.”

“Fine,” Jack replied, his eyes moving across the bubble’s surface as the darkening shade of dark violet turned more night sky purple and spread over slowly across the bubble. It was slow, like watching a thick liquid try to run down a very slight slope, but the colour was changing. But the problem was that the tiny hints of the lake they’d been able to see before were vanishing along with any chance of seeing Rose.

“Doc I sure hope you know what you’re doing,” Jack whispered as he reached out towards the bubble with one hand. His fingers brushed the bubble’s surface which was becoming colder and his hand didn’t shift through the surface this time, the surface was becoming solid. Underneath his hand, Jack could feel the warmth of his body seeping into the bubble which seemed to suck it in sharply. “I knew it,” Jack sighed. “I’m going to die again. Ah Rose the things I do for you.”
Jack looked back towards the TARDIS with a growing sense of worry; the Doctor had vanished from the console room and was in the back someplace. Turning back to the bubble, Jack noted that the surface was becoming soft and fluid again, but the dark colour remained. He hoped that this was what the Doctor wanted. He’d seen a lot of things, but this was definitely new and unknown, even to him.

“Jack! Get in here!” the Doctor shouted from the TARDIS a moment later. “I’ve got the suits ready to go and we should be able to get into the bubble now.”

Setting the hose down gently in the sand, Jack placed it so that it kept touching the bubble and then raced up to the TARDIS. He blinked in surprise at the sight of two 27th century low oxygen environment suits hanging over the railing. The bright orange colour and large filter that hung around the neck were dead giveaways.

“Put one on,” the Doctor ordered, already shrugging off his tweed coat and reaching for one of the suits.

“I trust you have a plan,” Jack said as he pulled off his long overcoat and tossed it over the railing.

“By forcing some temporal energy in the bubble I’ve made it possible for us to move, but it isn’t normal. If we want to be able to move around and get Rose out of there then we have to be able to move.”
“And what’s so special about these suits?”

“Nothing much, they’ve just been in the TARDIS for a long time and have absorbed some of the Artron energy. That will shield us.”

“Alright,” Jack replied with a nod.

That was good enough for him and he climbed into the suit. Sadly orange was one colour that he wasn’t very flattering on him. He still looked good of course, but not great. It only took them a few short minutes to gear up, both of them moving quickly and deliberately. Jack was reminded once again of how focused the Doctor was when Rose was in danger. At other moments he could seem like a small child, younger and more carefree than his own children, but at times like right now Jack was thankful that the Doctor loved the universe so much. They stepped out of the TARDIS, the Doctor leaving the door open and the hose system still running. He gave a warning look to Swanic and Jack chuckled when the man straightened up and nodded quickly to the Doctor. No one would interfere with the TARDIS.

They secured their helmets and the breathing filter began working, pumping the proper mixture of air into Jack’s helmet. Without hesitation, the Doctor stepped up to the bubble and pushed against the dark swirling surface. Like gel, it gave away but surged around his hand. The Doctor kept pushing forward and soon enough his torso began to vanish into the bubble. Taking a deep breath, Jack stepped forward with both hands and began to push his way through.

The Doctor had to keep pushing, wishing for a moment that he had the larger and stronger body of his ninth form. Old big ears had the most athletic body of the lot and he always seemed to move extra fast when Rose was in danger. It was hard to move, the very air seemed to resist his attempts to move at all. The filter was struggling to provide him with the oxygen he needed and he was starting to feel a slight burn in his lungs. A spark of worry shot through him for Jack, regretting bringing the man for a moment, but then again Jack would never suffer being left behind when Rose’s future hung in the balance.

Damn Silver Lord, playing with a still point in time and damn near making a fixed point. Except it could go either way, it was more like a hinge point. If he didn’t do everything right then he’d lose Rose. He wouldn’t even remember her; there’d just be this hole in his life. Even though it made no sense, the Doctor was certain that somehow he’d know. After all, this entire event would lead to…

The Doctor shoved the thought away as the shimmering darkness around him seemed to be lifting. It was becoming easier to move and he slowly pulled the sonic screwdriver out of the small pouch in the front of the suit. The sonic screwdriver whirled loudly, echoing in the strange warped space as the Doctor held it up in front of them. The low light of the green diode cut through the swirling darkness around them. He could see the sandy beach under his feet and that was a good sign at
least. They hadn’t gone into the water yet and he could see Jack next to him now, shadowing him as they went further in the bubble.

The air twisted visibly, sending shimmers of colour around them as the Doctor and Jack pressed forward. Next to him, the Doctor could hear the harsh whirling sound as the space suits air filters. The air in the bubble was breathable, after all the Silver Lord needed Rose alive, at least for a little while. Jack struggling to move in the temporal disruption, but the man kept moving. In any other circumstance, the Doctor might have insisted he turn back, but right now he was grateful for the help and the company. Every step was hard to make, the few feet from the edge of the bubble to Rose stretching forward like miles. The weight of the distorted time was beyond uncomfortable, similar to the time eddies he’d encountered years ago when a band of humans had been playing with time on Earth.

Then he saw her, just ahead of them. The atomic clock was in the sand, having dropped from her hands and Rose seemed to be floating in a swirl of darkness with shimmers of light dancing around her. It took the Doctor a moment to realise that he as looking at the manifestations of the different timelines that were being forced through the bubble. Every one of his Time Lord senses shuddered in horror.

Rose’s eyes were slammed shut tightly, her whole face contorted with agony that made both the Doctor’s hearts stop. Her mouth was open in a silent scream and her hair was floating around her on waves of the disruption. She wasn’t moving at all, completely caught in the disruption and whatever it was she was seeing. As his hearts started beating again, a wave of sorrow crashed down on the Doctor and the once familiar pang of guilt over bringing this into Rose’s life hit him once more. Something he hadn’t felt since years before his regeneration into his form.

“I’m so sorry darling,” the Doctor whispered as he reached out a hand to her.

“Doctor?” he hears Jack call, his voice sounding distant and distorted. “What now?”

“Hold onto her,” the Doctor responded, pulling his hand back as his better judgment returned. “And Jack you may need to transfer…” he trailed off.

“Understood,” Jack told him calmly, his voice colder as Jack fell back on his compartmentalization method of focus.

The Doctor’s eyes scanned what he could see of the lake, but it was made easier by the swirl of thin strands of light that were emerging from the water. All different colours: some were soft reds, others icy blues, some much darker shades and a few were flickering gold like he knew his own
Rose’s was. Pointing the sonic screwdriver towards the small fountain of light, the Doctor took a deep breath and glanced towards Rose who Jack as holding steady, one of his gloves off and resting on her cheek. Nodding, the Doctor considered whispering a prayer, but the one thing he really believed in was the one in danger. The sonic screwdriver whirled, it seemed louder than normal with the green diode lighting up brilliantly in the dark. There was a sputtering sound from the centre of the lake, a gasp from Rose behind him and then a dull roar.

Then the flow of colours was gone and the Doctor heard the sound of metal collapsing in the lake, he’d have to fish that out later. Over their heads the bubble seemed to rumble like a thunderstorm, sending of shimmers of colour down through the thick swirling blackness. He’d never been inside something like this when it collapsed and was left wondering if the lake would even be left after this.

“Stay here or get out?” Jack asked, cutting into the Doctor’s thoughts.

“Get out,” the Doctor huffed turning his attention to Jack and Rose.

She’d collapsed into Jack’s arm, unconscious and horribly pale. Jack’s bare palm was glowing a soft golden colour against her cheek and the Doctor was hit with another blast of gratitude. Jack hoisted Rose up more in his arms, shifting his hand to rest against her bare arm as they both turned and started heading back up the beach. Flashes of light around them illuminated the dispersing clouds of darkness, but as they moved it seemed to be vanishing at a faster and faster rate. Yet the Doctor couldn’t really make out anything beyond the darkness. He couldn’t hear wind or water lapping at the shore or anything. The hint of worry that the place was going to vanish was getting stronger and stronger.

But then he felt the more solid outer layer of the bubble and sighed in relief. Looking to the side, the Doctor saw Jack turning around and pushing his way through backwards, protecting Rose and keeping a grip on her bare arm. The Doctor moved closer to them, placing a steadying hand on Jack’s shoulder. Pushing forward, the doctor half pulled and half pushed Jack through the outer layer, helping the other man to stay on his feet and move straight through the layer. Behind them, the rumbling was growing louder and the Doctor was beginning to feel a small hint of panic. Then they stumbled out of the bubble, their feet hitting the soft real sand of the beach and the bright sun blinding them. Matthews and Swanic ran forward followed closely by a pair of medics with a stretcher.

The Doctor waved them back as Jack turned around properly. Glancing over his shoulder at the bubble, the Doctor pushed on Jack’s back, urging him away from the bubble. They moved quickly up the gentle slope of the beach towards the road. Behind them, there was a strange crackling sound that made the Doctor turn back around. He pulled off his helmet in one smooth move and stared with wide eyes as the bubble flickered and vanished. There was no lake, instead there was a completely smooth rounded crater, the lower part of the bubble cut neatly into the ground.
“Good call Doc,” Jack muttered next to him as he gently set Rose on the stretcher and pulled off his helmet.

“Yes,” the Doctor sighed in relief. “Thanks for the help.”

“Course,” Jack replied with a small smile. “Anytime.”

………………..

Nothing hurt, there was a lingering soreness, but no sharp pains that made her feel like she was dying. The flashing images had stopped and all she could see was the calm darkness of her own eyelids. Breathing in deeply, Rose inhaled fresh air greedily but made no effort to move. Then she felt a warm hand touch her face. The fingertips had tiny slight calluses on the very tips but were otherwise gentle and smooth.

She could hear voices around her, soft and muted, either they were far away or talking quietly. One of them was very familiar and the image of a bow tie and bright green eyes flashed through her mind. Rose breathed in again and felt some of the tension in her body ease. She knew that she was safe.

“This was so dangerous,” a warm voice said very close to her, their breath tickling her cheek. Yet she felt no compulsion to pull away from the person, if anything had she been able to move, she might have curled up closer to them. Her mind was still hazy, little things trying to find their place, but she felt safe. “If something had gone wrong.”

“The Silver Lord did us a favour,” a dark gruff voice snapped, not making much of an effort to be quiet. It was also familiar, like the first voice. She didn’t feel threatened by it, but she did feel a sense of irritation.

“What’s done is done and this event remains a closed time loop Doctor,” another voice, this one calmer and a bit posh said. “She’ll be alright, you know that.”

“Still,” another sharp male voice that reeked of barely contained anger. “It’s wasn’t easy seeing her like that.” That voice was familiar too and despite the anger, she could hear, she felt a great sense of fondness. The fingers stroking her cheek stilled for a moment.
“Mind your place,” the second darker voice huffed. “You are here as a courtesy to her, nothing more.”

“Peace Black,” the third calmer voice insisted. “Jack Harkness is here because she would want and did want him here. That should be enough.”

“This business concerns us directly, the Doctor-”

Rose’s head hurt for a moment, the names suddenly conjuring up faces. The Doctor’s name brought up a short slideshow of different faces before it settled on a man with flyaway brown hair and bright green eyes. Everything clicked into place with an almost audible sound that actually hurt for a moment. Rose inhaled deeply, not yet ready to open her eyes as she tried to determine what had happened. She remembered coming to Lake Silencio at the request of Section 13, seeing Doctor Mattews and Swanic again. She remembered taking the atomic clock into the area and then…

Rose took another breath to calm down. Everything had come so fast that she couldn’t really remember anything, but her head felt stuffed with information that all disorganised, like walking into a messy office that you knew had what you needed, but you couldn’t find it. Her eyelids felt like they weighed a ton, but Rose forced them open with a sense of relief as her brown eyes met the Doctor’s. He grinned down at him, leaning over her and touching her cheek gently.

“Hello,” Rose greeted her voice soft and strained.

“Hello darling,” the Doctor whispered, leaning forward and kissing her forehead carefully. “How do you feel?”

“Overwhelmed and tired,” Rose answered honestly.

“But you know who I am?” the Doctor asked, his eyes suddenly becoming worried.

Smiling a tiny bit, Rose told him, “I believe it was Sarah Jane who said that one no is ever going to forget you.”
The Doctor’s shoulders visibly relaxed and he smiled warmly at her. “Good to have you back with us.”

“What happened?” Rose asked, she had a good idea but was hazy on the details.

“The Silver Lord connected you with different versions of yourself throughout this universe’s alternate realities,” the White Guardian explained as Rose turned her head to look over at him.

Jack was nearby, a relieved expression on his face. Rose smiled at him and he grinned back, seeming to take her smile as permission. He came over to join the Doctor in kneeling next to her. It was then that Rose realised that she was in a mobile medical unit, but the usual staff were absent. Probably driven out by the Guardians she decided.

“He planned to destroy all versions of you at once,” the White Guardian added. “I’m afraid that even though you can’t really remember any of it, you carry the memories and knowledge of your other selves now. You’ve been connected to the greater universe on a very rare level.”

There was a hint of something in his voice that worried Rose more than a little, but she nodded as calmly as she could, unwilling to start an argument with a Guardian at the present time.

“Be careful in trying to remember what you experienced,” the Black Guardian added darkly. “Human brains aren’t meant for that. Don’t poke at the knowledge.”

The Doctor squeezed her hand and Rose relaxed, nodding to the Black Guardian this time. She’d trust the Doctor on this one. Then in a flash of black and white light both the Guardians vanished and Rose sighed.

“So what now?” she asked with a soft sigh.

“Medical checkup in the TARDIS,” the Doctor said firmly. “For both of you,” he added glancing up at Jack. “Then we’ll take you back to London.”

“But what about the Silver Lord and the lake?”
“Both are gone,” Jack told her with a dark expression.

“Gone? How can the lake be gone?”

“Well, you see the space contained in the bubble was … erased,” the Doctor said carefully. “That was how the Silver Lord was going to destroy you and all incarnations of you.”

“But why?” Rose asked, forcing herself to sit up with a burst of adrenaline. “Why is he so fixated on me?” Rose saw Jack and the Doctor share a look that said volumes and frowned at them, grumbling, “Fine keep your secrets.”

“Timelines Rose,” the Doctor said gently, his green eyes pleading for her not to be mad.

“Let’s just say that you’re important,” Jack added carefully. “And he’s trying to make sure that you can never do what you’re capable of.”

“And as for erasing your other selves… well, he wanted to make sure that even if he stopped you that another Rose Tyler couldn’t be brought into this reality to take your place. Not that anyone ever could,” the Doctor assured her quickly.

Rose frowned slightly, a sense that she as missing something nagging at the back of her mind. There was an image of a beach that popped into her mind, but it wasn’t clear. Something seemed strange and out of place.

“Do you exist in other realities?” Rose asked the Doctor, leaning against him as exhaustion began to weigh more heavily on her.

“Well… no,” the Doctor answered a bit nervously. “Time Lords, the first Time Lord Rassilon, feared that our people would war with each other in other realities so using a major power source he locked Gallifrey and the Time Lords into existence in only one reality and universe. Prevented any other possibilities for Gallifreyans and set the course for what we’d be, forever. At least that’s what he thought.”

“That… doesn’t sound good,” Rose admitted her stomach turning.
“It’s not supposed to work that way, it’s one of the reasons why the Guardians didn’t try to interfere with the Time War. I guess on some level they wanted to be rid of us.” Then the Doctor made a little forced laugh. “Course I don’t like having them in the TARDIS either so we’ve all got some issues.”

Rose squeezed the Doctor’s hand, certain that there was more to the story, but content with what he’d told her for now. As she began to drift off, Rose felt herself being lifted into the Doctor’s arms and carried out of the medical unit. She heard Jack talking with Swanic and Matthews, but by the time they stepped into the warmth of the TARDIS Rose was already falling asleep.
Rose Tyler sipped at the slightly overly sweet red punch that her mother had put out for the minors attending their annual Christmas party. Her mother, of course, was drinking very alcoholic eggnog and urging her mate Gita Chandra to do the same. At the rate, they were going Rose calculated that the annual Congo line out into the street would be starting early. Gita’s husband Haresh was standing off to the side talking with his daughter Rani and Luke. Clyde had distanced himself from them a little, not surprising given that Haresh was the Head Teacher at their school, and was talking with Mickey. Judging from the smile on both their faces they were getting on rather well, Mickey’s time on Bannerman Road was usually focused on his Gran so he hadn’t spent much time with the neighbours.

Sarah Jane Smith and her husband Johnny Chesterton-Smith were chatting away with Toshiko Sato who was finally spending more time out of the office. Rose knew that Tosh wouldn’t be staying long before she headed out to see her mother for the holidays, but seeing the shy Asian woman interacting with more people made Rose optimistic about Tosh’s future. Her performance at UNIT since being freed from her cell had been outstanding and many officers no longer treated her with suspicion and of course, the Science Department looked after her as one of their own.

Malcolm was in the kitchen talking with Ian and Barbara Chesterton and if Rose knew Doctor Malcolm Taylor and his interest in the Doctor and the TARDIS, he was asking the Cambridge Professors and former companions of the Doctor all about their travels.

“Deep thoughts?” Rose jumped slightly and turned to see her mate Shareen smiling at her.

“Not really,” Rose admitted with a shrug. “Feels a bit odd being home for the holidays.”

“And you look like you’re bracing yourself,” Shareen observed, glancing her over. “Sonic pen in your hair and everything.”

It was true, despite being one of the hostesses, Rose had worn jeans. They were very dark and nice looking when teamed with the dark green jumper she was wearing and her braided hair was fancy enough, but the sonic pen was tucked into it gently. Shareen reached out and tapped the TARDIS key that hung from the longest chain around Rose’s neck alongside an old crystal pendant and biodamper ring.

“Well, Christmas lately… there was that thing with the brooch and the Guardians and last year the Silver Lord tried to kill me,” Rose reminded her.

“He just did that,” Shareen replied, her voice tightening as she swallowed thickly. “So you’re probably safe from him for a little bit at least.”
“Maybe,” Rose muttered darkly before she shook her head and glanced around. “Where’s Sharon?”

“She caught sight of some guy who was visiting his grandparents for the holidays. Pretty good looking I’ll admit, tall, dark hair and blue eyes.”

“We won’t see her for a while then,” Rose laughed.

“Not if she doesn’t strike out right away.”

“So how are classes?” Rose asked, “Have you gotten your marks yet?”

“I did very well on all my psychology courses,” Shareen answered proudly. “My professors are very pleased with me. I’ve already got several letters recommending me for further schooling after next year.”

“That’s great,” Rose said as she reached over and hugged Shareen. “I’m really proud of you.”

“Thanks and despite her quest to get a boyfriend, I happen to know that our lovely Sharon excelled in her courses this term too. And you?”

“Better than I expected given my distractions,” Rose said with a shrug. “Nothing you need to worry about at least, though Ian tried to give me a lecture that I could do better. It fell a bit flat when I reminded him of why I was too busy to fully apply myself.”

A half snort- half laugh escaped Shareen who shook her head and sipped at her plastic cup of eggnog. She glanced down at Rose’s punch with a chuckle and sighed fondly.

“Hi Rose,” Rani’s warm voice called and Rose turned to look at the pretty teenaged girl of Indian descent. Her long black hair was styled in a series of braids and Rose noticed that Clyde kept glancing over at her with interest. It was too cute really.

“Hello Rani,” Rose greeted with a smile. “Escaped your father I see.”


“So what are you up to? I haven’t seen you much.”

“Sarah Jane’s been letting me shadow her on one of her stories, not a major investigation piece, but it is still interesting. It’ll certainly help me get into school for journalism and get my foot in the door, knowing the great Sarah Jane Smith.”

“She does have quite the reputation,” Rose agreed, glancing at the woman in question who was now being interrogated by a wide-eyed Malcolm. Thankfully Sarah Jane didn’t seem to mind much.

“Actually I wanted to ask you something, you can say no of course if you don’t want to, but like mum says the odds go up when you ask.”

“Rani,” Rose cut in, recognising Rani was about to go into a rare ramble state. She largely took after her very well spoken and organised father, but there were moments when her mother shone
through brightly. “What is it?”

“I was wondering if you’d teach me some self-defense while you’re out of school now and in summer.”

“You aren’t having any problems are you?” Rose asked with a hint of alarm.

“No, nothing like that. I just think I’m old enough to not cause problems with what I know and I think I’d just feel better knowing something about defending myself. That’s all, I promise.”

“Well if it’s okay with your parents then I’ve got no problem with showing you a few basics,” Rose said carefully. She noted the distaste on Rani’s face at the requirement for their permission. “Rani, I’m sure they’ll agree, but take it from me that the fewer secrets you’ve got long term makes things easier. Anyway, in this neighbourhood, it would be hard to keep me teaching you a secret. Besides hiding bruising can be rough.”

The young teenager gave Rose a strange look, but slowly nodded with Shareen giggled behind her hand. Smirking, Rose raised her glass in a silent toast and took another sip of the overly sweet liquid. Rani shook her head at them, rolling her eyes dramatically before heading off to join up with Clyde.

“You are terrible sometimes,” Shareen scolded with a wide smile. “Really you are.”

“And sometimes I much worse than that,” Rose agreed with a slight shrug. “It just depends on what the universe throws at me.”

“Talking of which,” Shareen started to say before glancing around. “How are you doing since Lake Silencio.”

“I was okay then, I was okay when you asked last week and I’m okay now,” Rose assured her with a huff of impatience. “Really Shareen. I have weird dreams sometimes, but I really don’t remember anything that I experienced. The bubble is just a… blur of colours and lots of noise. Nothing was really clear enough to fix in my memory.”

Shareen frowned and shook her head. “I doubt that Rose, you may think that it didn’t affect you, but it did.”

“Is that your professional opinion Doctor Bell?”

“Yes it is, I may not be a doctor yet, but I know enough to know about the human brain that even if you didn’t fully process what you saw that you still saw it and that it is rattling around in your head.”

“Shareen, please don’t be an alarmist. I’m fine, really, I don’t feel any different. Just even more irritated at the Silver Lord.”

“Who is still out there,” Shareen reminded her sternly. “Be careful Rose, what’s in your head now still might be able to hurt you.”

“The Guardians didn’t seem alarmed and neither Jack nor the Doctor said anything.”

“Well the Guardians seem to have a different view about your safety and health than I do and the
Doctor and Jack have to worry about timelines, I don’t.”

Rose was about to respond when her phone beeped in her pocket. Pulling it out, Rose’s eyes widened at the text message from Spock which said: ‘Emergency alien intruders. Intentions unknown’.

“Trouble,” Rose informed Shareen, slipping the phone back into her pocket. With a quick glance, she found Sarah Jane and slipped over to the woman quickly.

“What is it?” Sarah Jane asked, her face becoming serious at Rose’s expression.

“Trouble at your house,” Rose muttered in a low voice, meeting Sarah Jane’s eyes. “Spock just reported alien intruders.

The older woman nodded and glanced over to where Luke, Clyde and Rani were talking and laughing together. Rose looked over at her mother who was already starting the Congo line with Gita and laughing cheerfully.

“Stay here and alert Malcolm and Tosh if we’re not back in twenty minutes,” Rose whispered to Shareen.

Her friend frowned in displeasure, but nodded and moved away from Rose, Sarah Jane and Johnny as they slipped out of the front door. It was a clear and chilly night, but Rose was too focused to let the cold distract her. Crossing the street with Sarah Jane, Rose pulled out the sonic pen and swiftly unlocked the front door.

Rose stepped into the house carefully, letting her foot gradually ease onto the hardwood floor. The house was mostly dark with only a single lamp on in the entry way and some blinking lights in Sarah Jane’s living room window. Moving forward, Rose gripped the sonic pen firmly in her left hand and kept her right hand readied to summon her sword. Upstairs she could hear movement, but then it suddenly erupted into crashes and laser blast. Lunging for the stairs, Rose abandoned being silent and heard the others rushing after her. The sounds were echoing down the stairs from the attic and Rose moved up the three flights faster than she’d ever managed before. The door was open and bright flashes of light made her slow.

There were three strange figures dressed in thick red robes with Santa masks covering their faces. Lasers from K-9 were shooting at them as the small robotic dog peeked around one of the brick corners of the attic. Spock was open with his screen flashing with information. Rose scanned it quickly as Spock shouted to K-9. The screen was showing the outline of the Santas with circuits and energy systems highlights. They weren’t alive then and that made this a lot easier.

Moving into the room, Rose called forth her sword and as one of the Santas began to turn towards her, she swung the sword and took off its head. Sparks flew as the robot jerked wildly and the other two Santas moved to face her. Another shot from K-9 hit one of them in the back making it spark and topple awkwardly the ground. Behind her, Rose could hear Sarah Jane and Johnny shouting at K-9 and Spock as she ducked to above the robot’s laser hand and slipped to its side. Its head spun first, making the creepy looking mask look at her just before Rose sliced off the head. Sucking in a deep breath, Rose glanced around for any other threats, noting the blast marks on the brick around Spock.

“What in the world was all this?” Sarah Jane demanded, stepping into the room, her eyes fixed on Spock.
“These robots arrived seven minutes ago, I alerted you three minutes later when I confirmed they had hostile intentions.”

“How did you confirm that?”

“They attempted to rip my crystalline body out of this array and shot at the dog.”

“Mister Spock,” Sarah Jane called as she stepped forward next to Rose. “Have you picked up anything unusual that these robots might be connected to?”

“Indeed, I was about to inform you that a vessel is rapidly approaching Earth. It entered the Solar System a few hours ago. I didn’t report it as they seemed to be just passing through, however they just changed their course after crossing paths with a probe.”

“Which probe?” Rose asked with a frown.

“The British Guinevere One that was about to land on Mars,” Spock answered bringing up a rotating image of the probe. “There is nothing remarkable about it, but contact with it seems to have encouraged the ship to come towards Earth.”

“Can you identify the ship?”

“It is a Sycorax war vessel, but my attempts at contact have not yet been successful to determine if it has Sycorax crew.” Spock brought up an image of the Sycorax who were mostly humanoid but had an exoskeleton covering part of its head creating what looked like a bone helmet with only parts of its flesh exposed.

Then her phone rang again and Rose pulled it out quickly. The UNIT HQ number was flashing on the screen.

“This is Tyler,” Rose greeted as she raised her phone to her ear, watching the ship’s approach on Spock’s screen.

“Tyler we need you to come in, sensors have detected-” Bridger Benton said, sounding very irritated.

“A giant spaceship currently travelling across our solar system,” Rose offered. “Spock’s identified it as a Sycorax war vessel, but we haven’t confirmed that they are in control of the ship.”

“And if it is?”

Rose glanced over the screen where Spock was presenting his information on the Sycorax as bullet points across the screen.

“Then we need to be careful, these are not friendly people. Very honourable and their culture puts a high value on the outcome of duels and agreements. But they’ve got a lot of warnings from the Shadow Proclamation for enslaving less advanced races. Apparently, the Durmino Empire recently liberated one of their slave planets.”

“Great,” Benton huffed on the other end of the phone. “So are you driving down or shall I send a car.”
“I’ll come down myself,” Rose offered. “See you in a bit.”

Hanging up the phone, Rose gave Sarah Jane an apologetic look and a small shrug.

“Sorry about this,” Rose told her gently. “I know it’s harsh to ask, but could you just let my Mum know that I’ve been called in and I’ll be home as soon as I can.”

“I will,” Sarah Jane promised, stepping forward to give Rose a quick hug. “Be safe.”

“You too, I’ll see you later,” Rose assured her with a wide smile. “Spock please keep an eye on this, if you get anything new please let me know.

“Understood.”

“Great, thanks.”

“And Rose,” Spock called as she headed for the door.

“Yes?”

“When this is over can we address a potential defence system for me. I don’t care much for relying on the dog.”
**The Christmas Invasion: The Tower of London**

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Seventeen: The Christmas Invasion: The Tower of London

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

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Swinging over to her house, Rose slipped upstairs to her room to grab her leather coat and shoulder bag. Malcolm nodded to her as she vanished up the stairs and Rose gave him a knowing look as he walked across the room to Tosh. She had no doubt that she’d be meeting up with them very soon at the Tower of London. It didn’t take Rose long to gather up her essentials, she’d already had her superphone, sonic pen and translator on her with her wallet in her back pocket. Snatching up her keys, Rose slung her bag across her body and headed out of the house through the kitchen door.

Rose was actually holding her breath as she walked her motorcycle away from the house and into the street. Behind her, Malcolm and Tosh were heading for the unmarked black car they’d driven over in. Straddling her bike, Rose pulled on her helmet and started it up, rushing down Bannerman Road.

It was a fair distance to the Tower of London, but Rose was able to swiftly move in and out of the Christmas Eve traffic even as she mentally berated people who still out shopping. It was a clear night and Rose was resigning herself to a rather brown Christmas unless she could convince the Doctor to do his snow trick again. The thought made her smile as she passed a limo and increased her speed.

Rose glanced over towards the Tower of London while she drove across Tower Bridge. A small shiver went up her spine at the sight of the building. While it housed the London headquarters of UNIT deep underground the main keep, Rose couldn’t help but remember the night she’d spent there with Queen Jane before Mary Tudor seized the Tower and took the young girl prisoner.

While Rose knew that Jane’s death had been a fixed point in time, the memory of the girl’s tearful farewell to her always made her heart ache and the Tower was a painful reminder. Forcing herself to focus, Rose navigated her way around through the streets surrounding the major tourist attraction to the small entrance hidden two streets away. Dumpsters half blocked her view of it, but there was a small guard building hidden in the shadows. Rose drove up and pulled off her helmet as she reached into her bag for her UNIT ID.

The guard nodded quickly to her as he stepped outside of the guard post, his UNIT uniform gleaming in the glow of the nearby streetlamp. He turned around and gestured to a second guard still inside the small building who moved inside. In front of Rose, a large metal door that filled the dead end part of the alley began to lift up.

“Thanks, guys,” Rose called, slipping her helmet back on and driving forward.

The door closed behind her in less than thirty seconds as she slowly drove down a gentle slope. It soon levelled out with another guard post coming into view. Two more men were here, standing on opposite sides of the small road with weapons. Rose repeated the process of removing her helmet
and showing her ID, this time turning around on the bike enough to stow her helmet in the back.

“Go to the right Miss Tyler,” one of the guards told her with a stern expression. “Your escort is waiting for you there.”

“Thank you,” Rose said with a nod to both the guards before she pulled forward and followed the instructions.

To the right, there was another slope, this one much steeper that led down to a small car park filled with military and black unmarked vehicles. A tall black man in a uniform that marked him as a Major was waiting near a large metal door that had a guard on either side of it. Her mobile phone rang and Rose quickly parked her motorcycle and waved for the captain to wait. She glanced at the caller ID and her heart jumped: it was Spock.

“Talk to me.”

“Rose, a newscast just revealed that the Sycorax captured the space probe and images of their faces were just broadcast around the globe.”

“Great,” Rose muttered. “Whole world in a panic, that’s never a good thing.”

“A cover story was just released that the signal was hacked as a student prank,” Spock offered.

“But they are still heading for Earth?”

“Yes so I’m afraid that the story will not hold up for long,” Spock agreed. “The dog and I have been able to confirm with the ship’s computer that it is a Sycorax war vessel with a full crew on board so they have the ability to wage war. I also finished analysing our robotic attackers.”

“And?”

“They are not connected to the Sycorax, rather I believe they are scavengers who stay near the ship in order to harvest what they can. Mostly harmless, but they may show up again before this is over.”

“Great, that pretty much confirms that I can’t catch a break on Christmas.” Rose groaned softly as she started walking towards the waiting men.

“Indeed, I will continue to scan and see if I can find anything more.”

“Good, but also prepare a message for the Shadow Proclamation. A level five planet is in danger from the Sycorax, make it anonymous. I also want you to send a message to the Durmino Empire and Otharan Council, make it from me. Advise them that the Sycorax have come to my planet and help might be needed.”

“Understood.”

“Thank you, Spock. Keep me informed of anything else you find.”

“Miss Tyler,” the Major greeted nervously as she hung up the phone. His jaw was slightly slack, but Rose figured he’s just overheard a very odd call. “Welcome, I am Major Blake. We’re ready for you inside.”
“Good evening Major,” Rose greeted with a respectful nod. “Lead on.”

He nodded and the large doors opened, allowing Rose into the main headquarters. It was mostly metal and stone wall with a lingering chill in the air, but soon enough Rose was in the main control room which was filled to the brim with people. Everyone was rushing around and on screen was a newscast with a grainy image of a Sycorax face.

Brigadier General Benton was standing at the top of the multi-tiered room full of computers, hands behind his back and a worried expression on his face. Rose almost smiled at the sight of Benton but held it back. He turned to face them as the Captain with Rose came to attention and saluted.

“Thorn,” Benton greeted relief clear on his face. “Sorry about your Christmas, but thank you for coming.”

“It was very kind of you to give me an excuse to escape my mum’s party before things got out of hand,” Rose said with a smile. “Although the police might not come this year; that will be breaking tradition.”

Benton smiled the tension in his shoulders easing; he gestured towards the screen and asked, “Do you know them?”

“We’ve never met,” Rose replied cheekily. “But they are the Sycorax, a warlike people who’ve gotten into a lot of trouble already for attacking or ransoming low technology planets.”

“How bad is this?”

“I’m not sure yet,” Rose informed him seriously. “It really depends on how they try to invade us, but I’ve already had messages sent out to the Shadow Proclamation and two of the alien governments who owe me some favours, just in case.”

“And the Doctor?”

“Haven’t called him yet,” Rose admitted, looking at the screen and not at Benton.

“Rose, there is nothing wrong with calling your boyfriend—”

“Please don’t use that word, it’s a bit juvenile for the Doctor,” Rose insisted, cutting him off. “But it is also just us. The Sycorax weren’t coming for us until they encountered that probe, we drew their attention. As a species, we need to work on taking care of ourselves a little sometimes.”

“I hate when you’re idealistic like this,” Benton grumbled. “But promise me—”

“If things look really bad and I can’t stop it, I’ll call him in a heartbeat,” Rose promised seriously. “But if he was really needed then the TARDIS would already be bringing him. She has a real talent for taking him where he needs to be.”

“Brigadier Benton,” a young woman called as she came closer to them. “The Prime Minister has arrived and Mister Llewellyn is waiting for you.”

Benton nodded and mentioned for Rose to follow him, he quickly led her to a smaller room tucked off the side of the main control room. Inside, Rose could see a pale balding man in a suit and none
other than Prime Minister Harriet Jones.

“I don’t suppose there’s any chance it was a hoax?” the man in the suit asked as they walked over.

“That would be nice. Then we could all go home,” Harriet said calmly, still not noticing them. “I don't suppose anyone's offered you a coffee?”

“No.”

“But, no, the transmission was genuine. And this seems to be a new species of alien. At least, not one we’ve encountered before,” Harriet informed the man as she reached over to the small table with a coffee maker and poured a cup of coffee for the man.

“You seem to be talking about aliens as a matter of fact.”


“Wow I wonder what they’d say to me trying to write one,” Rose said cheerfully to announce herself.

Harriet Jones spun to face her with widening eyes and then a huge smile appeared on the Prime Minister’s face. To Rose’s surprise, the older woman stepped forward and hugged her tightly.

“Rose, you precious thing, thank goodness you’re here.”

“Hello Harriet Jones,” Rose greeted warmly as the woman stepped back. “How are you?”

“Been very busy since the election,” Harriet informed her with a small smile. “But this is a bit much.”

“It’ll be okay,” Rose promised the Prime Minster with a gentle smile. “Despite what you might think these sorts of things happen a lot and remember what I said?”

“Yes I remember, focus and get through the crisis then you can have a breakdown, or at something along those lines.”

“Close enough,” Rose said before glancing towards Benton.

“Thorn this is Mister Daniel Llewellyn, he is the head of Guinevere One space probe project which was going to land on Mars tonight,” Benton said, stepping up next to Rose and nodding at the man in the suit. “Mister Llewellyn, this is Rose Tyler, code name Thorn. She’s one of the best in the world at this sort of thing.”

“I can confirm that,” Harriet Jones agreed with a wide smile.

“I’m flattered, but you should see my significant other in action someday,” Rose remarked but kept talking before Harriet could ask any questions. “Now, I’ve already had a message sent out to the Shadow Proclamation about these aliens, they’re called the Sycorax by the way. I’ve also sent the news of a potential invasion to two alien governments that owe me favours just in case.”

“Then you think they are hostile?” Harriet asked while Llewellyn’s eyes went wide behind her.
“The Sycorax have a nasty habit of enslaving low technology planets and using their resources, one of the reasons they have so much trouble with the Shadow Proclamation.” Seeing confusion on Harriet’s face, Rose paused and backtracked. “The Shadow Proclamation is a galactic agreement amongst many of the most advanced species. One of the rules is that low-tech planets have to be left alone, Earth is classified as a level five planet.”


“Exactly, now a lot of people don’t follow it and the Shadow Proclamation’s police force really sucks,” Rose growled. “But the Durmino Empire recently liberated on of their planets, one of the reasons I called them. According to my sources, the Sycorax were crossing our solar system, probably just a shortcut when they intercepted the probe and it drew their attention to Earth. Due to our status, this solar system is a good shortcut into Orthan territory.”

“Orthan… that sounds familiar,” Harriet said thoughtfully. “Didn’t they attack us recently?”

“No,” Rose answered darkly. “The Chancellor’s ship crashed and Torchwood captured and tortured him for information. The Orthans sent in forces to rescue him and since I had entered Torchwood to warn Hartman and protected the Chancellor, he agreed to spare Earth the consequences.”

“Hartman did what?” Harriet asked with wide startled eyes.

“How about once this is over Harriet, we sit down and have a talk about the Torchwood I’ve had to interact with. If you and the Queen are willing, I’d say some restraints are in order before Hartman starts a war with a much more powerful alien government.”

The Prime Minister didn’t have a chance to respond as a man came rushing to the doorway and gasped, “They are sending a message!”

They all left the small room and returned to the main control room where the image of the Sycorax on the screen was speaking.

“I'm getting demands from Washington, ma'am. The President's insisting that he take control of the situation,” one of the UNIT staff, a man named Blake according to his uniform, told Harriet.

“You can tell the President, and please use these exact words, he's not my boss, and he's certainly not turning this into a war,” Harriet replied sharply making Rose smile. “What have we got on what he is saying?”

“Pathetic people of this pitiful rock,” Rose called out, getting everyone’s attention. “You belong to us now. We own you and all that you are. We now possess your land, your minerals, your precious stones. You will surrender or they will die. Sycorax strong, Sycorax mighty, Sycorax rock!”

“They will die? Not you will die, they will die? Who's they?” Llewellyn asked nervously before he looked at Rose. “How did you know what they said?”

“Rose has one of the translators, hers was actually a personal gift from the Durmino Princess,” Benton explained with a smirk and a pointed glance towards Harriet.

“Send them a reply,” Harriet said sternly. “Tell them, this is a day of peace on planet Earth. Tell them, we extend that peace to the Sycorax. And then tell them, this planet is armed and we do not
“Oh that’s not the way to go about this,” Rose remarked with a shake of her head. “This is a war society, very patriarchal and very hit hands against their chests.”

“They got the message. Here comes the response,” a pretty blonde woman called out from her computer.

The Sycorax leader on the screen held out his hand, making Rose frown as blue energy danced over his bony hands.

“What was that? Was that a reply?” Harriet demanded, looking around.

“I don’t know. It looked like some sort of energy, or static?” Harriet’s assistant said.

“Almost like someone casting a spell,” Llewellyn remarked with a frown and Rose nodded her agreement, thinking back to what Spock had said about the aliens.

A flash of blue energy appeared in the corner of Rose’s eye and she turned to see sparks of blue falling over the head of the blonde woman. She began to stand up as Llewellyn said something else. Rose noticed two more women and another man in the room begin to rise from their seats as the blue energy danced over their heads. Turning, Rose’s eyes widened as she saw Benton stiffen and the blue energy spark over his head.

“What the hell? It’s the light. It’s the same light, Sally, what’re you doing? Sally?” Llewellyn called to the blonde woman, trying to grab her.

The people all moved slowly, their eyes glazed over and expressions vacant, towards the doorway. Rose moved over to Benton, calling his name and looking for any sign of a reaction from him, but there was nothing.

“Oh, leave her. You’ll hurt her,” Harriet shouted.

“Let them pass!” Major Blake called to the guards, eyeing Benton with worry.

“Where are they going?” Llewellyn asked.

It turned that they were going to the roof, as Rose, Blake and Harriet followed the people through the corridors of the Tower, they were joined by others. All of them seemed to be in a trance and by the time they reached the roof, Harriet had been informed that it was happening all over the world.

Rose’s phone rang and she pulled it out quickly. “Spock, talk to me.”

“The Sycorax are using a blood control field,” Spock informed her. “I believe it is geared to A positive blood based on Johnny being on the roof.”


“Yes, people are going to the top of tall structures, but they are stopping. No one is jumping.”

Rose looked over to where the UNIT staff were perched on the edge of the Tower roof. She turned
to Llewellyn quickly.

“Llewellyn, was there blood on the probe?”

“Uh, yes,” Llewellyn replied in confusion. “A few drops of A positive blood, a sample of our DNA.”

“Great,” Rose sighed as she turned and headed back into the building. “Spock how strong is this blood control?” she demanded.

“Not very,” Spock informed Rose quickly. “It is such a broad control that it cannot be refined enough to an individual to overcome their subconscious instincts, you know how strong those can be.”

Rose shivered at the memory of being under another’s control, but felt a surge of relief. “So none of them will actually jump?”

“No, this control is not powerful. I suspect if ordered to jump the control will break under the surge of survival instinct.” She was back in the main room and looking up at the screen where the Sycorax leader was laughing. “Good Spock, I’ll take it from here. Tell Sarah Jane to stay calm, Johnny will be fine.”

“Surrender or they will die,” the Sycorax shouted to the probe.

Rose sat down at one of the computers for a moment, checking on the location of the ship as it entered the upper atmosphere. It wasn’t in view of Earth yet except by telescope, but she was going to have to hope that it was close enough for more direct contact. A rush of voices behind her told Rose that the others had returned from the roof.

“Rose, what is happening?”

Pulling out her sonic pen, Rose stood up from the seat. She glanced at the image of the Sycorax leader on the screen. Behind her, Harriet Jones caught sight of the sonic pen and asked, “Rose, what are you doing?” Smirking, Rose turned on the sonic pen.

“Ringing the doorbell.”
The Christmas Invasion: Champion

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Eighteen: The Christmas Invasion: Champion

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Pulling out her sonic pen, Rose stood up from the seat. She glanced at the image of the Sycorax leader on the screen. Behind her, Harriet Jones caught sight of the sonic pen and asked, “Rose, what are you doing?” Smirking, Rose turned on the sonic pen.

“Ringing the doorbell.”

There was a whirl of her sonic pen as questions erupted from behind Rose, but she kept her eyes on the screen. She could hear Major Blake trying to calm down Harriet Jones who was clearly worried. In other circumstances, Rose would have smiled at the older woman’s concern, but Harriet had seen what Rose was capable of and she really should know better. A moment later, the Sycorax leader spun away from the probe and stopped his threats, shouting to someone in the distance. She was able to get a clearer look at the backdrop behind the alien, but it looked rocky and Rose could see almost no instrumentation or even things that looked mechanical to her. Rose smirked, holding back a laugh as the Sycorax leader shouted a transport order. A moment later, her skin tingled and Rose felt the world shift, but only for a tiny moment.

The teleportation shift was one of the most seamless that Rose had ever experienced. There was the aura of blue light around her and she could see the UNIT HQ command room flicker out of sight before her new surrounding came into view. Doing her best to look calm and collected, Rose brushed a strand of loose blonde hair from her eyes and tucked it behind her ear.

It was like an arena, Rose realised with a quick glance around. She and the others were in the centre of a large sandy pit with a rocky wall rising up around them in a circle. High above their heads were more Sycorax who were watching and shouting down to the raised platform where Rose could see the probe and some strange looking controls. Again, nothing here screamed space faring alien race to her, it was the opposite of almost everything else she had ever seen before and Rose made a mental note to remember how deceiving some things could be.

The leader who had been the one communicating with Earth via the probe and spouting the threats turned back to face them quickly. He made an angry gesture at another Sycorax still standing near the platform. With sharp threatening movement, the Leader stalked towards them and began to pull off his helmet.

“It’s a helmet. They might be like us,” Llewellyn said in a low voice behind Rose, eagerness and relief in his voice. But a moment later when the flatter, but still very boney structure of the Sycorax’s head was exposed, he added, “Or not.”

The alien looked like the picture that Spock had shown her and Rose made a quick inventory of where the bone plates protected the body. It was difficult to determine how far the exoskeleton ran.
with the heavy red robes that the Sycorax wore blocking her view. A sword glinted at his side and decorations of smaller bones hung from his neck and across his body like a sash. He looked every inch a soldier from a warrior race and Rose felt a tinge of worry in her chest. The likely hood of a peaceful end to this invasion suddenly seemed impossible.

“You will surrender, or I will release the final curse and your people will jump,” Rose heard the Leader say over the jeering of the Sycorax in the galleries above them. She heard the other’s moving behind her and locked eyes with the Sycorax Leader.

“If I can speak,” Llewellyn started to ask, stepping closer to the Leader.

“No,” Rose said sharply, not looking away from the Leader. “Be silent, all of you.”

“The yellow girl, she has the sonic technology,” the Leader announced. “Therefore, she speaks for your planet.”

“But Rose-”

“Hush Harriet,” Rose snapped quickly as the Leader drew back from them.

Refusing to be intimidated or show any hesitation, Rose stepped forward with a slightly raised chin. “I seek an audience with the Sycorax under peaceful contract. According to convention 15 of the Shadow Proclamation,” Rose called out respectfully, straining to remember the proper formal protocol laid down by the Shadow Proclamation.

There was a grumbling sound from the mouth of the Sycorax Leader and whispers all around them, but he nodded. “Your request is heard and granted,” the Leader replied, sounding angry.

Rose didn’t have to guess why; she wasn’t supposed to know this stuff. It had to already be sinking in that Earth wasn’t as primitive and unconnected as they’d probably assumed. Served them right for not keeping up on the region’s gossip.

“Thank you. That I might have permission to approach.”

“Granted.”

Rose nodded and walked forward, gesturing to the others to stay put. She heard Harriet make a small sound of worry but pushed down the instinct to reassure her. Right now, her focus needed to stay on the Sycorax Leader.

“Am I addressing the Leader of this war band?” Rose questioned, even though she was confident in the answer.

“You are, speak,” the Sycorax replied with a snarl.

“Thank you. Now through the use of blood control, you are staging an invasion of a level five planet which has protected status under the laws of the Shadow Proclamation. This is a violation of six, no seven, galactic laws. I demand that you withdraw your forces and cease hostile intentions.”

“You are but a child,” the Leader hissed as jeering could be heard above Rose. “Are you the best this world can offer up as a Champion?”
“No, I’m not the best,” Rose replied with a raised eyebrow. “But I’m more than enough for you.”

She stalked past the Leader who was stunned by her remark and walked up onto the platform. A Sycorax cracked his whip at Rose who fell back on her heels to avoid it. When the tip hit the ground, Rose stepped on it, pushing all her weight onto keeping it in place. Before the Sycorax could attack her, Rose grabbed the whip and pulled it sharply out of the Sycorax’s hands.

“Really, is this what the warrior honour of the Sycorax is worth?” She asked as she dropped the whip and rubbed her foot down on it, pushing it into the dirt. “Attacking during a parlay?”

“Who are you?” the Leader demanded.

“Rose Tyler,” she replied as she skipped up onto the platform and eyed the controls she found there. “You might have heard of me from the Durmino Empire, the Orthans, the Tervtians, the Bane, the Gorgons, or the Osirians, no wait I killed the last of them so never mind them.”

Even as she spoke, Rose was eying the device. She could see a small plate holding thick red liquid that was easy to identify as blood. Above it was a big red button, wasn’t hard to guess what that was for either.

“Your name is meaningless,” the Leader growled at her. “We are the Sycorax, we stride the darkness. Surrender now or we kill them.”

“And if I do surrender?” Rose asked calmly, inching towards the button.

“Half will be sold into slavery.”

“At least until the Durmino Empire arrives and frees them, sending you running,” Rose added. She enjoyed the rage that flashed over the Sycorax’s face. It was really tempting to taunt him with news that a message had already been sent, but that wasn’t the goal right now. “And here is the blood control,” Rose observed, stepping up to it and reaching out her hand. “Complete with a big red button. Let’s push it.”

Rose pressed the button even while Harriet shouted no in a panicked voice. There was a soft rumbling noise through the ship and the button dimmed.

“And that’s that,” Rose observed as she turned back to the Leader. “No more hostages so how are you going to force a surrender now?”

“Rose, what did you do?” Harriet asked with wide eyes.

“Everyone is fine,” Rose told her gently, looking over at her calmly. “Blood control creates a low-level control field, but it isn’t strong enough to overcome a human’s subconscious. No one jumped; their survival instincts kicked in and threw off the blood control.”

“Blood control was just one form of conquest. I can summon the armada and take this world by force,” the Leader shouted.

“You could I suppose, but then again I’ve already alerted the Shadow Proclamation, the Durmino Empire and the Orthan Council of your little invasion. Would your armada even get here intact or would the Durminos use it as an excuse to finally be rid of your little world pillaging culture? You lot aren’t strong or powerful, you’re just bullies until your betters come along and scare you off.”
“You insult me under parlay!”

“You attacked me under parlay, trust me, you’re definitely ruder than I am,” Rose countered.

“You insult my honour, the honour of my people!”

“Again, you’re doing a better job of that than I ever could,” Rose retorted with a glowering look.  “Leave my planet.”

“You claim this planet, you stand as its champion and you insult us!” the Leader shouted, reaching over and grabbing a sword from one of the guards. “I claim combat for the planet. You stand as this world’s champion.”

Rose caught the sword carefully, bending her knees to cope with the sudden weight. It was well balanced but would require both of her hands. She considered summoning her own sword but decided it was a better surprise weapon in case of trouble.

“For the planet then, I win and you leave us in peace to never return.”

“If victorious, you may choose your champion command,” the Leader growled in agreement.

Rose eased into a combat stance, internally wondering just how binding such an agreement would be. She had enough faith in Spock to know that the messages got through and hoped that Princess Alenica and Councilor Markin wouldn’t let her down. The galleries were bursting with noise: shouting and jeering that Rose did her best to ignore. The Leader lunged forward, swinging the heavy sword toward her head.

“Look out,” Major Blake shouted just before Rose jumped to the right to avoid the sword crashing down. It hit the stone with a sharp ring and Rose backed away, putting distance between her and the Sycorax.

She swung back to the Leader, bringing up the sword with both hands in time to block another strike. He was a good swordsman, he had excellent control over the blade, she had to give him that. They danced around each other, the swords clashing together with Rose on the defensive and her opponent searching for an opening. With the weight of the sword, she wasn’t as fast as usual and against such a strong opponent that was a problem.

Rose quickly dropped to avoid another swing of the sword. The Leader growled and threw all his strength behind it and Rose smirked. He was becoming clumsy. As the Leader stumbled from the force of his swing, Rose jumped up and kicked him in the back, sending him falling to the ground. Stepping back, Rose sucked in a deep breath and planted her feet on the ground.

He was back on his feet in an instant, urging on by the jeering now being directed at him from the galleries. Rose lashed forward with the blade, not giving him a chance to steady himself. The blade sliced through his robes slid off a plate of bone and slashed into flesh. A howl of rage and pain erupted from the Leader as Rose pulled the sword back sharply, noting the maroon blood on her blade.

Then he moved, moving at her, the Leader swung his blade in a seemingly random pattern. Rose ducked and backed away to avoid the rage-fueled attack. Bringing up her sword, Rose was able to parry only of the blows, each one making the sword vibrate in her hands. The third blow sent the
sword crashing from her hand to the ground. A deafening cheer came from the galleries and the Leader raised his blade to deliver a final blow.

Moving quickly, Rose pushed off the jagged rocks behind her that the Leader had backed her up against. With one movement, she slipped under the falling sword and under the Leader’s arm, coming out behind him. The Leader’s sword collided with the rocks, sending spark flying into the sand as Rose took a deep breath and tuned out the horrified shouting from her fellow humans.

Dropping her hand, Rose watched the Leader spin back towards her, snarling. Her bracelet shimmered for a moment, growing out over her palm in a split second and forming her golden sword. The Leader stepped back and growled.

“Witchcraft,” the Leader snarled.

“Star Knight,” Rose corrected, lashing forward with the sword.

The Leader barely avoided the blow to the torso, Rose’s sword slicing into his arm and forcing a howl of pain from him. Pulling back her sword, Rose eased into a defensive position, her sword raised in front of her.

“Much better,” she remarked calmly. “I hate the whole men are stronger than women thing, but I have to admit that your swords are bloody heavy.”

Without the weight of the heavy sword, Rose easily avoided the Leader’s heavy blows, dancing around him with quick movements. Her own blade easily stood up to the hefty Sycorax design each time that she had to parry his attacked or he parried hers. With sharp slices, Rose had begun slicing through the heavy armoured robe that the Leader wore and maroon blood was seeping out of several shallow wounds. None of the blows were fatal, but he had yet to land a hit.

Then with a roar, the Leader swing over his head at her, bringing his blade down towards her head. Rose jumped to the right, avoiding the blade and bringing her own down on his hand. She heard a strange scraping sound for a moment as her sword hit the bone plating of the Leader’s left hand. There was a howl of pain as her sword sliced clean through the hand, followed by the dull thump of the appendage hitting the sand.

The Leader fell to his knees, his sword forgotten in the sand as he clutched the bloody stub against his robes with his remaining hand. Stepping forward, Rose placed the tip of her sword against the Leader’s neck.

“You are defeated,” Rose said loudly, her voice echoing dramatically through the cavern. “Are you prepared to take my command?”

“I am,” the Leader agreed his voice tight and low.

“You and yours will leave this planet and never return,” Rose commanded.

“Agreed,” the Leader hissed.

Rose lowered her blade, a soft sigh escaping her as she looked up at the galleries full of grumbling Sycorax. She turned to look over to where the party of humans were all beaming with a wide smile of relief and gave a small smile to Harriet. Then she heard the Leader start to rise from the sand followed by a soft hiss of metal being dragged against the sand.
“Look out!” Harriet shouted.

Rose spun on her heel, bringing her own sword up to protect herself. Her blade flashed in the light of the cavern, glints of gold flashing in the air as she swung the sword at the Leader’s neck and shifted to avoid the thrust aimed at her stomach. There was a moment of resistance and Rose felt her stomach quiver as the blade passed through the heavy bone plating. Despite the Gorgon and Apep, she’d never get used to beheading. A moment later the Leader’s head fell into the sand, rolling over near his hand and Rose stepped back to give the body room to fall.

“Is this the honour of a Sycorax warrior?” Rose shouted accusingly to those watering in the galleries. “For if it is then be warned that I will be vigilant. By my rights as the victorious champion, I give this command: I forbid you to scavenge here for the rest of time. When you speak of this world when you speak of its riches, its potential and its life you are commanded to also say that it is protected.” Rose looked up and around at the galleries filled with warriors watching her. “Remember my name Sycorax, for no matter where or when you are, should you ever violate this champion’s command I will find you and you will know my wrath.”

There was a look of anger, resignation and Rose fancied a touch of awe on the faces of the Sycorax just before the teleport beam enveloped her and the others.
Rose tensed up as the teleport beams enveloped her, but tried not to show any worry. A small voice in her head was wondering if the Sycorax were going to beam them into an active volcano or something, but a moment later they materialised in the UNIT HQ control room and Benton was moving towards them with wide eyes.

“Prime Minister,” he greeted Harriet with a nod even as his eyes slid over to Rose.

“We’ll all fine,” Rose assured him with a nod. “No injuries and no problems.”

“Sir!” a voice called from down at the computers. “The Sycorax ship is accelerating away from us, they’re leaving!”

A cheer rang out through the room and Rose smiled in relief, feeling a weight vanish from her chest. She looked over to Harriet who was watching the screen, now showing their solar system and the Sycorax position, with a look of trepidation.

“Rose,” Harriet called, looking over at her. “Are there more out there?”

“Lots,” Rose answered with a small smile, stepping over to Harriet. “Some good, some bad and some ugly,” she chuckled at her own little joke, but Harriet did not. “They’re not so different from us you know; they have cultures, languages, arts, music, families, children, education, values and history. Some like the Orthans have been around so long that they’ve advanced to a benevolent peacekeeper status while some are still like the Sycorax, scavengers who invade and grab what they can. Not so much unlike our own Vikings.”

“Will more invade?”

“Certainly,” Rose answered honestly. “But Harriet invasions have been happening since long before either of us were born and will be happening long after we’re gone. We’re a planet that sits metaphysically in an important spot and that draws things to us. Plus we keep sending our probes and signals, drawing attention to ourselves.”

“Ma’am,” her aide said in a low voice that Rose could barely hear. “Torchwood is reporting that they are ready to fire and caution that the ship will be out of range in less than sixty seconds.”

“Don’t Harriet,” Rose cautioned with a stern look at the Prime Minister.

“You said it yourself Rose, there will be more invasions.”
“And we’ll stop them when the time comes like we’ve stopped the others and we stopped this one.”

“What happens where you’re not around anymore?”

“I’m human Harriet, there is no reason why another human can’t learn what I know and be just as good at defending the world. Have some faith in your own species.” Rose glanced towards the screen at the Sycorax position. “They are leaving Harriet, they have been defeated, but you shoot them down now and suddenly we’re the bad guys. We’re the ones who fired on a retreating force under a peace order. We’re the one who will be creating the widows and orphaned children who will seek revenge in the future. We’re the ones who look like savage and faithless creatures to whatever is watching. And I promise you, there are species watching, wanting to see just sort of species the human race is. Better make sure you give them a good impression.”

“Showing strength-”

“Whatever Hartman’s got isn’t strength Harriet, it’s something she stole from crashed vessel like a vulture. And shooting someone in the back isn’t strength, it’s cowardice. It’s honorless, it’s warlike and vengeful. And the galaxy will remember it, they won’t remember your name or Hartman’s or that it was one country that fired. They’ll remember that as the human race.”

“Ma’am, Torchwood needs your answer,” her aide probed in a soft voice.

Rose was in a staring contest with Harriet who suddenly sighed, her shoulders slumping slightly. “Tell them to stand down,” she said softly before looking at Rose. “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

“I’ve met more aliens then you Harriet, I can tell you know that the ones you want to like us would approve.”

Harriet turned to look at Rose, a disquieting look on her face. Over the years, Rose had become used to the looks of confusion, awe, surprise, doubt and occasionally fear, but this expression was quite different. It was... more like how Rose imagined people looked at the Doctor. It was difficult on to shift uneasily, but Rose gave Harriet a small approving smile and held the gaze far longer than was normal. Then Harriet nodded, her shoulders easing slightly and a sigh escaped her as she turned to look back at the viewing screen.

Rose’s phone thrummed and she pulled it out with a smile. “Hello?” she answered in a soft voice, taking a step back from Harriet.

“The ship is leaving our solar system,” Spock informed Rose calmly. “Johnny is just fine and my communication scan reveals there were no jumpers. There is a bit of a panic, but the United Nations is already working on a cover story.” Rose heard a chime in the background. “Rose, a Durmino vessel is entering the solar system. I expect UNIT will pick it up very soon.”

“Thank you, Spock,” Rose told him gratefully. “You were a huge help in this. Thanks.”

“You are welcome Rose,” Spock replied, sounding very pleased with himself. “I will inform Sarah Jane that you are alright.”

“Any idea how my mum is?”
“Sarah Jane mentioned that much of the neighbourhood is still at Jackie’s recovering from the shock.”

“Well… Mum does make good tea,” Rose agreed before sighing. “I’m sure my absence has been noted, thanks anyway.”

“Of course, if you require anything further, just call.”

“Another ship just entered the solar system!” Someone shouted in alarm. “It’s huge.”

“We’re receiving a message,” another person called, “Visual and audio.”

“Put it on screen,” Benton shouted, standing at attention with a stern look on his face.

“That’s my cue to go,” Rose told Spock before hanging up the phone and moving back to Harriet’s side.

The screen flickered for a moment before the image of a large white bridge came into view and front and centre to the visual connection was Princess Alenica. Next to her, Rose heard Harriet gasp at the sight of the alien. Like all Durminos, Alenica had very fine and delicate features with pale skin that had a bluish tint to it. She had large wide blue eyes and deer-like ears that were poking out of her pile of elegantly styled long black braids. Rose couldn’t help but find those ears a little adorable in a strange way.

“This is Princess Alenica of the Durmino Empire calling planet Earth. We received a message that your planet was being threatened by a Sycorax war and enslavement vessel. Our communications with the Sycorax indicate they are withdrawing, we seek confirmation that they have taken no slaves or hostile actions against you.”

“Hello Your Highness,” Rose called as she stepped up next to Benton with a smile, giving the princess a small bow. “I welcome you back to my star system.”

Alenica’s thin blue lips curved into a smile of her own. “Greeting Star Knight Rose Tyler, how do you fare?”

“I’m fine Princess Alenica,” Rose replied warmly. “Thank you for responding so quickly, but thankfully the Sycorax threat has been defeated in a champion contest and the order was that they leave and never return.”

“I wonder who Earth’s champion was?” Alenica asked with a laugh and a knowing look. “Well done Rose. I am sure that this will reinforce your planets reputation and stay threats in the future.”

“Thank you, Your Highness,” Rose replied. “May I present Bridger General Benton, the head of UNIT forces in my country and Prime Minister Harriet Jones, the head of my country’s government.”

“Do you believe they will honour this agreement?” Harriet asked urgently, moving closer to Rose and Benton.

“They will,” Alenica answered calmly. “We just picked up a message from the ship to their home world for the agreement to be added to their central computer system shared by all their armada. Such agreements are laws in the eyes of the Sycorax once sent to the Sycorax High Command,”
she explained and Rose could see the wheels spinning in Harriet’s mind, realising that the agreement would have been null if the Sycorax hadn’t had time to send the message. “To be honest, their honouring such agreements is one of the only reasons that they haven’t faced more serious consequences for their warlike actions. That and we have the Sontarans to keep an eye on,” Alenica added casually.

“Sontarans?” Harriet repeated weakly.

“I will send a message to the Orthans Council on your behalf,” Alenica continued. “Markin has been preparing his fleet. I believe he may be disappointed to not yet have a chance to repay his life debt to you Rose.”

“He repaid that debt in my eyes when he did not seek retribution against my planet,” Rose said honestly which made Alenica smile.

“Your success today merits celebration,” Alenica said cheerfully. “If you have no objections then perhaps you will allow me to grant you a gift, to celebrate of your skill and honour in dealing with the Sycorax.”

“Respectfully Your Highness,” Benton cut in with a polite nod. “It would depend on the nature of the gift.”

“Have the translators I gave you been of use?”

“They have been of great use Your Highness, many of our leaders and commanders wore them today in order to understand and communicate with the Sycorax.”

“Have you been able to replicate them?”

“Only to a limited extent,” Benton replied carefully, a spark of excitement in his eyes. “But not yet to the high efficiency of your own design.”

“Then perhaps a gift of ten- no twenty translators to your planet, so that your leaders may be well served when they next need to parley.”

“We would be honoured by such a gift,” Benton replied and Rose glanced over to see Harriet still staring at Alenica with a pensive look on her face.

“Then you shall have them Brigadier General Benton,” Alenica said dramatically, gesturing to someone off screen.

A moment later a transport beam shimmered in front of them and a large metal box appeared. Rose bent down and picked up the box, turning it towards Benton and opening it.

“Thank you, Your Highness,” Benton said respectfully.

“You are welcome,” Alenica replied with a smile. “I shall leave you then; my ship will escort the Sycorax vessel to where a Shadow Proclamation vessel is waiting to question them. You need not worry about this any further. Farewell.”

The transmission cut off and Rose had to fight to keep herself from smirking. It was difficult as she and Benton shared a look and Benton took the box from her and handed it to Captain Blake. Harriet
reached up behind her ear and carefully took off the translator, studying it in her hand.

“So they gave these to us?”

“Yeah,” Rose agreed with a nod. “As thanks when we helped them prevent a war with us and exposed a conspiracy in their own ranks. It saved the Princess’ life which is one of the reasons she sort of sees Earth as a pet project I suppose.”

“To be exact, Rose saved her life and prevented the war,” Benton told Harriet. “Hence why she has a personal translator. The Princess was rather clear on that.”

“It would seem that I still have a great deal to learn about aliens,” Harriet said in a dull voice, her discomfort obvious.

“So do I and I’ve been dealing with them for decades,” Benton said kindly, his voice warm and reassuring, making Rose smile. “But Rose honestly nailed it. They’re just like us, just with different looking bodies. Some are good, some are bad, but most are like us: a bit of both.”

Rose smiled at Benton until a yawn escaped her, forcing her to cover her mouth. She shook her head in an attempt to shake off the fatigue trying to weigh her down.

“Well Prime Minister, Brigadier if there is nothing else, I’m going to head for home and salvage my Christmas.”

“Of course,” Harriet said with a sharp nod. “Thank you, Rose.”

“You’re welcome,” Rose told her with a soft smile. “And I’m in London for a bit longer after the holiday if you want to talk about the Durminos and anything else you may have questions about.”

“I’ll review as much of the files as I can and give you call,” Harriet promised. “Happy Christmas.”

“I’m going to need you to come in again,” Benton said with an apologetic shrug. “There’s reports and paperwork that have to done. I can only push it back a few days before Geneva gets restless.”

“Understandable,” Rose assured him. “Thank you for not insisting we do it now. My Mum still isn’t too happy with this alien thing and I’d like to be home for Christmas.”

“You did good, now go and rest,” Benton replied with a small smile.

“Happy Christmas to you both,” Rose answered with a wide smile of her own, glancing between Harriet and Benton.

“Happy Christmas Rose,” Benton replied. “And if you see your ‘significant other’ give him my best.”

As Rose turned to walk away and head out, she heard Harriet ask about her significant other. Then Benton laughed and answered with, “Do you know what a Code Nine is?”

“The Doctor, you can’t be serious,” she heard Harriet scoff. “I have a hard time believing he’s real as it is.”
“Oh I’m very serious,” Benton answered and Rose had to fight down the urge to stay and listen to this little conversation. Someday when Harriet met the Doctor things would be very interesting, she just hoped that she was there to laugh.
Lights were still on throughout Bannerman Road as Rose pulled onto the street. It was past midnight now, but Rose imagined the shock and fear of seeing loved ones climb up on the roof was going to make it hard to sleep. Across the globe, people were sure to be having difficult days as the brief events became fixed in memory.

She’d left the Tower before any attempts at a cover-up had started, but a part of her wondered if this was finally it. Would humanity finally start to accept the idea of aliens? Of course, she admitted to herself as she pulled up into her drive, the only alien that had been seen was the brief televised feed from the probe. The only part of this mess that the average person had experienced was a third of everyone around them going to the roof. Rose shuddered as she climbed off her bike and put away her helmet. She’d done her best to ignore the lingering hint of fear that witnessing Benton and others walk, seemingly to their deaths had caused. It brought back too many memories of being the Silver Lord’s puppet.

“Rose?” her mum’s voice called from the doorway and Rose tensed up. She’d not really been expecting her Mum to be asleep, but she’d hoped.

“I’ll be in in a moment,” Rose called back, hoping that her mum wouldn’t try to have this conversation outside.

Taking a deep breath, Rose walked her motorcycle to the small sheltered area just off the main car park. She lingered for a moment but quietly told herself not to be a coward. Rose squared her shoulders and headed inside the house. Things were messy: plastic glasses scattered over the entry wall table, some unfamiliar scarves and hats still hanging on the hooks. Rose stepped into the living room and blinked in mild surprise when she found Sarah Jane, Johnny, Luke, Ian and Barbara sitting with her Mum.

“Rose,” Sarah Jane breathed with a look of relief. “You alright?”

“I’m fine,” Rose assured her with a smile. “The aliens have left our solar system and will be facing penalties from the Shadow Proclamation.” She looked at Johnny and asked, “How are you?”

“A bit shaken,” Johnny admitted as his mother reached over and touched his shoulder. “But I really don’t remember anything about it. My sense of self just sort of … shut off.”
Rose nodded in understanding, swallowing thickly as Johnny gave her a small sympathetic smile.

“Well, it’s time for us to be going home,” Sarah Jane said with a forced smile. “We just didn’t want Jackie waiting up alone.”

“Thank you,” Rose replied with a nod to Sarah Jane. “Happy Christmas.”

Being both polite and trying to gather her thoughts for the conversation that Rose knew was coming, she saw the Chesterton-Smith family to the door. A round of hugs and a soft whisper from Sarah Jane that it would all be alright, but she was also always welcome with her made Rose relax slightly. She waved as the family all bundled themselves up for the quick jog across the street. Rose lingered by the doorway, watching through the window as they walked across the street and vanished into Sarah Jane’s house.

“I’m sorry I missed the party,” Rose told her mother as she walked back into the living room. “But at least no one got hurt this time.”

“You stopped it?” Jackie asked. “It was you, directly.”

“Yeah, but no one would have jumped,” Rose promised her mother. “It was a scare tactic, there is a limit to what a person can be made to do against their will.”

“Like that… alien did to you?”

“The Silver Lord, what he used was specifically designed for my brain patterns,” Rose informed her mother carefully. “But even then, my brain was still fighting back.” Rose shook her head. “Anyway, this wasn’t so bad.”

“But you’re alright?” Jackie asked in a soft voice, her eyes moving over Rose and checking her for injuries.

“I’m fine Mum,” Rose assured her quickly, stepping closer to her and taking her hands. “Really, it wasn’t fun, but it really wasn’t a problem. I defeated their leader and then as they were retreating an ally of mine arrived to make sure that we were safe.”

“One ally… No don’t, I probably don’t want to know,” Jackie said, pulling her hands away from Rose and walking back into the living room. She paid no attention to the fallen streamers and remains of Christmas crackers scattered about as she sat down on the sofa. “I wish that I could stop you sometimes,” he mother confessed.

“I know,” Rose admitted, walking across the room to join her mother. She sat down next to Jackie, neither of them touching and sighed softly. “But Mum, this life has given me great things too. The life we have now, that’s because I made friends with an alien and her father left me money. My friends, well most of my friends, I’ve met because of our shared experiences. They are amazing, wonderful people and I love talking with them and travelling to see them.”

“Why can’t you just settle down with a nice boy, Mickey for instance, and finish school. You’re a good student and I’m sure you’d be able to find a wonderful job. Just retire.”

“Mum, one, Mickey is like a brother to me and two, the military outfit he works for is UNIT, same as me. Three, at this point I know too much for UNIT or other organisations to let me just fade into
the background. And four, I like what I do.”

“Why? For the little bits I’ve heard from you and your friends it sounds terrifying.”

“Sometimes,” Rose admitted gently, reaching over and covering her mum’s hand. “But it is also so beautiful. I’ve seen Earth from space, I’ve seen our galaxy, I’ve met people from other worlds that I’ve helped and laughed with. I’ve met humans from all across the globe and seen how much we share. I’ve been a part of protecting my world, been a part of something so much greater than myself. Mum, that’s an amazing life and it is worth the risk. Besides, I’ve got people who watch out for me, even when it’s dangerous.”

“But it’s changed you,” Jackie insisted, shaking her head. “You’re so different than I ever imagined you would be and now I know that it’s because of aliens and such horrible things Rose. How can I think that’s a good thing?”

“Because I chose it for myself,” Rose told her firmly. “Because no one forced me into this life, I was given several chances to get out. It may not be the safest life, but it is mine and it is the one that I’m grateful to have.”

The hallway clock began to chime the hour: two in the morning and Rose paused as she heard the sound echo through the house. With a soft sigh, she turned back to her mother and gave her a small smile. “Happy Christmas Mum, I love you.”

Jackie sighed softly, her shoulders slumping slightly in defeat before she nodded. “Happy Christmas Rose. I love you too, even if you are too much like your father.”

They hugged each other tightly and Rose rested her chin on her mother’s shoulder. “Do you think I’m like Dad?”

“He was full of mad ideas and always wanted to be a part of something great,” Jackie said softly, her voice thin and trembling slightly. “You’re just like him.” She gently brushed some of Rose’s hair behind her ears. “Oh enough of this, I need some sleep if I’m going to make you that full Christmas dinner tomorrow.”

“You don’t have to do that you know.”

“If you’re going to support me and go off saving the world, then I can make you a seasonal dinner,” her mum told her sternly before adding. “You will be here won’t you?”

“I’ll be home for Christmas,” Rose promised with a silly little smile.

“Just like your father,” Jackie sighed, walking towards the staircase.

“What about Rita Anne?” Rose asked, remembering Mickey’s grandmother. “Is she okay?”

“She was already in bed when… it started,” Jackie informed her as she began to climb up the stairs. “Thank goodness, I’m not sure her heart could have taken it.”

“And at least she wasn’t A positive,” Rose said to herself, shuddering at the thoughts of what the news might be like.

As her mother vanished up the stairs, Rose considered turning on the television and finding out
what the news was but decided she didn’t have the energy for it. Instead, she went up to her room and carefully pulled out her journal. Flipping it open to a blank page, Rose began to write down the details of her day and slowly a drawing of a Sycorax appeared on the page alongside a doodle of crossed swords. Rose knew that she really should change and get some sleep, but she also knew why she was waiting.

The sound of the TARDIS materialising outside made Rose’s heart jump. She leapt up from her bed, glad that she’d decided against changing and slipped her trainers back on. Pausing for a moment, Rose stopped in front of her mirror and brushed out her long hair, admiring the soft curl it contained with a smile. Once she was satisfied, Rose quietly opened her door and looked down the hallway. Her mother and Rita Anne’s doors were closed and she couldn’t hear any movement. Rose slipped downstairs, pausing long enough to grab her long coat and shrugged it on before she crept out the back door.

The TARDIS was standing in the centre of the yard, the door already open and light streaming out into the quite yard. The Doctor was leaning against the side of the doorway, whistling Silent Night. He stopped and straightened up as he caught sight of her, a giant smile taking over his face.

“Happy Christmas Rose,” he said warmly.

“Happy Christmas Doctor,” she returned happily, racing forward.

He swung her up in a hug, his arms tightening wonderfully around her and her feet nearly colliding with the side of the door. Rose didn’t care and knew she was grinning like an idiot. The Doctor didn’t even set her back on her feet before he kissed her. Rose had no idea how long they stayed like that in the doorway of the TARDIS. Then the Doctor set her back on her feet.

“How about a white Christmas?” he asked with a silly smile, already moving towards the controls.

“Sounds lovely,” Rose sighed, reaching for his hand after he flipped a lever.

The Doctor took her hand, fitting their fingers together and they both turned to look out the TARDIS door as snow began to slowly fall from the sky.

“There we go,” the Doctor remarked with a pleased nod. “A proper Rose Tyler Christmas.”

“Complete with an adventure and a visit from you,” Rose finished with a tongue on teeth smile before she sighed and leaned against him.

“You alright?”

“Yeah, sometimes I just regret not going with you right away,” Rose admitted as an arm came up around her. “It would be simpler. Probably safer for my relationship with my mum too.”

“You’d regret not finishing your degree,” the Doctor reminded her gently, his lips brushing the top of her head. “You worked too hard to just walk away, even for this life.”

“I know,” Rose pouted slightly. “Still, there are moments.”

“It’ll work out,” the Doctor promised quickly, a hint of glee in his voice. “And for what it’s worth the things you’ve achieved over the last couple of years are going to help knock me off my feet.”
“Are you saying that I impress you?” Rose asked in a teasing tone as she looked up at the Doctor.

“I’m saying that you, Rose Tyler Defender of the Earth are incredibly impressive,” the Doctor said, turning fully towards her. “And gorgeous, charming, funny and terribly clever.”

Grinning, Rose stepped forward and put her arms around the Doctor’s neck. “I am, am I?”

“Oh very much so,” the Doctor sighed happily, pulling her closer. He leaned down and kissed her quickly. “And I know just the spot to take such a brilliant woman for Christmas and I’ll have you back before the sun rises.”

“Well then, don’t let me stop you,” Rose replied.

Grinning, the Doctor raised a hand and snapped his fingers. The door of the TARDIS closed and Rose laughed happily as he spun her around and began setting their course.
Rose Marion Tyler let out a small sigh of relief as the plane made a slight jolt, a sign that the wheels were finally touching down on the ground. Around her, she could hear other people making similar sighs of relief and a newlywed couple across the aisle from her exchanged happy looks. Leaning forward, Rose rolled her shoulders slightly and curled her toes inside her trainers. Despite having gotten a first class ticket, at a discount rate thanks to a contact of Tegan’s, the trip had been over twenty-four hours long without including the stopover in Singapore and her layover in Adelaide, Australia. It was a little disappointing really; she’d never been to China before since the Doctor’s last attempt to take her there had landed her in Prague. Rose smiled as the plane gently taxied and turned, that trip had been nice even if it wasn’t China. It wasn’t every girl that got to waltz with her lover before he even met her.

The intercom buzzed on, welcoming the passengers to Alice Springs, Australia and thanking them for their business. It was finally over and she was in the heart of Australia for a brand new adventure. Rose rolled her shoulders and yawned, shaking her head to clear the fatigue threatening to take her over. She shouldn’t be tired, she’d put in earbuds and slept most of the last leg of the trip. Not to mention her early departure from Heathrow meant that she’d slept during the first part of the trip as well. It just didn’t compare to the TARDIS.

Pulling out her phone, Rose turned it back on and silently thanked her universal roaming plan that meant she didn’t have to worry about silly little things like what country she was in and what carriers were in the area. The clock indicated that they were actually a little early, surprising but pleasant. Rose figured that Tegan being a former flight attendant would already be at the airport waiting for her.

As the plane rolled to its gate, Rose felt the nervous energy of an adventure creeping over her. Outside the windows, she could see bright sunny and blue skies. It was summer in Australia and Tegan had called her with a rather cryptic request for help. School didn’t resume in Cambridge until January 19 meaning that Rose had ten days to find out why Tegan had called and helped her solve her problem. But Rose knew that the Doctor’s former companion wouldn’t have called with some normal problem, no this had to be something interesting and exciting.

Calmly, Rose collected the backpack containing her laptop from under the seat and her small rolling suitcase from the overhead bin, smiling inwardly that she didn’t have to worry about baggage claim. It felt great to stand up and stretch out her leg muscles, but soon the crowd of people pushing against her to speed up departure was threatening her good mood. Rose sucked in a deep breath and nearly started running when she finally stepped out of the plane and was able to move down the long corridor towards the gate.

It didn’t take her long to spot Tegan in the crowd of faces. The former companion of the Doctor
was grinning at her, a look of relief evident on her face. Smiling in return, Rose moved past the barriers and met up with Tegan. The older woman stepped forward and threw her arms around Rose, hugging her tightly. Rose returned the embrace for a moment before she glanced around. It was the smallest airport she’d ever seen, discounting only the private military hangers she’d flown into. She hadn’t looked up much about Alice Springs, but she knew the population was much lower than she was used to. Tegan apparently had a small home here in addition to her main residence in Sydney.

“Do you have any baggage to pick up?” Tegan asked as they parted.

“No, my flight information warned that it was a smaller plane and that I’d been switching airlines,” Rose explained as she gestured to her backpack and a smaller bag. “So I tried to keep it simple.”

“Good girl,” Tegan praised as she took Rose’s arm and began to steer her outside. “Come on then, we’ve got a lot to go over and you must be ready to drop.”

Rose was led out of the airport quickly; Tegan seemed to know just how to navigate the airport system. Soon enough they were in the car park and heading for a dark coloured SUV.

“Get comfortable,” Tegan told Rose gently as she climbed into the passenger seat of the SUV and Tegan loaded her bags in the back. “It’s a long drive north.”

“Where are we going?” Rose asked, leaning to look back at Tegan.

“A friend of mine is watching my kids so we’re heading straight out to the problem,” Tegan informed her before closing the backup and coming around to the driver’s side. “We’ll stop on the outskirts of Alice Springs for some food and supplies.”

“How long are we talking?”

“About six hours,” Tegan answered. “Our destination is Yulara. I’ve got a nice hotel room there that we can work out of. You’ll need to get some sleep, but it is urgent that we stay close in case of trouble.”

Rose blinked at the statement, her jaw dropping slightly, but she nodded. Tegan pulled out of the car park smoothly and said nothing as they paid for their parking and fled the area. Rose looked out the window and wondered if she’d have any time to see the sights of Australia while she was here or if her adventure was going to be restricted to wherever Tegan was taking her.

“Is there a reason we can’t fly or are there no flights?”

“There are normally flights, but they’ve been stopped in light of recent events?”

“So what did you not want to tell me on the phone?” Rose asked as they sped down the road. She slipped her hand out the open window and grinned at the feel of the warm summer breeze on her skin.

“We’re trying to keep this quiet,” Tegan said carefully, a hint of nervousness in her tone. “And honestly it’s a bit strange.”

“Strange for us?” Rose questioned, raising an eyebrow and looking towards Tegan.
“Yes, strange even for us.”

“I’m very curious now,” Rose told her. “Come on Tegan, I came all the way to Australia because you asked me to. Can I please get some details?”

“How much do you know about the aboriginals?”

“Uh… well they are the indigenous people of Australia and like a lot of other conquered native cultures faced a long period of persecution,” Rose said uncertainly. “At least that’s what a BBC special said. I know that you work on issues that relate to them and your organisation is one of the major voices for their rights. Other than that I’m afraid I don’t know much. History isn’t really my thing Tegan, it’s Barbara’s.”

“Well, this isn’t about their history, not really. This is about their culture, specifically the aboriginal concept of Dreamtime,” Tegan informed Rose as they turned continued to head out of the main city, such as it was.

Already the buildings of Alice Springs were fading away behind them and traffic was beginning to lighten. Stretching out in front of them was suburban housing complete with green lawns. Beyond that Rose could see miles of dusty brown terrain stretching out as far as she could see.

“The trouble is at the Uluru Stone,” Tegan continued with a guarded tone. “I work with aboriginal leaders to help protect their sacred sights and the Uluru Stone is one of the most important. Many don’t even like tourists climbing Uluru.”

“I’m afraid I don’t know much about this Uluru Stone or the Dreamtime.”

“Right, well its better-known name is the Ayers Rock, though nowadays it’s officially known by both names. It’s the large reddish stone hill in the outback. It rises straight out of the ground.”

“Oh yeah, I’ve seen pictures of that,” Rose agreed with a nod of realisation.

“The Dreamtime is sort of the mythology of the aboriginals, but it is more complex and spiritual than most western mythology. Dreamtime actually is the name of the sacred era in which ancestral Totemic Spirit Beings formed the world or Creation. Many aboriginal beliefs, traditions and ideals are connected to this. There are taboos that protect the environment and people follow a certain set of these traditions based on where they were born or their family.”

“Okay…” Rose said slowly, “So what’s up?”

“Well a lot of strange things have been seen at Uluru Stone recently,” Tegan told her nervously, nibbling at her lip. “Glowing misty animals have been seen and the rock itself seems to be vibrating. Some of the aboriginals who still believe think that something is coming, but I don’t believe in the Dreaming myself.”

“What has you so worried Tegan?”

“A friend of mine vanished three days ago while trying to get some footage of the strange creatures we’ve been seeing. When I went looking for them I saw one of the things myself, it’s a kind of animals and was glowing bright red, but Rose I’m certain that it wasn’t an earth animal.”

“Something alien?”
“Exactly, there is something alien at Uluru Stone and I can’t call in UNIT just yet. There is so much sensitivity about the site and these things look like something out of the Dreaming stories. It’s very delicate; I need someone to check things over.”

“Okay,” Rose said with a nod. “I’ve done Greek monsters and Egyptian gods before; I can handle aliens hijacking aboriginal dreams.”

“Dreaming or Dreamtime Rose,” Tegan sighed loudly as she shook her head. “It’s a time period and pattern of life. Like I said it is a rather different concept than what we’re used to, but it is very important and has inspired and informed the entire culture here.”

Rose was about to ask for more details when Tegan pulled them off the road and into a small gas station. She shoved a bunch of the local money, brightly coloured dollars decorated with the face of the Queen and other people that she didn’t recognise, into her hand. Following Tegan’s orders, Rose headed inside the store to grab water and some food while Tegan began to fill up with gas. She headed straight for the washroom, splashed some water on her face and quickly brushed out her tangled hair with a small comb. She looked exhausted, but Rose didn’t linger too long in front of the mirror. She picked up several water bottles, some trail mix and a couple other things that looked edible and headed back out to join Tegan.

Rose adjusted her seat slightly before climbing back into the SUV and did her best to put a smile on her face. The last time she’d been in a car for a trip this long had been when she’d gone to Wales with Shareen and Sharon to help Eve. Sadly Tegan didn’t seem to be in a cheerful talking mood. Something about what was happening at Ayers Rock really had her bothered. Rose saw Tegan finish pumping the gas and head inside. Pulling out her phone, Rose pressed the button for Spock and waited for the call to go through.

“Hello Rose,” Spock greeted calmly. “How was your flight?”

“Not bad, but it was no TARDIS,” Rose answered calmly. “Listen, Spock, I need you to scan the Ayers Rock area. Tegan called me here to help, but she seems unusually worried and actually sort of scared.”

“Are you looking for anything particular?”

“No, just some highlights of anything unusual that you can find. If you can manage a scan of the place I’d like to know if you pick up any alien tech.”

“Very well, I’ll begin the search. Shall I call you?”

“We’ll be driving for a bit if there isn’t anything urgent then send it to my computer and I’ll check it in the morning.”

“Very well,” Spock replied. “Stay safe.”

Rose could see Tegan coming out of the gas station and quickly assured Spock she’d be fine before hanging up the phone and slipping the phone away. Tegan climbed back into the vehicle, started it up and they were off.

Since Tegan didn’t seem to want to talk about what was happening, just insisting that Rose would see soon enough and that she didn’t want to influence her, they talked about Rose’s classes and
Tegan’s mood improved greatly as she talked about her two children and she asked a lot of questions about how Luke was handling school.

“He’s well,” Rose assured Tegan. “I don’t think he’d be as happy as he is without Rani and Clyde, but the three of them work really well together. It’s actually kind of amazing what a perfect set of friends they are.”

“That’s good; I’ll admit that knowing the boy’s history and genetic makeup I worry about how other kids react to him.”

“Well Luke is known as the ‘brain box’ at the school, but he’s modest about it and helps tutor some of the other students when asked so he’s garnered good will. Clyde’s the class clown and is pretty popular and Rani, of course, is the Head Teacher’s daughter, but a nice girl.”

“I’m surprised her father supports her friendship with Clyde then.”

“Well he doesn’t fully, but Haresh is a good man and knows that Clyde is a good person. He’s not a book person, but he’s smart in his own way. Clyde is even working on drawing and writing comic books now, he’s a very good artist.”

“Something the two of you have in common.”

“Sort of I suppose,” Rose agreed with a shrug. “But I haven’t taken much time for my art in a while.”

“Well you might see something on this trip to inspire you,” Tegan said cryptically.

As the sun set and they finished off the packaged sandwiches that Rose had grabbed for dinner, she felt her eyes getting very heavy.

“How much further?” she asked around a large yawn.

“Another hour, go to sleep. I’m fine and I don’t mind.”

Rose wanted to stay awake and keep Tegan company, but before she could even really think about it, she felt her eyelids close and fell asleep. Then a hand shook Rose awake and she straightened up with a hint of alarm.

“Easy Rose,” Tegan called gently. “It’s me, we’re at the hotel. I’ve already checked us in. Let’s get inside and get some sleep. We have an early start in the morning.”

Rose nodded and climbed out of the SUV, opening up the back door to retrieve her bags. Then she heard a soft gasp from Tegan and glanced over at her, only to find the woman looking up at the hotel’s roof.

“Rose, look.”

Raising her eyes, Rose gasped as she suddenly caught sight of what Tegan was seeing. There in the night sky just over the roof of the hotel was a swirling animal figure of vibrant electric blue. It looked like some kind of cow or bison, but with some little differences like longer horns and a massive body. Around them, she could hear other people stopping and talking in excited whispers. The creature of light moved slowly as if walking on the air. Rose could still see the twinkle of a
few stars through the creature’s misty form. Then it stopped moving, spun in a circle and vanished.

“Was that?”

“Yeah,” Tegan replied. “They’ve been showing up all over the area. We can’t predict them and have no idea what’s causing them. The local cover up is that it is practice for a big light show.”

“Light show… people believe that.”

“There are people who believe that Christmas was due to solar flare activity,” Tegan countered with a shrug. “We don’t think they are dangerous, but they’ve started up for no reason and are centred around Uluru.”

“And let me guess,” Rose asked as they walked into the hotel. “They look like the descriptions of the Dreamtime.”

“Exactly, and those of us keeping an eye on it aren’t sure if that is good or bad.”

“Alright Tegan, I’m officially interested,” Rose informed her with a wide grin. “We start in the morning?”

“We start in the morning.”
Feeling refreshed and recharged, Rose gently towelled off her long hair as she stepped out of the small hotel bathroom. The water pressure had been great and had helped her finish waking up. She’d had strange dreams all night that had woken her up a few times. Most of the time she saw glowing and swirling animals, but there had been strange flashes of unfamiliar people and places scattered here and there. It was confusing, but Rose smiled at Tegan as the older woman looked over at her. She was determined to make the most of the day and get things done. If there was something alien in the area, they’d find it.

She glanced around the room, properly noticing it for the first time. Last night the only things she’d been interested in was a bed. Honestly, it was a nice room, there were two large beds and a soft looking sofa near a dining table with a small kitchenette in the corner. Rose wasn’t sure if this was normal in Australia or if they were at some kind of resort. If they were here for too long then it would prove very nice. There was another door that she assumed led into the next door room, probably to work with larger families.

“Feeling better?” Tegan asked as she slipped on a pair of hiking boots.

“Much better,” Rose assured her with a smile. “I just needed some sleep. I’m ready to tackle this and find out what is going on.”

“That’s the spirit,” Tegan told her. “We’ll give your hair a little bit and then grab some food.”

Tegan vanished into the toilet and Rose padded over to her suitcase. At the bottom of the bag, taking up much of the room were a pair of plain brown hiking boots and Rose pulled out. She rolled on two pairs of socks just to be on the safe side and put on the boots. They hadn’t been worn in a while, but the leather was soft and sturdy, just what they’d need for a hike. Rose knew that Tegan valued the aboriginal idea of not climbing Ayers Rock, but if she was honest, Rose really wanted to go to the top.

A knock on the door made her look up in surprise. It wasn’t really early, it was almost eleven, but Tegan hasn’t mind of the lingering fog. Rose opened the hotel door cautiously, her right arm at the ready if it proved to be a foe. However as the door opened, Rose was confronted with a very familiar smiling face and long braided brown hair.

“Ace?” Rose asked blinking in confusion, sure that she was seeing things. “What are you doing here?”

The brunette grinned at Rose, giving her a little wave. “Last time I spoke with Tegan she said that you were coming down here to help her with something.” Ace shrugged slightly with a wide grin.
“There was no way that I was going to miss this. I checked with Sarah Jane who gave me your flight information. It wasn’t hard to find out which hotel you were in.”

“Ace?” Tegan called, stumbling out of the toilet with wide eyes. “Goodness, I didn’t expect you to come? Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t want to miss the looks on your faces,” Ace teased with a grin. “I’m not missing this adventure and I’ve been telling myself that I needed to come and visit you.”

“Uh…” Rose trailed off, still blinking her eyes in surprise.

Ace just smiled at them adjusted her bag. “I’ve booked the room next door,” she announced before walking over and opening their side of the door to reveal that it was already open on the other side. Beyond the door, Rose could see a bed with a suitcase on it.

“Well then…” Tegan said, shaking her head a little. “Welcome aboard.”

Rose held back a laugh at the look on Tegan’s face and the satisfied expression on Ace’s. Things had just gotten even more interesting. Ace slipped into her own hotel room and returned a moment later with hiking boots on a small daypack on her shoulders.

“You really did want to go,” Tegan remarked with a small smile and shake of her head. She sat down on her own bed and finished getting ready herself. Tegan paused and looked down at her own hiking boots. “Funny how I finally learned the proper footwear for adventures.”

“I heard about that,” Rose laughed. “Seriously Tegan? Heels on unknown planets?”

“Shush you,” Tegan huffed as she stood up and picked up her own bag.

Rose slipped on the small backpack that she’d brought with her and put a water bottle in an easy to access pocket. A moment later, Tegan led the three of them out of the hotel room and across the street to a small diner type restaurant that served both breakfast foods and lunch. What really impressed Rose was the small display of fresh fruit they had for sale by the door. It was overpriced, but after a quick meal to charge them up for the day, Rose paused and bought three apples for the road. They piled into Tegan’s SUV, Rose losing the front passenger seat to Ace when the woman lunged ahead of her and grabbed the door handle.

“Shotgun!”

“I think you’ve been living in the United States too long,” Rose remarked, but she opened the back door and climbed inside.

“Alright ladies,” Tegan announced as she started up the car. “Next stop Ayer’s Rock.”

They pulled out of the parking lot and Rose gasped softly. The moment that the hotel was no longer blocking them, she could already see a reddish hill in the distance.

“It’s about half an hour there,” Tegan informed them as she adjusted her rearview mirror. “Keep your eyes open, the closer we get the more likely we are to see something manifest.”

“Wonderful,” Ace cheered. Rose didn’t have to see her to know that the older woman was grinning like an idiot.
Tegan slammed on the brakes, sending the SUV in a slight swerve before they came to a halt. A bus was stopped in the middle of the road with people pouring out of it and pointing into the sky. Unbuckling her seatbelt, Rose slid over to the far side of the SUV and looked up and out. A soft gasp of awe escaped her. There in the sky over them, roughly seven feet over their heads were a pair of luminescent birds of some kind. Both had long gleaming beaks, one of brilliant blue and the other of bright red. Long feathery tails swirled behind them as they dove and spun around each other in the air.

The sound of another car slamming on the brakes behind them made Rose flinch and she reached above her shoulder to put on this side’s seat belt just in case. Even through the glass, she could hear the shouts of awe, surprise and even a few of alarm at the sight of the creatures of light. A small Asian boy shouted something about Pokémon, laughing excitedly. Another couple was less happy and ran back onto the bus shouting something about magic and witchcraft.

“Rose you buckled in?” Tegan asked from the front.

“Yeah, why?”

“We can’t linger here,” Tegan huffed, irritation clear in her voice. “We need to figure this out. These tourists have it on camera now. Soon enough they’ll be too many people here for us to explore the area.”

Rose couldn’t argue with that. Tegan was right; thanks to the internet and modern media it wouldn’t take long for news of these strange sights to spread across the globe. If Uluru itself was connected to what was happened then they needed some clearance to investigate. As Tegan steered them off the road so they could get around the bus and the tourists, Rose gripped the door handle and resisted the urge to look back at the strange creatures. They were clearly birds, but not like any she’d ever seen. She wasn’t from Australia, but there was something about them that just screamed ‘not of earth’ to her. If that was true then there was definitely something alien happening here. Rose felt her lips curve into an excited smile and hoped they had time to get some things figured out before UNIT arrived. The Australian branch might not be so willing to let her stay and poke around.

The car park was nothing special, but roughly half of it was filled with tour buses. There was an actual bus stop for the shuttle that went from town to here near the start of the walkway. Climbing out of the car, Rose rubbed her shoulders and pulled on her day pack. In the corner of her eye, Rose saw a man in his mid-thirties moving towards them quickly. She tensed slightly, her body beginning to shift into a defensive position.

“Easy Rose,” Tegan laughed. “It’s a friend of mine.”

Ace chuckled at Rose’s reaction as Tegan walked over to speak with the man who had waved to her. Rose frowned, noticing the pensive look on his face, but she turned her attention to Uluru to give Tegan privacy.

Uluru towered over them. Having grown up in a landscape of stone, metal and glass in the form of skyscrapers, tall housing buildings and parking lots, Rose was suddenly struck with the majesty of just what she was seeing. Uluru was a huge reddish formation rising right out of the earth. Intellectually Rose knew that it was just sandstone, but as the sun hit it and parts of it seemed to
shine gold, she couldn’t help but understand why this place had become sacred to Australia’s first people. Her eyes traced the long deep grooves carved by water over the years and noted the subtle hiking trails that wound around its base. The island mountain was a sight to behold and Tegan thankfully gave her and Ace time to stare at it.

“Come on,” Tegan finally said, poking Rose’s shoulder. “I hate to say it, but I think our best bet to hiking up the trails. We might find something that way.”

“I thought the locals didn’t like that?” Ace remarked as she straightened her pack.

“They don’t and in my career, I’ve tried to honour their wishes,” Tegan paused and swallowed. “But I’m certain that the reason behind these events is at Uluru itself.”

“Is this so bad?” Ace asked curiously, tilting her head slightly. “If it attracts tourists and renews interest in the Dreamtime, why worry about it?”

Tegan gave Ace an incredulous look of shock. While Rose as pretty sure Ace was just fishing, Tegan seemed so stressed that she hadn’t seemed to notice.

“The source could be dangerous,” Tegan hissed. “Remember Rose telling us about the ship under the desert that started leaking hundreds of years after it crashed. It endangered people and this might be too.”

“One please don’t talk about that,” Rose whispered to them both. “I don’t think Section 13 will be as forgiving of me talking about them as UNIT is. Two,” Rose paused and glance back at the island mountain that loomed over them. “Have you thought that what we find might, in fact, be the source of the Dreamtime mythology.”

“I have,” Tegan agreed with a nod before she sighed. “Richard, the man was speaking to, just told me that three of the men I work with from time to time out here have gone missing. They went up to Uluru to check it out, but they haven’t returned. Two of them were of aboriginal descent.”

“So it is already dangerous,” Ace remarked, her expression hardening. She reached up and tightened the straps of her small pack. “Then let’s go ladies.”

Yeah, Ace had definitely been living in the United States for too long. A grateful expression crossed Tegan’s face as she turned to look at the mountain herself. Tegan inhaled deeply and began heading for the trailhead. Rose looked up at the mountain again, shivering slightly this time as her mind went back to the Lonely Mountain and the Hobbit. That island mountain, all on its own surrounded by plains and peaceful landscape had no happiness or warmth. Knowing that people were already missing made the beautiful place suddenly seem cold and sad.

Still, she took in a deep breath and followed Tegan and Ace to the trail, bringing up the rear of their little party. The translator tucked behind her ear was turning the buzz of the different languages around her into English and she swept her eyes over the small crowd gathered near the trail. Most people were not climbing the trail very far, going up only a few feet and posing for photos. The great lump of the crowd was gathered just beyond the car park and from their position on the trail; Rose could see another car park a few miles away. She supposed that was the spot for getting full photos of the mountain in the background. Soon enough, the rush of human voices began to fade away as they went higher and higher in the heat of the day.

“Why are we climbing this thing at midday?” Ace grumbled ahead of Rose.
“It’s when there is the fewest people,” Tegan muttered from the head of the trio. “Besides it’s not so bad.”

“Not so bad? It’s summer here, we are literally hiking up a mountain in the summer at noon. We are officially crazy, even madder than the Doctor.”

As they followed the gentle curve of the mountain trail, Rose felt the hair on the back of her neck stand up and held back a shiver. Glancing around she looked for the source of the strange feeling, but couldn’t see anything. She dropped her hand so she could have her sword at a moment’s notice, but when the ground to her left on the mountainside began to shimmer and glow gold, she froze. What looked like liquid light spilt from the ground and she was caught in the wave, making a small cry of alarm that caused Tegan and Ace to turn back towards her.

The swirl of golden sparks spun around Rose. She couldn’t breathe, the air was too sharp and charged with energy, but her sense of wonder was overwhelming her fear. There was no form that she could make out, it was more like being stuck in a tornado of liquid gold glitter, but much prettier. Before she could think about it, Rose lifted her hand and reached out. She vaguely heard the others shouting to her as her fingers touched a swirl of gold. A sharp jolt sailed up her arm, a zing of energy, but it wasn’t painful. For a moment Rose smiled as the energy rippled around her hand like brightly coloured water. Then she tried to laugh only to realise that she was running out of oxygen.

Just as Rose was beginning to feel a hint of panic and sway on her feet, the swirl of golden moved away from her. It spun up and over her head, releasing the vortex it had created around her. Rose sucked in a greedy breath with a loud gasp.

“Rose!” Ace called, stumbling down to her and grabbing her arms to support her. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine,” Rose gasped, nodding as she raised her eyes above her head.

The swirl of gold quickly changed into a lupine creature. It has a longer body than a wolf but was similar enough that Rose’s heart skipped a beat.

“I don’t think that was on purpose,” Rose managed to say, her eyes fixed on the creature. “I just got in the path of its exit.”

“What the hell is going on?” Tegan hissed angrily. “What are you talking about?”

Rose shivered again as a new rush of energy crackled over her skin. She saw the soft blue glow envelope both Tegan and Ace as well.

“Teleport!” Rose shouted in warning, but the world fell away in a haze of blue light.
The Dreaming: Point of Origin

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Twenty-Three: The Dreaming: Point of Origin

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

The world faded back into focus from the strange blueish white that had filled Rose’s vision. While smooth, the transport was slower than most others she’d ever been subjected to and while everything was correcting itself, Rose wondered if all teleports were blue. Was it something to do with the basic technology needed or were all the blue teleport beams based on the same technical origin? If she was really interested, she decided, she’d ask the Doctor and endure whatever lecture he had about it.

Rose sucked in a quick breath of air, pleased to find that she could breathe as she glanced around. The air was clean and almost too crisp, there was something lacking in it that she couldn’t put her finger on. A quick look at Tegan and Ace reassured her that they were alright, but they both looked as confused as she was.

They were in a small white cylinder with a glowing circle beneath their feet. The walls were stark but had a soft rippling shimmer to them that beckoned rose closer. It was warm to the touch and there was the slightest give to the fell of the wall. It wasn’t metal, but maybe something organic like the coral of the Doctor’s TARDIS. This close, Rose could see the seam in the wall where it looked like there might be a door. Following it quickly, Rose traced the seam which did indeed form an archway. Then beneath her hand, it shifted and pulled itself to the right and vanished into the wall, leaving an opening for them.

“Now what?” Tegan asked, looking between Rose and Ace. “Do we wait for who brought us here or go on our own?”

“We won’t learn anything here,” Ace reminded her looking almost eager. “And this looks almost like an invitation.”

“Almost,” Rose agreed before she took a deep breath and stepped through the doorway.

The corridor beyond was much the same except it was an arched hallway. All around them the organic walls thrummed softly, a barely audible sound, and shimmered. It took Rose a moment to realise that there was no light source that she could see, the wall was giving off the light. She couldn’t help but smile, truly impressed by that. If enough else it probably prevented blackouts.

The corridor curved gently away from the transport station and as they came around the corner, Rose was hit with a wave of heat and the scent of something citrusy. It was lighter in the corridor, but it seemed softer and more nature. As they stepped completely around the curve, Rose stopped in her tracks. Just ahead of them was a long wall of softly glowing controls, small levers poking out of the organic walls and several screens showing graphs and flickers of colour.
Standing in front of everything was a tall man up ahead with his back towards them. Even at this angle, Rose could see that he had dark tanned skin, was broad shouldered and had a sense of energy around him. Rose wasn’t certain if he was human, but he was definitely humanoid which caused her relax slightly. He was shifting from foot to foot and next to her, Rose heard Tegan gasp softly behind her.

“Michael?” Tegan called, stepping forward and extending her hand.

The man spun to face them with wide eyes, but a beaming smile on his face at the sight of Tegan told Rose not to worry.

“Tegan?” Michael asked, blinking a few times. “What are you doing here?” He asked her, moving towards them with a confused smile on his face.

“What am I? Are you joking!” Tegan shouted, the worry vanishing from her face and being replaced with irritation. Her hands tightened into fists and Rose didn’t have to see her face to know that her eyes were wide and her lips pursed. “Michael, are you out of your mind!?”

He flinched back and Rose nearly laughed, he obviously had experience with Tegan when she was angry. He held up his hands and made a calming gesture. Rose heard Tegan make a small sound, almost a growl, but she quieted.

“I’m alright Tegan, so are Jacob and Peter. They’re resting in the next room…. They haven’t adjusted to what is happening as easily as I have.”

“Adjusted…. Michael, you better start explaining and start explaining now.”

“Please,” a new masculine voice called to them, seeming to radiate from the walls itself. “Please calm down everyone. No harm will come to you.”

“That’s right,” Michael assured them with a nod, not seeming worried by the voice. Rose was guessing master computer or intercom system. “Please,” Michael pleaded, “If you’ll follow me.”

He gestured them forward around the bend of the corridor and swept his arm out in a welcoming gesture. Rose stepped forward, following the natural light and the smell of citrus fruit. She didn’t recognise the scent at all and was certain that there was no reason for her too, but it was still comforting. Her boots echoed slightly as she moved around the slight curve through the widening corridor. Stopping, a small sound of awe escaped Rose and she smiled. Ahead of her, the corridor opened into a large doomed space with soft warm golden lights suspended so far over her head from the ceiling that they looked like floating fireflies.

There were tall trees, similar to those on Earth, but silvery moss hung from them and their leaves were a rich purple colour. The trunks were thick like oaks, but with a smooth willow-like texture and flecks of purple amongst a light brown shade. Thick violet grass spotted with dark purple ferns and green flowers were dotted about the large space. But most interesting was directly in front of them were a twisted pedestal of curving alien branches from the ground held a perfectly spherical white orb that was glowing. As they tentatively approached, Rose could see small, almost hidden buttons along the branches and realised that the large purple collection of leaves that she assumed was simply a bush was, in fact, a sort of seat.

“Welcome to the cradle,” Michael said proudly behind her. “Incredible isn’t it. This ship is alien, it amazed me. I knew that after Christmas… but this is something so beautiful.”
Rose looked over at Michael with a new sense of comradery and appreciation. He got it, in her experience that was rare. She loved Sharon and Shareen, but they just didn’t see the wonder in all of it like she did, like the Doctor did.

“IT is beautiful,” Rose agreed with a nod and a smile. “But can you explain what is happening? Where are the others?”

“They are asleep in another room,” Michael replied, rubbing the back of his neck nervously. “They didn’t react well, thought we were being attacked and wouldn’t listen. The computer… well, it put them to sleep. It startled me, but once it explained I sort of understood. Apparently, this system is pretty fragile and can be messed up easily.” He saw the shocked look on Tegan’s face. “It wasn’t trying to hurt them Tegan, I swear! It just has to protect itself and the animals.”

“The animals?” Rose questioned an idea of what was going on beginning to form in her head.

The orb in front of her glowed brightly and illuminated Rose’s face as she turned back to it quickly. Around them, she could hear the soft sounds of slumbering animals and the thrumming of systems that kept this place working.

“This ship was created following the disastrous asteroid collision with the planet Vetan IV by the Fallidin Collective. Its purpose is to contain in status and eventually deliver these creatures to the uninhabited planet Ergo X,” the voice explained calmly.

“Wait,” Rose said, blinking in surprise as she started out at the strange looking forest. All around them the shimmering creatures were moving slowly and flickering in and out of sight. “This is… an ark? You’re trying to save these creatures?” She couldn’t help but grin, she’d been right, but this was still…. Amazing.

“Yes,” the ship told her. “I am the memory imprint of the caretakers. Thousands of your years ago this ship crashed and the chemical reactions caused by our engines overloading upon impact created the limestone mountain in which we reside. Many of the animals escaped, only for a brief time, but apparently for long enough to inspire the local legends of the Dreamtime. Eventually the last surviving caretaker was able to recall all the creatures, but the ship could not take off.”

“Why are the animals escaping now?” Rose asked, stepping closer to the large white orb and looking it over carefully. “Why haven’t you taken off?”

“The energy cells are fully recharged,” the ship replied, “But we are trapped within the mountain. This ship was originally equipped with phase technology, but it requires repairs to leave. We need help if we are to leave.”

“And the animals?” Rose repeated carefully.

“The systems are fragile, two of the environment systems broke down not long ago and the animals are coming out of their stasis. This ship is failing, we must leave soon or all systems will shut down.”

“So you took Michael and the others in hopes of finding help.”

“Yeah, but I explained that this is beyond me,” Michael added, sounding very sad.
“Let me take a look,” Rose told him with a small smile. “I’ll help if I can and I know who to call if I cannot.”

It was a curious thing to see the walls glimmer as she returned to the corridor and dissolved back, revealing panels upon panels of flashing lights, tiny circuits and wires. It was beautiful and Rose was terrified to touch any of it. There was over a mile of it, spanning throughout most of the walls and into the floor of the great environmental room where the main computer access was kept. Carefully with soft touches, Rose followed the various wires across the walls, noting the burns and tears that were visible every few feet. She lost track of time as she fought to familiarise herself with the strange system before her.

In many ways, it was a lot like what she was used to on Earth, but the materials were different and she hadn’t even looked at the power sources yet. Lying on her stomach, Rose pulled out the sonic pen and carefully inspected a piece of circuit board that was charred. Another piece nearby was beginning to show signs of rust.

“How’s it look?” Tegan asked, leaning over her shoulder.

Rose sat up, her shoulders protesting at the action. “Not very good,” she admitted. “I don’t think I can fix this,” Rose admitted as Tegan helped her to her feet.

“Shit!” Ace swore softly, running a hand through her long dark hair before taking a breath. “Look, we need some supplies. We’ve been down here for hours.”

“I’m afraid that we can’t teleport you out,” Michael informed them nervously, twiddling his fingers. “The teleport isn’t fully functional.”

“Michael!” Tegan shouted before Ace grabbed her and fought to hold her still.

“I’m sorry!” Michael insisted. “Tegan I didn’t mean to trap you guys… I just needed help and these creatures are going to die if we don’t help them. I’m a conservationist how could I allow that?”

“Everyone calm down,” Rose ordered as she tidied up her shirt and brushed off her jeans. “Time to go with Plan D.”

“Plan D?” Michel repeated in obvious confusion.

Rose pulled out her mobile phone with a small smile and ignoring the curious looks on Ace and Tegan’s faces, she hit the speed dial for the TARDIS. A knot of nervousness formed in her stomach as she waited for him to answer. Tegan and Ace hadn’t seen the Doctor since her almost wedding. She saw Ace’s eyes widen in realisation of who she was calling and gave the other woman a small smile.

“Hello, darling,” the cheerful and warm voice of the Eleventh Doctor greeted.

Rose was startled for a moment, expecting the call to go to his younger incarnation, but she recovered quickly.

“Hello Doctor,” Rose greeted a warm fluttering in her chest at being addressed as darling. It was a bit silly, but it never failed to please her. “I’m in Australia with a broken space ship and a rather serious deadline. I could use some technical assistance.”
“Oh is that all I am to you?” the Doctor asked in mock irritation, but she could hear laughing in the background. “A mechanic?”

“You know the answer to that so don’t fish,” Rose replied with a small smirk when the Doctor laughed. “But really, I’m worried about hurting these systems. Both the main environmental system and the phasing system need repairs or else they’ll destroy the Uluru when they take off.”

“I’ll be there soon,” the Doctor promised warmly. “I just need to drop you off and I’ll be there. Just leave your phone on.”

“Okay, thank you,” Rose told her, feeling a bit nervous at the mention of herself on the TARDIS. “Uh pass my regards onto me and thank her for loaning you out.”

He laughed loudly and she heard him repeat her words. There another laugh that she recognised as her own and wasn’t that just insane. Then the call ended and Rose exhaled slowly before turning back to Tegan and Ace.

“The Doctor is coming to help,” she told them a small smile.

They were both staring at her with strange expressions: a mixture of shock, awe, amusement and resignation. Ace chuckled softly and shook her head before she said, “It must be fascinating to be you.”

“Fascinating?” Tegan remarked, raising an eyebrow. “It must be hell to keep track of everything.”

“A good diary helps,” Rose replied with a shrug that earned a pair of snorts from the other women. The three of them paused as the wheezing and grinding sound of the TARDIS began to echo in the passage. Rose turned around and grinned as the TARDIS materialised behind her.
The Dreaming: Legacy Ship

The Tyler Factor
By Lumenda
Chapter Twenty-Four: The Dreaming: Legacy Ship

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

Rose turned around and grinned as the TARDIS materialised behind her. Behind her, she heard Michael gasp and ask Tegan what was happening, but she ignored whatever explanation that Tegan was giving. As the TARDIS finished its usual melody, Rose heard Tegan tell Michael just to trust her and wait in the other room and to tell the control system not to worry.

The door opened with a soft, barely audible squeak and the Doctor stepped out. He looked a little older, a few more wrinkles around his eyes than Rose remembered and a hint of greying, but his eyes were bright green and happy. His style had changed slightly too, he was wearing a darker coat than the one she remembered and a waistcoat, but his bowtie was still in place. She liked it she decided as he grinned at her and closed the distance between them.

“Hello darling,” the Doctor told her just before pulling her against him and dipping her dramatically. The blood rushed to Rose’s head, but she couldn’t help but return the kiss, sliding her fingers into the Doctor brown flyaway hair. Whatever worry and tension she’d been carrying a moment ago faded away.

The Doctor broke the kiss and looked at her without righting her, just holding her down in the dipped position. If it was uncomfortable at all, he didn’t show it at all.


“Of course, you call and I come running,” he told her in a very matter a fact voice.

“Oh really?” Rose said doubtfully, gripping his shoulders a bit tighter. “I remember a few times when I didn’t get through to you.”

“Well that’s on the TARDIS and she knew at those times that you could handle it on your own. She has great confidence in you.”

“Does she now?” Rose asked with a teasing smile.

“Just as much as I have in you,” the Doctor answered, kissing her gently, “If not more.”

There was a cough at the end of the hall and Rose turned her head to see a sideways Tegan and Ace standing down the corridor from them. Tegan looked rather uncomfortable but was tapping her foot impatiently while Ace looked more embarrassed and was trying to find a safe place to look. With a dramatic sigh, the Doctor swung Rose up, earning a little giggle from her and places her back on solid footing.

“Tegan! Brave heart!” The Doctor greeted as he released Rose and turned to his former companions
with a wide smile. “And Ace! How are you!!?”

“Hello Doctor,” Ace said as she stepped forward to accept his hug. “Good to see you.”

“You too, I haven’t seen you since my funeral,” the Doctor informed her with a laugh. “So don’t worry about that.”

Tegan relaxed slightly and shook her head at the Doctor, but stepped forward and claimed a long hug from him. Rose grinned despite herself at the sight of her Doctor with his old friends. He didn’t come around to see them nearly enough. Already she was wondering just how much she’d be able to convince his Ninth self to do, maybe she’d be able to swing visits to her mother and friends. That would really be something, none of the other companions had ever mentioned being able to visit their families. Heck, Tegan often complained about never finding Heathrow.

“Alright then,” the Doctor called, stepping back and rubbing his hands together. “The auto or ship club is here.”

“Over a thousand years old and it has come to this,” Rose teased, coming up behind him.

He laughed and reached down to take her hand, tangling their fingers together. “Oh, we’ll have fun darling I promise.”

“You sound very certain of that,” Rose observed with a raised eyebrow.

“I’ve seen how happy you can be in a pile of spare parts,” the Doctor teased right back. “After all your talents were enough to convince even my leather grouchy self to teach you how to help repair the TARDIS.”

“Really?” Rose couldn’t help but squeak with excitement. “You’re actually going to trust me with helping repair the TARDIS in the future.”

“Why not,” the Doctor laughed before lowering his voice. “I’d already entrusted you with everything else by then, even if I didn’t completely know it.”

Rose tried not to melt at the words; this version of the Doctor was so comfortable with his feelings and assuring her of her place in his life that she always felt a bit spoiled. A silly little smile took over her face and she could feel herself blushing. The Doctor smiled at her, squeezing her hand warmly.

“Oh, I’m still not completely convinced about this whole relationship, it is one hell of an age gap.”

“Does it help if I remind you that nothing happened until she was eighteen,” the Doctor asked, stepping back from Ace a little hesitantly.

“Not really,” Tegan replied, crossing her arms across her chest while Ace nodded in agreement.

“I suppose that this wouldn’t be a good time to say how old I was the first time you kissed me?” Rose asked in a teasing voice, she really shouldn’t enjoy watching the Doctor squirm, but at the
time it was just too much fun. “This you,” she added.

“I’ve got a ship to fix,” the Doctor said quickly, giving Rose a warning look that just made her smile widen. “When you have a moment Rose, join me by the controls.”

He strode down the corridor quickly and Rose giggled despite herself. Tegan and Ace gave her odd looks and she could just sense the question coming. Deciding to spare the Doctor, Rose just shook her head and followed after him, leaving his former companions to wonder. Rose watched the Doctor as he walked through the ship, pausing and inspecting the panels that Rose had opened. He nodded and hummed a few times at each one, never touching anything, his fingers dancing just above the surface of the components.

When she came closer to him, the Doctor dropped his hand and gripped here, seemingly without even realising it. Smiling, Rose contented herself with silently watching him as he continued his examination of the ship’s system. They inched their way closer and closer to the main control room. As they came around the curving corridor, the Doctor glanced over and then did a double take.

“Oh that is beautiful,” the Doctor cooed eagerly.

Tugging Rose after him, he burst into the forest control room causing Michael to jump. Tegan gave him an odd look from where she and Ace stood talking. Rose gave them all an apologetic look, but he was staring at the Doctor with wide eyes and a slightly slack-jawed expression.

“Well,” the Doctor said cheerfully, nearly skipping over to the main orb of the computer. “Let’s see what we have here?”

“Who is this man?” Michael asked Tegan with a frown. “Is this the alien you called?”

“He’s uh…” Tegan struggled for a moment before she rolled her eyes and huffed softly. “He’s called the Doctor and yes he’s an alien. A very very intelligent alien. If anyone can fix this ship it is him.”

“Thank you Tegan, that’s very kind of you,” the Doctor called back to her as he circled the orb carefully. “Just look at you, oh you are beautiful.” He reached out and brushed his fingers across the surface of the orb. “Nothing like this exists outside of museums right now. This ship is old; you were travelling for a very long time before you got stuck here weren’t you?”

“That is correct,” the computerised voice replied. “Please Doctor; your assistance is vital to the completion of our mission.”

“He doesn’t look like an alien,” Michael remarked in the background. “When you said that you called an alien I was expecting something… more alien.”

“Oh don’t get him started on all that,” Ace said quickly, sounding exhausted with the topic already. “Trust us on that.”

“But-”

“Don’t,” Rose heard both Tegan and Ace command behind them and she barely kept herself from laughing.
“Question!” the Doctor shouted, spinning away from the orb and waving his hands. “Even if I fix the ship you’ll still need a living person to activate some of the controls. This main computer isn’t really a computer, well; it isn’t just a computer correct?”

“That is correct,” the computer replied with a hint of defeat. “And your summary of the situation is also quite correct.”

“What does that mean?” Rose asked, forcing herself to focus on the conversation between the Doctor and the computer.

“This computer is the custodian of the ship, but not really the pilot” the Doctor replied looked over at her with a softening expression. “It can monitor and control many of the ship’s systems, but there’s a lot that it cannot do. People were originally sent with this ship. It was a generation ship, their descendants would help keep everything working, but… something went wrong, didn’t it?”

“Unexpected solar flare activity combined with a collision with a meteor,” the computer answered sadly. “There was no warning, the ship survived mostly intact, but the crew did not.”

“And the crew would have been killed by radiation, horrible way to die,” the Doctor finished, shaking his head. “Except they are preserved in you aren’t they.”

“Correct,” the computer responded. “All memories and brainwaves of the dying crew were uploaded into this unit to preserve the mission and enable the computer to perform a wider range of tasks that required creativity and invention. My original design was a rather simple machine, but as they were dying with no way to replenish the crew or a safe haven for repairs they upgraded me.”

“You’re an artificial intelligence built from organic intelligence,” Rose whispered in awe. “That is amazing.”

“Thank you, but it was not enough to prevent the crash on Earth.”

“No it wouldn’t be,” the Doctor said carefully. “Still those people truly believed in what they doing, no doubt there.” The room shuddered around them, the lights flickering and the Doctor spun on his heel to look around. “Oh, that’s not good. I thought we’d have more time…”

“Shields are failing,” the computer responded, the orb turning a mauve colour. “The mission will fail-”

“Not yet it won’t,” the Doctor shouted energetically. “Is this a problem sure, but we’ve still got time.” The Doctor looked back at the group of humans. “The real question is, once we fix everything and get the ship free how can the mission still be completed. Someone, someone living and mobile has to stay aboard.”

There was a silent moment and the Doctor’s eyes moved across all of them. Ace shifted nervously and glanced towards Rose and Tegan. Rose could figure out Ace’s thought process: Tegan had kids and the Doctor wasn’t going to let Rose spend the rest of her life on a spaceship that wasn’t the TARDIS.

“I’ll do it.” Michael’s strong voice called out behind them.

Everyone except the Doctor turned to look at him while the Doctor fixed his green eyes on the man.
“Do you understand what that means,” the Doctor asked slowly. “The ship can feed you and take care of you, but the trip will be your entire lifespan.”

“Michael-” Tegan started to say, reaching towards him.

“I understand,” Michael said firmly with a nod. “I’ll either by dead or extremely old by the time the ship reaches its destination, but I can get it there. I can make sure that these creatures survive.”

“But Michael-” Tegan tried again, moving closer to him with an almost frantic look on her face.

“Tegan, I’m a conservationist and right now I’ve got the chance to go into space and keep an ark afloat as it were,” he told her with a wide grin. He looked a little frightened, but his eyes were bright and he seemed genuinely happy. “I have the chance to help save beautiful species who haven’t got any other chance. I can’t turn away from that. I wouldn’t be me if I did.”

“Doctor? Can’t you just take them in the TARDIS?! Tegan demanded, twirling back to face the Doctor.

“I’m afraid not,” the Doctor answered with a shake of his head. “These creatures are both matter and energy, but they are mostly energy. That’s why they are still alive after all this time and why they can leave the ship with it in this condition. They aren’t restrained by walls like you and I are. Completely distinct in the universe.” He shook his head, “Sadly that means that they are actually a danger to the TARDIS, all that energy spilling out of them with no way to contain them. They’d shut her down or she’d interfere with their frequency.” He stepped up to her and touched her arms gently. “I know it isn’t an easy thing that I’m asking here, but this ship is a marvel of the universe. The last of its kind, the civilisation that built it is long gone.”

“The planet is dead?” Ace asked in alarm only have the Doctor smile sadly at her.

“No, just moved on… like your Celtic civilisation is gone. Some memories and history remain, but this effort was one of a kind. An attempt to save a thousand dying species on a dying planet, an attempt to preserve something irreplaceable,” the Doctor shook his head. “I doubt they even have any records of it anymore, the Faldin Collective fell apart in a series of invasions. Time marches now, but this ship is its own little time capsule,” the Doctor announced, sweeping his arms out towards the ceiling.

“Well Doctor,” Michael called, saying the Doctor’s name with a hint of unease. “If you can fix the ship and who me what I need to know then I’ll get it to Ergo X.”

“Good man,” the Doctor replied with a nod and a smile. “Very good man, well then ladies let’s get to work.” He pulled out the sonic screwdriver and twirled it around his fingers with a manic grin. “We have a ship to get back on its way.”
The Dreaming: Lights in the Sky

The Tyler Factor
By Lumenda
Chapter Twenty-Five: The Dreaming: Lights in the Sky

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

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Rose stuck close to the Doctor as he began his many repairs of the ship’s system, even running into the TARDIS multiple times with vague descriptions of spare parts packed into one of the many storerooms. Thankfully what she was looking for always seemed to find its way to the top of a worktable when she stepped into the rooms. It was a nice distraction, she was getting an odd vibe off of Tegan and Ace and had the feeling that one of them really wanted to say something that she didn’t want to hear.

Michael was staying near them, a look of intense concentration on his face as he watched how the Doctor handled each little component. Sometimes the Doctor even stopped his work to explain something to Michael directly and with much more patience than Rose had ever seen from him before. It reminded him of when he’d been her teacher when she was younger and Rose briefly wondered when the Doctor became so good at calmly explaining things. In his earlier body, he tended to rush through things, barely explaining anything at all and then acting as if the person he’d been explaining things to was an idiot. Rose wondered if it was a quirk of this body or he’d finally managed to learn realm patience.

“Nervous Michael?” the Doctor asked after he finished explaining the basics of the wiring system.

“Of course,” Michael admitted with a thick swallow. “I’m still going, this is the chance of a lifetime, a chance to really make a difference.”

“Do you have a family?” Rose asked softly with a small frown.

“No, it’s just me. My parents died two years ago in a car crash and I was an only child. If I was married I wouldn’t have volunteered, that wouldn’t have been fair.”

“Agreed,” the Doctor said with a nod. “For what it’s worth, I think you’ll do an amazing job.” He clapped Michael on the shoulder. “Come on, I’ll show you how to access the viewing screens so that you can see what’s out there as you travel.” There was the sound of a few things being soniced and a laugh of triumph. “Alright,” the Doctor shouted as he popped up from the lower panels. There was a smudge of something dark on his cheek that looked like oil, but Rose wasn’t willing to bet on it. “That’s everything, the ship can now phase out of the mountain and leave the planet.”

“Michael,” Tegan said gently. “You don’t have to do this you know.”

“I know,” Michael said, inhaling deeply and giving Tegan a small smile. “But I want to, Tegan. Really I do.”

“You’ll regret it, you’ll miss Earth and you won’t have anyone around.”
“I’ll be alright Tegan,” Michael insisted, stepping forward to hug her. “I’m going on an adventure that lets me make a difference. Please try to be happy for me.”

Rose thought she heard Tegan sniff, but the woman nodded and tightened her grip on Michael for a moment. The Doctor stepped up next to them, looking unsure of what to do before he placed his hand on Tegan’s shoulder for a moment.

“Tegan,” the Doctor called. “He’ll be alright, but it’s time for us to go. I need to get the TARDIS out of here before all the animals are recalled.”

Tegan sniffed softly, releasing Michael and nodded. “Are the others on the TARDIS?”

“I took care of that,” Ace told her, interjecting uncomfortably. “They aren’t exactly comfortable, but they’re inside.”

“We won’t be long,” the Doctor said with a smile and nod, his hand still on Tegan’s shoulder. “Good luck Michael.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” Michael replied, straightening up and looking rather proud of himself.

Rose hoped that he’d be alright, what he was about to do seemed crazy, but maybe it wasn’t with the right person. She glanced at the Doctor and he smiled at her, his green eyes bright with the familiar ‘I know something you don’t know’ energy. With a snap of the Doctor’s fingers, the TARDIS doors opened. Wanting to give Tegan a moment to collect herself and finish goodbye, Rose nodded to Ace and they stepped into the TARDIS.

Stopping suddenly, Rose looked around the console room in surprise. The bright brass and glass control room was gone, replaced with a dark metal room. Above the TARDIS column were two large wheel looking things with Gallifreyan script on them. The console itself seemed much smaller and more compact, gone were the odd bits and pieces from the Ninth Doctor’s TARDIS. She hoped that was a good sign, but wasn’t sure. Two sleeping men were gently propped up against another panel of controls to the side of the main console.

“It’s changed again,” Rose remarked softly. It was attractive she supposed, but she knew that she’d miss the brass design. Of course, she’d miss the coral too.

“I’m surprised that the TARDIS still smells the same,” Ace remarked softly, walking over to the sleeping men and gently checking on them.

“How are they?” Rose asked, moving to join her.

“Still asleep, but their breathing is normal. I just don’t know what the ship used. I’m a bit worried.”

“I’m sure they’ll be okay,” Rose assured her. “The Doctor can be a little…. Distracted at times, but he values life too much not to be worried if they weren’t okay.”

The conversation was cut short by the Doctor and Tegan coming into the TARDIS. Tegan lingered by the door as it closed while the Doctor strode over to the console. He glanced Rose’s way, his eyes taking the two extra passengers as Tegan walked over to join them. After a few moments of the Doctor pressing buttons and pulling levels the familiar grinding sound of the TARDIS rumbled in the console room.
The TARDIS shook as they moved and Rose gripped the railing tighter. The Doctor didn’t seem concerned by it and jumped over the prone forms of the two men who were shifting across the floor. Lunging forward, Rose grabbed one of them, almost falling on her face and tugged him back towards the rail where she could keep hold of him. Nearby Tegan did the same with Ace’s help.

“Bit bumpier than usual,” the Doctor called as he threw a large switch. “But we’re almost done.”

“What’s going on Doctor?!” Tegan shouted.

“Like I said, there’s some issues between the TARDIS and the animals’ energy. We’re passing through the same space as them right now.” The Doctor shook his head, “Probably should have gone all the way into the vortex, but didn’t want to risk arriving too much later!”

Then the rumbling stopped and Rose heard the normal wheezing of the TARDIS for a moment before everything settled into place.

“Okay, we’re back outside the mountain,” the Doctor called, looking over at them. “It should be quite a show ladies.”

Rose was first to the door and threw it open. They were in the car park and a quick glance around assured her that Tegan’s SUV was still there. Above her head, the night sky was starting to flicker with light. Stepping out of the TARDIS, Rose grinned and looked straight up into the night sky. Behind her, she heard Tegan and Ace step outside with small sounds of awe and excitement.

Pulling out her phone, Rose raised it up and quickly started recording the flashing colours in the sky. Around them, a strong wind was blowing and Rose could barely keep her hair out of her face. The Doctor was laughing with excitement and Rose couldn’t help but let a little laugh escape her.

Across the dark sky, brilliant animals made of different coloured lights were appearing, lighting up the night sky. They were running, jumping, swimming and flying through the air, all of them headed towards the Uluru. The shimmering figures circled Uluru, the glow becoming brighter and brighter until all of a sudden all of the animals cried out as one. It was a blend of birds chirping, eagles crying, lions roaring and hundreds of other sounds all blending together into a noisy symphony.

The lights swirled together, forming an eddy of light right above the mountain. It was so intense and bright that Rose had trouble even looking at the blending of reds, golds, blues and violets. The ground rumbled beneath their feet and Rose couldn’t breathe. In one blast of light, like a surge of water, the swirl of light shot down into the mountain. The pillar of light was too bright, forcing Rose to shield her eyes. There was a loud humming sound coming from within the mountain and for a terrible moment, Rose was terrified that Uluru was about to fall apart.

There was a charge of energy in the air for a moment, so strong that it was hard to breathe, but a moment later a large shimmering shape rose up from the mountain like a ghost. It was barely visible, just a shimmer of pale light surrounded by the brilliant shades, but Rose did her best to focus on it. The ship rose slowly through the air, the creatures vanishing inside of it in brilliant flashes of colour. In a swirl of colour everything collided and for a moment Rose was able to see the ship clearly, its large almond shape gleaming in the night sky. There was a loud thrum and the ship blasted up and out of site. Then everything went silent and still as the night sky returned to normal, leaving Rose looking up at many constellations she’d never seen before.
“Couldn’t you have towed the thing?” Tegan asked with a soft sigh of regret. “So Michael didn’t have to go?”

“Yeah I probably could have towed it from a distance, the TARDIS is stronger than she looks,” the Doctor admitted, “But your friend Michael is going to be needed on that ship. Trust me Tegan he’s where he should be.”

“But he’ll be dead before they even reach the planet!” Tegan shouted, looking at the Doctor with a hurt and betrayed expression that made Rose flinch.

“No they won’t,” the Doctor assured her in a rush. “I gave the engines a little boost and I may have slipped some special medicine into the system that feeds the pilot.”

“What did you slip in?” Rose asked with a soft smile, coming up to stand next to the Doctor.

“Oh, just a little something to boost his health and slow down his ageing a bit.”

“That might just confuse him,” Rose remarked.

“You said that he’d be old when he got there!” Tegan snapped, glaring at the Doctor.

“He needed to know the worst case scenario,” the Doctor told Tegan firmly. “He needed to understand what he was giving up before he made the choice. If anything goes wrong then he will be old by the time they get there.”

“You were testing him,” Ace huffed, a hint of disapproval in her voice. “He’s still stuck on that ship alone for decades.”

“Hey, I thought I was quite nice!” The Doctor protested with a pout. “I boosted the engines for him, I gave him medicine to keep him healthy enough to enjoy the new planet once he gets there and I copied the TARDIS media library into the ship’s databanks.”

“You did what?” Rose asked, slightly stunned. “Copied everything?”

“Yeah, all the movies, television shows and digital books that we’ve collected.”

“That’s a lot then?”

“Well, he’ll know how the next set of Star Wards movies are before you lot will.”

“There’s going to be a new set of Star Wars movies?” Ace repeated. “Really? After the last set?”

“Yep, but Disney will own the rights then.”

Ace and Tegan were now looking rather confused but recovered quickly enough to glare at the Doctor.

“And why couldn’t you just tow the ship Doctor?”

“Because your friend Michael is going to be talking to more than a few aliens on his way there, he builds the relationship foundations that will protect that new planet. Plus, he’s also due to cross paths and save a young space explorer who will join him in about two years if I remember my
history correctly. They settle down together and protect the world until they’re old and are successful in establishing it as a special designation wildlife reserve. Their kids are just as active in protecting the animals.”

“So he’s making real history,” Rose said as she looked up into the dark night sky. “Fixed point?”

“No, but a nice enough story that I didn’t want to change anything. Two hundred years from now in that part of the galaxy he’s considered an inspiring figure. Has a few schools named after him and a holiday.” The Doctor turned to look at Tegan with a soft smile. “I know you’ll miss him Tegan, but really he’s going to be just fine.”

She sighed softly but then nodded. Rose thought she still looked angry and Rose decided that she couldn’t blame Tegan for that. The Doctor hadn’t shared any of that earlier and had purposefully frightened Michael to test him. Wrapping her arm around the Doctor’s, Rose shook her head slightly. He would never be completely human, always a little strange to them.

With the Doctor’s help, they carried the two still unconscious men to Tegan’s SUV and got them belted in. While Tegan made worried noises, the Doctor assured her that they were going to be just fine and would wake up within two hours. Rose just wondered how weird it was going to be to get them into a hospital or at least the local clinic. She glanced at Ace who was eyeing them with a similarly irritated expression.

“We’ll just say that we found them near the car park after the weird lights vanished,” Rose suggested with a small shrug. “The clinic shouldn’t ask too many questions.”

“That light show would have been visible for miles,” Ace remarked, looking back into the sky. “I suspect there’s going to be a lot of questions about it, probably won’t be too many about a pair of unconscious men.”

“And if there is then Tegan can handle it,” Rose offered with a little smile.

“Well ladies,” the Doctor said dramatically, “It’s time for me to be off.” He spun on his heel and swept Tegan up in a warm hug. After a moment of surprise, Tegan smiled and returned the hug.

“I’d tell you to stay out of trouble Doctor, but really what’s the point,” Tegan said as the Doctor set her back on her feet. She didn’t look happy with him, but there was an expression of resignation on her face.

“As I once told my mother in law, trouble is just the bits in between,” the Doctor replied before spinning to hug Ace.

Rose had to bite back a laugh at the very idea of her mother being the Doctor’s mother-in-law. It was just so ridiculous and oh guardians of the universe she hoped they would get along. She had trouble envisioning the leather wearing Doctor and her mum getting along, but hoped that pinstriped Doctor and Jackie would.

“Mother-in-law,” Ace laughed as she hugged the Doctor. “Now that’s a strange concept for you.” Ace smiled up at the Doctor before her expression turned serious. “I’m happy for you Doctor, don’t doubt that but be careful cause if you hurt Rose I’ll have to kill you.”

“There’d be a line, trust me on that,” the Doctor told her honestly with a soft smile. “But understood Ace, you take care of yourself.”
Rose smiled as the Doctor turned to her and stepped forward. As his arms wrapped around her, she whispered, “I love you, but next time just tell us what’s going on before you cause a nervous breakdown.”

He didn’t reply, just hugged her a little tighter, maybe as a silent apology. As he pulled back, the Doctor kissed her quickly and squeezed her hand.

“Stay out of trouble,” he told Rose with a grin.

“I make no promises,” Rose answered with a shake of her head. “Get going Trouble.”

The Doctor laughed and stepped back into the TARDIS, the doors closing behind him a moment later. Rose sighed softly and stayed still as the TARDIS vanished into the night. The three of them were left standing alone in the quiet car park, but in the distance, Rose thought she could hear more vehicles, probably people speeding towards the mountain to find out what had just happened.

“So did you record the whole thing?” Tegan asked as they slowly started walking back to her SUV.

“Most of it,” Rose replied. “Thought I’d send it out to the club.”

“Ah, a guess what we did today video,” Ace laughed, glancing towards Tegan.

“Oh stop that,” Tegan snapped, giving them both a look. “I’m fine, I’m irritated with that blasted alien of yours Rose, but I’m fine. Michael will be okay, that’s good to know and regardless of my feeling on the matter I know that he’ll be happy making a difference.”

Still, Rose paused and reached over to give Tegan a one armed hug. On the other side, Ace did the same and they nearly fell over as they kept trying to walk to the SUV. Tegan laughed and shrugged off their arms when they all nearly tripped on a speed bump.

“So what now?” Ace asked, looking over at Rose. “I’m not due back in New York for a few more days. I thought this would take longer.”

“Me too,” Rose agreed with a small smile and nod. “But we should go and meet Tegan’s kids!”

“Very true,” Ace replied with a widening, almost evil smile. “They should have a chance to meet Mummy’s friends.”

“I agree, we have all sorts of stories we can tell them,” Rose added, looking at Tegan who was turning an interesting shade of red with wide eyes “But right now we should probably get out of here before UNIT Australia descends on us,” Rose added a bit more seriously.

“Doesn’t UNIT like you?” Tegan asked, snapping out of her stunned silence.

“Yeah, but I want to meet you kids and then maybe spend a few days in Sydney to see the sights and spend some time on the beach. It’s winter right now in England after all. I’d rather not be stuck making statements.”

“So you won’t be telling them?” Ace asked with a slight frown.

“Oh no, I’ll tell them once I’m ready to go home. I’ll fill out all the reports and submit a full
written statement that will largely consist of: the Doctor did it,” Rose assured them with a giggle. “I wouldn’t get paid otherwise.”

“There are moments I sort of hate you,” Ace remarked, shaking her head and climbing into the passenger seat. “Though your plan for Sydney sounds good, want some company?”

“Of course Ace,” Rose agreed with smile as she carefully climbed in next to the two unconscious men. “Wouldn’t be half as much fun without you.”

“Okay you two that’s enough,” Tegan cut in, shaking her head, but she couldn’t hide her small smile of amusement. She climbed into the front seat and started the SUV. “You can meet my kids, but then I’m kicking you to the curb. I’ll have a lot to do in helping the locals deal with this mess.”
Life Not Lived: Awake

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Twenty-Six: Life Not Lived: Awake

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

The sunlight streaming in through the windows started to wake Rose up even before the soft beeping of the alarm clock by her bed started. With a soft groan, she rolled over and tapped the off button at the side of the clock. She lingered in bed for a few more minutes, staring up at the soft rose coloured fabric of her canopy.

“Maybe it’s time for a colour change,” she murmured softly. “Red might be nice, a nice light red or is that too close to pink?” she asked out loud. She turned her head and looked towards the large window where sunlight was creeping in between the long white curtains. It would be warm enough to leave the window open soon during the night and get rid of the last stuffiness of winter.

Rose sighed softly and told herself to get up to no avail. There was a lingering sense of a weird dream in her mind. She’d been having it or at least she thought she’d been having it for a long time, but now there was a growing sense of…. Rose wasn’t sure and sighed again. It was just a dream, no sense getting all worked up over it.

She shrugged to herself and sat up, pushing back the thick rose coloured duvet that her mother had given her a few years ago. Her feet hit the lush cream carpet and Rose stumbled over to her vanity. She held off looking in the mirror for a moment, grabbed her brush and closed her eyes and she gently began to work out the worst of the sleep knots. When she was done, Rose grabbed her dressing gown and went through a white door on the other side of the room.

Her ensuite bathroom gleamed in the soft light coming through the translucent glass windows, but Rose barely noticed. She turned on the hot water for her shower and finally looked at her reflection in the massive wall mirror that filled half of the pale blue wall. Her hair was still a little matted in spots and she had marks around her eyes from not getting all her makeup off the night before. Grumbling, Rose climbed into the shower and let the hot water finish waking her up and began mentally taking a tally of what was on her agenda for the day.

When she came out of the toilet, scrubbed clean with only slightly damp hair after spending some time with the hair dryer, Rose walked into her massive closet. She lingered for a few minutes before she selected her outfit for the day, settling on dark jeans and a dressy top. Once she was dressed, she sat down at the vanity and did up her makeup, carefully applying her eyeliner and lip gloss. With a smile of satisfaction, Rose stood up and combed out her quickly drying hair.

She glanced over at the photo calendar that hung over the small desk tucked back in the corner next to a tall bookshelf. It was 25 March 2005, and Rose once again had the odd feeling that she was forgetting something. But there was nothing written on the calendar. She looked around the room, eyeing the violin case propped up against the desk and the sheet music scattering across the desktop around her laptop. Nothing came to mind. Picking up her phone, Rose checked her digital
calendar, but again there was nothing.

Stepping out the door, Rose glanced down the long hallway, the wooden floor mostly covered by a long red runner down the entire length of the hallway. Already the staff were at work, dusting off the nearby hall table and the frames of the paintings. Rose stopped by one of them, they were nice enough she supposed, hung with expert lighting, but her mother had only gotten them because they were fashionable. Rose didn’t think anyone in the family actually liked the modern art pieces.

“Your father is already downstairs Miss Tyler,” one of the maids informed with a smile. “Have a good day.”

“Thank you, Rebecca, you too,” Rose replied with a wide smile, heading for the staircase.

The staircase was the centrepiece of the house, perfectly designed for grand entrances at the social functions that were held here, something her mother loved. Rose glanced around before she sat on the bannister and slowly slid down the sloping arm of the staircase. It was a brief rush that ended with her nearly falling on her face at the bottom. She caught herself and grabbed onto the bannister while she overcame the rush of dizziness before moving on.

Walking into the dining room had always made Rose feel very small and dirty, but her mother insisted on using the formal dining room. The only times Rose ate at the large kitchen table were when she and her father slipped down in the middle of the night for snacks or when her mother was ill. The room was massive with a huge long table with white marble flooring and white walls with a few landscapes hanging on them. Several chandeliers hung over the table giving the place its illumination and glittering in each other’s light.

Sitting at the head of the table with an open newspaper obscuring half of his face as a man dressed in a tailor black suit. As Rose strode over to join him, a small petite woman hurried out from the open door connecting the kitchen to the dining room with two steaming plates. She set one in front of the man who began to fold up his newspaper and the other in front of Rose. As he set his paper aside, the man looked at the maid. “Nothing for my wife?”

“She wasn’t feeling up to breakfast this morning Mr Tyler,” the maid apologised. “We’ll have something ready for her once she is up.”

“Very well,” he sighed, nodding to dismiss the maid. Then he turned to Rose and smiled. “Morning sweetheart.”

“Morning Daddy,” Rose greeted with a smile of her own as she surveyed her own plate. It wasn’t a traditional English breakfast like she’d had yesterday. Instead, they had hotcakes and a side of blueberries. “How did you sleep?”

“Fine,” he answered shortly and Rose grimaced. She glanced around to make sure they were alone. “Did you and Mum fight again?”

Pete Tyler sighed but nodded. “I’m afraid so, I don’t think I even did anything this time.”

“Mum’s just been… on edge lately,” Rose offered weakly.

Her father gave her a soft look but shook his head. “Maybe honey, but I’ve alerted the staff to move my things to another room.”
“Oh…are you two going to…” she couldn’t bring herself to ask the question.

“No, not yet at least,” he assured her, reaching out and putting his hand over hers. “I’m hoping some space will help. With me home more now, we’ve been tripping over each other all the time.”

Rose knew that the problems had been going on much longer than that, but it was clear that her father didn’t want to talk about. Instead, she just gave him a supportive smile and turned her attention to eating Sophia’s amazing hotcakes.

“Any plans for the day?” her father asked her with a smile. “You won’t be on break forever you know.”

“I know,” Rose answered with a nod. “It’s weird, but I miss school. The routine, the work and seeing everyone.”

“You’ve never been a social butterfly like your mother,” her Dad observed with a laugh. “You’re too much like me, you want to be busy and get things done.”

“I don’t know how mum stays home all the time.”

“She doesn’t,” her father chuckled before sighing, “Her credit cards prove that.”

They made small talk, Rose asking her father about the big news stories and how things were at work. Only last week, he’d had let go one of the vice presidents due to employee complaints mounting up against him. There wasn’t anything so impressive this week, but her father was clearly distracted. Frowning, Rose pushed around the remains of her hotcakes and tried to think of how to cheer him up.

“I’m alright sweetheart,” her Dad said suddenly, giving her a warm smile. “A bit distracted, but you shouldn’t worry.”

“You worry about me, Daddy,” Rose reminded him with a small smile.

“You’re my baby girl,” her Dad replied. “That’s my job, to look after my girls.” He pushed his plate back and stood up, smoothing out his dark suit. Leaning forward, he kissed Rose’s head gently and whispered, “I love you Rose, have a good day.” Without another word, he walked out of the door, his footsteps echoing on the floor slightly.

Rose lingered in the dining room for a few more minutes, finishing up her breakfast before she got out of the staff’s way. She stuck her head into the kitchen to shout her thanks to Sophia for breakfast. Uncertain of what to do with herself, Rose wandered the ground floor of the mansion, glancing into the parlour where her mother entertained guests, the small gallery with the major parts of the art collection and the library that pretty much no one else ever used. She walked into the music room that originally had been just for show until Rose had shown some musical talent at the age of six. Since then, her mum had been determined to have a properly cultured daughter.

Walking over to the black grand piano, Rose moved around it in a circle, running her fingers gently over the smooth painted wood. Sitting down on the bench, Rose pushed her hair over her shoulders and sat up straight. Her fingers brushed over the smooth and cool keys, but she didn’t press any of them yet. She tilted her head and considered the black key for a moment before pressing one of them down. The low and deep note filled the space and echoed perfectly. Still not really playing anything, Rose pressed another key and then another. The familiar tones were comforting, but
Rose was still at a loss for the odd sense of melancholy hanging over her. One of the older maids walked into the room, nodding to Rose and gently began to dust the cabinets and windowsills. Rose watched her for a few moments before shaking her head, turning her attention back to the piano.

Resting her fingers on the keys, she took in a slow breath, placed her foot on the pedal and began to play. She started with Mozart, a slow piano sonata that she thought fit her present state. The music filled the room, precise with every note in place and in the perfect rhythm. But it didn’t feel right and Rose changed songs, shifting into Beethoven’s fifth. That inspired no change in her mood and she settled on playing the chorus from Don’t Stop Believing. It made her feel a tiny bit better, but then with a huff of frustration, Rose pressed down three keys at one and pulled her hand back.

“Are you alright miss?” the maid asked warmly. “You don’t seem to be yourself today.”

“I’m fine, I don’t feel sick or anything, Janice,” Rose assured her quickly, pulling her fingers off the piano keys. “Probably just bored.”

Janice chuckled and shook her head. “Your break won’t last forever Rose, you should go out and enjoy your time off. You’ll be back at school in no time.”

That was true enough, but Rose didn’t think the problem was university or lack thereof. There was something else, a lingering sense of wanting something else or more, missing something. Which was foolish, she was the only child of a multimillionaire and his famous socialite wife, she’d grown up wealthy, well that wasn’t totally true. Her father had made his fortune when she was two so she didn’t know any other life.

“Oh are you sulking around the house?” her mum asked, walking into the room with a teasing smile.

Jackie Tyler was dressed in a stylish pantsuit with her long dyed blonde hair pulled back in a bun. Rose wondered if her mum was even going to leave the house today, she tended to dress up just because she could. Her mum moved over to the large gold ornate mirror on the wall that reflected sunlight into the room.

“Uh… no,” Rose responded to the question slowly.

“Go into town and do some shopping,” her mum said firmly as she studied her reflection in the mirror. “It’ll help you feel better.” Her mother’s rough cockney accent reverberated around the room, it had softened over the years, but it was still distinct. A strong contrast to Rose’s own more refined accent.

“Shopping isn’t really my thing,” Rose pointed out to her mother.

“So don’t shop, go to a museum, you like that. Just get out of the house and stop acting so depressed. Honestly Rose when your father and I were your age we had nothing. We were just two poor kids and you were just around the corner.” Jackie sighed and smiled softly. “If your father hadn’t gotten so lucky with those little schemes of his then I can’t imagine where we’d be today.” Jackie laughed and turned to look at Rose properly. “Well, you wouldn’t have attended all those fancy schools.”

“Yes Mum,” Rose replied, knowing there wasn’t really anything else she was supposed to say. “Maybe going into town is a good idea.”
“That’s my girl, off you go then!”

Having no choice in the matter now, Rose returned to her room to grab her purse and headed for the garage, trying to be positive about going into London. The Tyler’s impressive garage had several cars parked inside, all of them shining in the hanging lights. Rose eyed her mum’s favourite, a beautiful classic Porsche that had only been driven three times. A real shame in Rose’s book, but she wasn’t brave enough to try to add a fourth. Instead, she climbed into her own little red car, hit the button and carefully backed out onto the drive. Her father was standing in the doorway of the house, his cup of coffee in one hand as he waved to her with the other. Grinning, Rose returned the wave quickly and shifted the car into drive, heading for London.
Once in London, Rose called up a classmate and arranged to meet her. Mary was spending her break interning in a law office and could only meet her for a little while at a nearby coffee shop, but Rose was happy for the company.

“You’ve been getting weird the last few months,” Mary remarked with a frown, taking a sip of her tea.

“Have I?” Rose asked with a frown of her own, leaning on her hand. “I suppose so,” she said a moment later. “I’m not sure why?”

“Is everything okay at home?” Mary asked carefully. “You’ve said that your parents are having problems.”

“That’s been going on for years,” Rose replied with a shake of her head. “I think I’m past breaking down over the realisation that my parents don’t have a perfect relationship. A divorce could be messy, but Daddy and Mum love me too much to risk going overboard.”

“Then what else could it be?” Mary asked, leaning back in her chair and studying Rose carefully. “You’ve been staring off into space, saying strange things from time to time and you seem so restless.”

“I’m sorry,” Rose apologised. “I’m not sure what’s wrong with me. There’s just this nagging feeling like I’m forgetting something, I’ve had it for a while now.”

“Do you remember when it started?”

“No,” Rose told her, shaking her head. “It’ll pass I’m sure, but in the meantime, I just have this weird sense of… apprehension. Like something is coming.”

“Spooky,” Mary remarked with a raised eyebrow.

“Shut up,” Rose huffed; pouting slightly and turning her attention back to her own tea and cupcake.

The conversation turned to Mary’s internship at her father’s law office and Rose did her best to seem interested, but her distraction was like a painful itch where she couldn’t reach. Mary’s phone chirped and she hugged Rose quickly, saying goodbye before dashing off down the street, her long dark hair fluttering behind her. Sighing, Rose left the coffee shop and wandered the neighbourhood for a bit, looking up at the tall glass and steel office buildings before she decided to move on.
The British Museum was her next stop and it proved to be a decent distraction for much of the day. She grew bored with the famous Egyptian and Greek artefacts and instead spent most of her time in the small galleries of ancient British treasures. Still, she couldn’t shake a sense of foreboding and that she was forgetting something.

Her phone rang and Rose quickly looked around and grimaced with a silent apology to the other museum patrons. The guard was looking at her with disapproval and Rose stepped off to the side and brought the phone up to her ear.

“Hello?”

“Rose,” her mother said, “I’m going out to dinner with Margaret and your father is working late. Do you want the staff to make you up something?”

“No mum,” Rose replied, barely holding back a sigh. “I think I’ll stay in town a bit longer.”

“Alright sweetheart, have fun,” her mum cheered before ending the call.

Ending the call, Rose looked down at the phone and checked the time. No wonder the museum was clearing out a bit, dinner time was fast approaching. She considered what to do for a moment before she turned on her heel and headed out of the museum.

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Rose shifted the plastic take out bag to her other hand and pulled open the heavy door that led into her father’s office building. It had been a surprisingly quick trip across town and then just a short walk from the office buildings underground car park to the nearby restaurant. Above her head, the steel and glass building gleaming in the light of the descending sun. The main receptionist jumped up when Rose entered.

“Hello, Miss Tyler? Can I help you with that?”

“No thank you,” Rose told her with a smile, unable to remember her name. It was D something, but she could never quite manage to keep it in her head. Doris maybe, no that didn’t sound right. “Dad’s just working late and Mum has plans with a friend so I thought I’d grab something and we’d have a little dinner.”

“How thoughtful,” she said, reaching down and pressing a button. “Go ahead and go up, I’ll let him know that you’re coming.”

“Thank you and have a good evening,” Rose told her with a smile.

Pete Tyler’s office was the largest in the building; something that Rose thought made her father uncomfortable. As a result, he had positioned the furniture to build as comfortable a space as possible. While his large wooden desk and leather seats filled the entire side of the room by the largest window, a smaller round table with three soft looking chairs was set up in one corner where he usually had his small meetings. A credenza along the far wall held many pictures of Rose herself through the years. There was her father’s favourite photo of them on a carousel together with him holding her on a brightly painted horse all the way to a recent photo of Rose in a formal gown with her cello at a recent performance.

“Hello honey,” her father greeted, rising to his feet from behind the large wooden desk with a large
“Hi Daddy,” Rose replied with a soft smile of her own as she held up the bag. “I come bearing gifts.”

“You’re so good to me,” her Dad said, walking around the desk and shrugging out of his dark grey suit jacket.

They sat down at the small round table and Rose spread the small Indian food boxes around in front of them. It was a quite meal with him catching her up on a few things that had occurred that day. Rose told him about seeing Mary for a bit and going to the British Museum. Rose felt some of the odd tension she’d been carrying around all day ease a little, it was nice just to just have a little time with her father to herself.

“We should go somewhere this weekend,” her father suggested suddenly as he leaned back in his chair and pushed the empty take out box away from him. “Just you and me, some proper father-daughter time.”

“That would be nice,” Rose agreed with a grin.

“Where would you like to go?”

“I don’t know, somewhere quiet I think,” Rose suggested with a small shrug.

“Maybe north then, you mother likes to go to Europe so I’ve never taken you north. We could see a few of the ancient sites.”

“Like what?”

“Well I remember seeing Hadrian’s Wall when I was fifteen,” her father said with a wistful look. “And we could stay at some smaller places and eat in the local pubs, nothing flashy or fancy.”

Rose nodded in agreement, it did sound nice and it would be boring so the press wouldn’t be following them around. Only recently, she’d been able to get them to leave her alone. Thankfully there were plenty of other rich girls who were much more interesting than her, no matter how much her mother insisted it would help her music career. She was a classical musician after all, not a pop singer and Rose wasn’t really sure that she’d even keep that up once she was done with college.

The phone rang, ending their conversation. Her father gave Rose an apologetic look, but she just smiled and kissed on the cheek quickly before seeing herself out. After leaving her father’s office and tossing out the take out boxes, Rose left her car there and wandered around the area. It felt good to stretch her legs and Rose looked around at the office buildings that alternated between brick and steel. People were bustling about in a rush of noise and bodies, many talking on their phones. Up ahead Victoria station was jammed packed with crowds vanishing down to the subways and heading inside to board trains. Rose turned around and decided to head down towards the river. She followed the long street of office buildings and post-war brick housing. The traffic thickened and the street lights began to turn on as the sun dipped lower and lower in the sky.

The cool air of the March evening felt good on her face and Rose walked calmly across Westminster Bridge. Off to her side, the London Eye was brightly lit and turning slowly. People were moving about on South Bank, heading to one attraction or another. Rose wondered what had
drawn her here for the evening. She had some new memories of the area from coming here with her parents as a child.

Rose stepped off the bridge and began to follow the path along the Thames before heading away from the South Bank to look at some of the shops. Small shops filled the street by South Bank, many of them simply for tourists with a few good stores thrown into the mix. Glancing around at the small shop displays, Rose pulled out her phone and began texting her mate Katherine. Maybe she just needed to make some real plans for the rest of break, she should have gone to France like her mum first suggested.

Movement in the corner of her eye made Rose look up from her phone. Around her, she could hear other people talking and some shouting. It took her a moment to realise what she had seen, but the small display in the window of the shop had a dummy that was moving. She stared at it, nearly laughing at the sharp jerky motions of its arms. As it moved, the blond wig it was wearing slid off the head, leaving it only in the loose skirt and blouse. It unnaturally pointed toes suddenly shifted and it took a slow step on now flat feet.

“What in the world?” Rose asked even as the woman next to her began to clap.

“Mummy, I want one!” A child shouted somewhere nearby.

A shiver rushed up Rose’s spine, the feeling that she’d always connected with the phrase ‘someone walked over my grave’, only twice as intense. Her chest was tight and she sick to her stomach. For some reason, her hand dropped to her side, straightened out and her fingers itched for… something.

Then the moving dummy swung its arm forward, crashing it into the glass window. The glass shattered and it stumbled down out of the display. Taking a step back, Rose felt the urge to run taking over. A few people were still moving closer to the thing, but Rose could feel that something was very wrong. With a sharp movement, the dummy turned to face the nearest person and raised its hand. The stiff plastic flipped down, revealing a tube. Rose made a small sound of alarm, but it was too late. There was a sharp boom and the person fell to the ground. The shop window dummy turned on the next nearest person who was scrambling away.

Rose ran towards the river, listening to the shouts and screams echoing in the city behind her. She had no real idea of where she going, there was a just an urgent sense of run and get away quickly. The South Bank crowds were thinner than usual, the restaurants packed with people eating their dinners and the bright lights illuminating the wide concert spans in the darkness of night. Rose kept running as the sounds of screaming behind her became louder and louder. Turning to look behind her, Rose ran into a barrier which knocked all the air out of her lungs.

Just below her was an access tunnel, dark red light spilling out of it. From deep below Rose could hear shouting and a strange gravelly noise. The sound of electric sparks made her look up in alarm at the London Eye. It had stopped moving and the long metal supports were shimmering with electrical sparks. The ground beneath her began to sway and the sound of explosives echoed up from down the access tunnel. Backing away, Rose turned and ran once again, joining the mass of people trying to escape the shop window dummies as they marched towards the people out of the side streets.

Then everything stopped the dummies spasmed randomly for several seconds before they fell over. Slipping out of the crowd, Rose stared down at the suddenly unmoving lumps of plastic. Around her people were still shouting, screaming and crying. In the distance, she could hear sirens and she looked around. There were several bodies nearby her, a few gunned down, but a few others looking
more like they’d been crushed by the stampede. Covering her mouth, Rose turned away and looked back at the river. She steadied herself on the barrier and slowly began to walk away, not realising she was heading back the way she’d come. Time slipped away from Rose and the sirens grew closer and closer.

Sitting down on the small wall by the river, Rose breathed in the night air and tried to calm down. There was a hint of smoke in the air and she wondered if it was gunpowder. Tightening her jacket around her, Rose told herself that she needed to get up and find her car. Then she heard loud talking and sirens down the walk. Standing up, Rose followed the noises and found herself standing at the edge of a police line. But it wasn’t the regular police there; instead, there was a small group of two women and three men with a military ambulance. The insignia on their shoulders was one that Rose had never seen before: UNIT. She wondered if they had been called in to help with the cleanup. She paused and felt ill; she’d gotten away but was left wondering how many people those things had killed.

Another pair of men suddenly appeared from out of an access hole, the same one she’d heard the terrible explosions from earlier, carefully handling a long covered stretched. When they got it top side with the help of the others, they placed it on a normal rolling stretcher. Rose was frozen on the spot; her heart aching for some unknown reason as they carefully pushed the covered stretcher away.

“From the evidence, I'd say he managed to stop the source of the moving plastic. The area is filled with some kind of chemical and unknown technology.” one man said into his earpiece, a deep frown on his face. “Over.”

“And where is he now? Over,” another voice asked, Rose, leaned forward, straining to hear the conversation.

“We found a body, sir. Over.”

“Is it him? Over.” Rose heard as she moved down the barrier, following the slant of the walkway, her eyes locked on the stretcher.

“I think so. He just didn't make it out in time.”

Rose’s throat felt even more constricted now, the stretcher moving right past her towards the ambulance. Then as they lifted the stretcher, one arm fell into sight, clad in black leather. A strange silver tube with a dull blue tip dropped to the ground and rolled away, unseen by the uniformed men. It stopped a few feet away, just beyond the blocked off area, looking discarded and forgotten.

“The Doctor is dead,” the first man said sadly. “Must have happened too fast for him to regenerate. Escort the ambulance back to UNIT base.”

Still stuck to her spot, Rose watched the ambulance drive away. Strange words were rattled around in her head and she suddenly became aware of tears rolling down her cheeks. Raising a bare hand to brush them away, Rose gasped for breath.

“Are you alright?” another bystander asked her, voice soft with concern. “Did you know him?”

“No…,” Rose answered, shaking her head quickly. “No, I didn’t.”

She slipped away from the woman before any more questions could be asked, her eyes fixed on the
strange tube that the man had dropped. A few men in uniform were still moving about, but they
paid her no mind. Creeping forward, Rose slowly bent down and picked it up, compelled to do so.
She shoved it in her purse, turned on her heel and started walking back into London, determined to
find her car in the madness and get home where she was safe and everything made sense.
The strange metallic tube with the blue tip taunted Rose from its place on her desk. When she’d gotten home and assured her parents that she was safe, she’d deposited the strange thing in a mug that held pens and pencils. It had stayed there since, the blue tip catching the light in strange ways whenever she looked over at it. Just the sight of the thing sent an odd shiver down her spine that she couldn’t quite explain. It was surreal and made her feel like she was in some kind of weird show or part of an experiment.

She could justify crying when they took that body away. Someone had died, that was sad and tragic and she’d never seen a dead body before. Just on TV and most of the time that was part of a show or movie, it wasn’t real, but that… whatever it had been was real. So she could understand being sad. But she couldn’t understand why she had grabbed the strange tube and taken it home with her. She couldn’t understand that odd sense of déjà vu that she got when she was brave enough to pick it up and look at it. She couldn’t understand why when that feeling of déjà vu crept her out she put it back into the cup rather than throwing it away.

Rose sighed loudly from the edge of her bed where she was brushing out her blonde hair in preparation for what she hoped would be a good night’s sleep. She eyed the metal tube for a moment before standing up and setting her brush back on the vanity. Turning off the light, Rose climbed into bed and turned out the small lamp on the nightstand, sending the room into darkness. Exhaling slowly, she looked up at the soft faded fabric of her canopy.

The house was quiet, everyone else in bed or gone for the night. Rose brought her hands up to rest on her chest and adjusted her palm so she could feel the soft beat of her own heart. Suddenly she saw a beaming smile, soft brown eyes and wild brown hair and felt another beat underneath her hand. Then it was gone and Rose gasped, shaking herself as she looked around the room. Nothing was out of place and there were no strange noises from anywhere in the house. She rolled onto her side, watching the door and shoved her hand underneath the pillow. With a soft huff, Rose closed her eyes tightly and focused on her breathing, slowing it down and telling herself over and over that she was sleepy.

A man in a leather coat grabbed her hand, sending a jolt of warmth up her arm as he pulled her away from the man who was looming over her. All about she could hear the odd crackling sound of broken machines, but that quickly faded away as she pulled further and further from the danger. A door was slammed open and she sucked in a greedy breath of fresh air. It was hard not to cry, she wanted to, she wanted to scream and run away or curl up in a little ball and hide. But she didn’t, she tried to control herself and looked at the man who’d taken her hand. He was tall and dressed in a familiar black leather coat and holding a silver metal tube. A shiver of recognition went through Rose and suddenly she couldn’t breathe, let alone speak.
Gasping for air, Rose jolted away and began to cough. She rolled to the side and took several deep breaths around the coughs, trying to regain some control over herself. Shivering, Rose tried to shake off the dream and waited for it to fade away like dreams were supposed to. Instead, it lingered and clung to the forefront of her thoughts despite her attempts to focus on something else. She threw back the duvet and swung her feet down. The wooden floor was cool against the soles of her feet and she shivered again. A glance at the clock told Rose that it was early, but not too early.

“Might as well get going,” Rose muttered to herself as she reached over and turned on the bedside lamp.

Across the room, the metal tube glinted in the light, almost like it was mocking her. With a growl of frustration, Rose launched herself off the bed and strode across the room. She pulled the strange tube out of the cup roughly, sending the contents spilling across the desk. Rose moved to throw the strange tube into the waste basket, but her fingers slipped over its surface and it suddenly vibrated in her hand. A soft whirling noise, the same noise from her dream filled the room and the small blue tip lit up with a soft light.

Gasping, Rose dropped the tube and it clattered to the floor. The sound vanished and the blue light went out without even flickering. It took Rose a few moments to recover from her surprise, but finally, she bent over and picked up the strange tube. She glanced towards the waste basket and took another step towards it. A sharp sense of wrongness threatened to overwhelm her and nearly sent to her staggering to her knees. Rose’s stomach turned over and she tasted a rush of bile in her mouth. She turned and quickly slapped the metal tube back onto the desk, sending a few pens rolling off the edge of the desk. The strange feelings vanished and Rose slowly released the tube as she caught her breath.

“Bloody hell.”

Her legs started to give out and Rose stumbled back, her legs hitting the bed and she fell down on the soft surface. Breathing in and out slowly, Rose eyed the strange tube for a moment before she closed her eyes. But then, strange events began to play out in front of her eyes.

She was in some kind of small chip shop, the scent of the chips surrounding her as she sat at a small table. In front of her was a strange robot shaped vaguely like a dog and she turned to look at the person sitting next to her. It was a man with wild brown hair and intense brown eyes that were focused on the robot.

“It’s complicated having you near her,” the man told her, breaking the strange silicone that seemed to hang over them. “Donna knows that you are missing and were involved with me.”

“She hasn’t said anything,” Rose heard her own voice say. She could feel her lips moving but had no control. “She keeps looking at me strangely, but she hasn’t said anything.”

“Good,” the man replied. “That could damage the time lines. You shouldn’t be interacting with people from your future too much.”

“I interact with you.”

“I’m a Time Lord,” the man told her with a small shrug. “I just don’t want what Donna knows to upset our timeline.”

“Okay,” Rose heard and felt herself say. “I understand.” Her lips curved into a smile when the man
turned to look at her. “It’s okay.”

He nodded to her, his eyes bright with… Rose shivered internally. Then he looked back at the robot dog. “For twenty-first-century technology, you did really well.” Then he dug into his pocket for a moment and then pulled out a sleek black and silver pen with a very familiar blue crystal on the end. “Here, this should help.”

“This looks like your sonic screwdriver,” Rose heard herself say.

“Sonic pen; took it off of a rather nasty alien nanny,” the man said with a chuckle. “I was going to toss it, but thought you’d be able to use it.”

“Alien nanny,” Rose repeated as she turned the pen over in her hand. “Being with you is like tossing opposite words together and seeing what comes up.” She grinned at him as he turned to look at her. He returned the warm smile and shifted his hand to quickly squeeze her own, sending a rush of warmth through Rose. “Thank you.”

Rose groaned and slumped back on the covers of her bed, pulling her body into the fetal position. Her head was aching, her heart was pounding and her mind was racing. That… vision had been so real, but she hadn’t had any control and certainly didn’t remember it. That man had the same sort of tube that was on her desk, almost mocking her. A sonic pen, no, sonic screwdriver.

“It isn’t real,” Rose told herself, shaking her head stubbornly. “You’re just in shock from those living dummies, that’s all. Your mind is just playing tricks on you.”

She breathed in and out slowly, closing her eyes and trying to relax. But the image of the brown haired man’s face kept popping up in front of her, making her heart speed up against her will. Then the other face of the man she’d dreamt about appeared, he had icy blue eyes and stern features, but he was smiling at her. Groaning, Rose lowered her head until it touched her knees. She fell asleep like that and that was how the morning maid found her the next day, with tear tracks on her cheeks.

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The door opened and Rose walked into the doctor’s main office. It was nice, professional and clean, but there was a certain cosiness to the place thanks to the thick rug, overstuffed chairs and polished wooden desk that matched the small tables placed around the room.

“Welcome Miss Tyler,” a thin woman in her late fifties greeted, stepping forward with a smile and holding out her hand for Rose to shake. “It’s very nice to meet you.”

“Thank you for seeing me Doctor Blake,” Rose said politely, pushing down the urge to turn and walk out the door.

“It’s okay to be nervous,” Doctor Blake assured her, gesturing toward a comfortable looking sofa that was up against the wall near a shelf full of books. “Please sit down.”

Rose nodded and tried to look calm and relaxed. She was certain that Doctor Blake wasn’t fooled by it, but her pride demanded that she at least make the effort. Dropping her purse by the sofa, Rose sank down onto the soft surface. Her fingers brushed over the well-worn fabric, taking comfort in the very real and solid feel of it.
“Tell me about yourself Miss Tyler,” Doctor Blake said as she sat in the overstuffed chair near Rose’s arm. She had a soft neutral smile on her face and Rose briefly wondered how long it took to perfect. It was warm and comforting, but not friendly or involved. Perfect for a doctor who had to keep a professional distance she supposed.

“Well my first name is Rose; my parents are Pete and Jackie Tyler. You might have heard of them in the news. I’m nineteen years old… probably way too young to be here. I spent most of my childhood in my present home. When I was born, my parents didn’t have much money, but my dad… well people say he’s got the golden touch or an angel watching over him. When I was just a baby everything started going right for him. His inventions were purchased and every little scheme worked. I remember it driving my mum crazy.” Rose gave a weak laugh and swallowed.

“Would you say that your childhood was happy?”

“Yes, I would. I always wanted siblings, but that never happened, but that’s my only complaint. I went to really good schools. I actually speak four languages already and I’m working on a fifth. Mum and Dad let me learn what I wanted to and supported me when I decided to pursue music. Even when I wasn’t the best student, they always assured me that they loved me and were proud of me as long as I did my best. Dad’s never tried to pressure me to follow in his footsteps or anything.”

“And college? You’re in university correct?”

“At Imperial College London, I’m a music student, but I’m also taking some business classes. Just so I understand money, I don’t want to be irresponsible with it.”

“And you enjoy school?”

“I do,” Rose said quickly. “The professors and excellent and I’m only a first-year student so things aren’t too difficult yet. I have a lot of friends in a lot of different fields which means that things are never boring.”

“Alright Miss Tyler, so tell me in your own words what you think the trouble is.”

“I don’t think I’m crazy,” Rose said firmly. “But I keep having strange dreams, they are really distracting and I’m not getting much sleep so I’m so sleeping that I’m seeing things or remembering things that didn’t really happen.”

“I see,” Doctor Blake said in a very neutral tone. “Is there anything that you think might be behind the dreams?”

“Well my parents are having problems; they’re probably heading for divorce. It’s always been the three of us, we’re really close and I have no siblings. I suppose that is upsetting me a lot and I saw those moving shop dummies right after I found out about their problems.”

“So you have two incidents: one very personal and one very frightening that your mind is trying to make sense of at the same time,” Doctor Blake observed with a nod. “Well Miss Tyler, I agree that you’re not crazy. I don’t want to just give you some pills and send you away. I think what will help you most is telling me about these dreams and false memories that you have.”

“Uh… they are very strange,” Rose told her nervously.
“Sexual? Violent?”

“Well… some are a little sexual I guess,” Rose admitted thinking of the dreams with that brown-haired man and the strange flashes of him that she saw even while awake. She’d had boyfriends before, but…. “And some are sort of violent,” she added quickly, fighting down a blush.

“That’s nothing strange Miss Tyler,” Doctor Blake assured her. “Please remember that everything you tell me is confidential, but talking about these things will help you understand them and process them.”

“If you think it will help…,” Rose said slowly, taking in a deep breath. “Well, I guess it all starts the night of those moving shop dummies a few days ago. I was down by the river after running away from some of them and I saw these troops take this body away. They talked about him like they knew him and it was the first time I ever saw a dead body. I felt… heartbroken when I saw him.”

“Go on,” Doctor Blake urged her gently.

Rose nodded and went on to talk about the dreams she’d been having, but for some reason, she couldn’t bring herself to tell Doctor Blake about that metal tube, the sonic screwdriver, that she’d picked up. Somehow, for some reason, she couldn’t tell her and risk Doctor Blake wanting to take it from her. Even though she had a bad feeling that she’d regret that decision.
Life Not Lived: Disasters Beginning

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Twenty-Nine: Life Not Lived: Disasters Beginning

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

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Rose carefully packed her school books for the day into the messenger bag, doing her best to ignore the sonic screwdriver that was sitting near the edge of her desk. In some ways, she realised with a sigh, she felt better knowing what it was called. Not that it really made anything easier. Her fingers brushed over the small leather journal that Doctor Blake had suggested she buy. Rose paused her packing and carefully picked it up.

Inside were written descriptions of her dreams over the last couple of weeks and any hallucinations that occurred. There were a couple of drawings scattered throughout the journal. They weren’t very good and it frustrated Rose greatly. She had this weird nagging feeling that she could draw a lot better than that, but her fingers just didn’t work with her.

Sitting down on the edge of the bed, Rose studied the rough drawings of the brown-eyed man with the wild hair that filled one page. On the next page was a drawing of the blue-eyed man, the one that Rose was certain she’d seen being taken away by UNIT. There was a page with other faces too, less familiar, but ones that she just couldn’t shake off. She closed the journal with a loud sigh and took in a deep slow breath to calm down.

“Easy Rose,” she told herself. “Easy girl, it’s okay.” She stood up and slipped the journal back into her messenger bag and with another sigh, reached for the bottle of pills on the desk. Carefully, she poured two into her hand and swallowed them with a quick gulp of water from her water bottle. “Another day, you can do this,” Rose said out loud, squaring her shoulders.

She paused and studied her reflection in her mirror carefully. There were still bags under her eyes, but they weren’t as bad as the previous week and the concealer was doing a pretty good job hiding them. She’d eased up on the eye makeup a little so as not to draw attention to how dark her eyes were. Rose fingered her long hair thoughtfully, wondering what she’d look like with shorter hair. Maybe it would help her not look as tired all the time, which would be good.

Her mobile phone chimed, the alarm going off and Rose nodded to herself. After turning off the alarm, she swung her messenger bag on and grabbed her purse, starting to dig out her key. She rushed downstairs and called a quick farewell to her mother and the nearest maid before vanishing into the garage.

“Okay,” Rose told herself as she put her messenger bag into the front seat. “Remember what Doctor Blake said, one day at a time. Don’t lose sight of real life.” Rose turned on the car and took another deep breath, clutching at the steering wheel for a moment. “This is your real life, Rose Tyler.” She reached over and hit the button to open the garage. Rays of sunlight poured into the garage, shining off the polished surfaces of the family car collection. “This is your real life,” Rose repeated to herself, stepping on the gas and focusing on her trip to London for school.
Stepping back into the house, Rose glanced around in surprise at the heavy silence. There was no maid cleaning in the entry hall and she could only hear the faint sounds of the television on in the living room down the hall. With a small frown, Rose headed up to her room, all the while looking around for signs of anyone in the house. She reached her room without seeing anyone and shrugged out of her bag. From her desk, the sonic screwdriver seemed to glint at her, but Rose ignored it in favour of heading back downstairs.

“Mum?” she called as she headed down the corridor. “Mum? Anybody?”

“Here Rose,” her mother’s voice called, but she sounded alarmed and weak.

She walked into the living room and found her mother sitting on the sofa with a slack jaw. Behind her were the staff who were all looking transfixed at the television screen. Moving over to her mother, Rose sat down as a horrible sense of dread flooded through her.

“Mummy? What is it?”

“Oh my god,” one of the maids said breathlessly.

Turning, Rose stared at the television screen and forgot to breathe. Grabbing the remote, she turned up the volume and sunk into a chair right in from the telly. Her mother was staring at the screen with horror next to her, jaw slack. On screen, buildings were smoking and Rose could make out crushed cars and burn marks everywhere. At the bottom of the screen kept repeating the words: US bombs major city overtaken by an alien threat.

“The strange behaviour has been linked to Bane; a product that we have now discovered was approved in less than a month by the US food and drug administration. Doctor Matthews, a representative of the US government just confirmed that startling truth: Bane contains alien organisms that took over those who drank the product. Sources are indicating that the examiners were likely placed under the same mind control that gripped the west coast of North America this morning,” the reporter said sadly, circles under his eyes. “The death toll reported from Los Angeles has already passed three thousand and is expected to grow as the United States Government sorts out the rubble and wreckage. This is with the bombing being centred on the local Bane manufacturing plant. Reports so far indicate that those who were controlled have returned to normal, as normal as can possibly be hoped. We’re about to show you footage from the event itself, be warned that it is very disturbing.”

Then the coverage cut away from the reporter to shaky footage obviously caught in the middle of the chaos. A large strange creature with tentacles was crashing over a car as people in the background ran. There were humans walking towards the person holding the camera, bottles of orange liquid in their outstretched hands. An eerie chant of ‘drink it’ could be heard over the screaming. A group of people dressed in black body armour rushed into view, heading for the strange creature. They had a small logo on their shoulders that looked like a number, but the footage was too fuzzy. Then the strange creature behind the humans let out a high pitched roar and jumped off the car and over the humans. There was a loud scream and the camera dropped.

“Turn that off,” her mum demanded, shaking her head. “I can’t listen to it anymore.”

Obediently, Rose raised the remote and shut off the television. Silence rang in the room and Rose
could barely breathe again. Her mother stood up and strode out of the room, her hands shaking slightly. Rose could understand her shock and terror. Rose heard the staff talking in low voices for a few moments before they wandered out of the room, staying in pairs and whispering to each other. She was suddenly alone in the room, remote still in hand.

Bane…. Matthews, it sounded so familiar and that thing looked familiar…. Rose could almost see black blood spilling out of a sliced tentacle, an image that made her shudder. Yet it wasn’t quite right. Los Angeles wasn’t familiar at all and Rose couldn’t help but want to shrug off the strange feeling of guilt that was churning in her stomach. She swallowed and set the remote back on the side table.

“Why should I feel guilty?” Rose asked out loud, shaking her head. “I didn’t do anything wrong. I’m not responsible for what happens in Los Angeles. Their obsession with new, improved and natural drinks got them…. Rose stopped and shivered. “Sarah Jane Smith…. “ She whispered, the strange name dancing on the tip of her tongue. “Luke…

“Rose!” her father’s voice called from the doorway. She turned to see him standing there, gripping the doorframe with a relieved look on his face. His suit was messy and his tie looser than normal. Pete stepped forward, releasing the doorway and opening his arms to his daughter. Rushing forward, Rose hugged her dad tightly, pressing her cheek up against the silk of his tie.


“I know sweetheart,” her dad whispered. “I know.”

“What’s gonna happen?” Rose asked in a soft voice, unwilling to release her hold on her father just yet.

“I don’t know sweetheart,” her father said gently, running a hand down her back. “Los Angeles will have to be cleaned up. That bomb was focused on the factory, but it took out more than a square mile of the city. We’re just lucky that Bane hadn’t become globally distributed yet or that could have happened to the whole world.”

Rose shivered, wondering why the aliens had moved so soon and not waiting. Someone must have forced their hand, but who was it. Those UNIT guys that she saw by the river or …. Doctor Matthews or someone else entirely.

“It’ll be okay,” her father told her, hugging her a little tighter. “It’ll be okay Rose.”

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Things weren’t getting better as all Rose could think as she dropped her messenger bag on her bed and slumped down the soft surface. She desperately wanted to curl up in a ball and go to sleep, but instead reached over and found the remote buried under term paper notes and jewellery on her nightstand. The wall television across from her bed flickered on and with a deep breath Rose changed to the news station.

“We are unsure what exactly happened today inside the Met,” an American report said, glancing nervously at the large museum behind him. “Authorities have gone inside, but thus far there have been no statements as to what happened. An alarm was set off four hours ago from inside the museum, but no attempts to contact those inside have been successful.” The report reached up and touched the speaker in his ear, falling silent for a moment. “Wait, we’re getting something now.”
Behind him, there were sounds of gunfire and the camera shook for a moment before it focused on an armed man in heavy combat gear stumbling out of the museum. He was screaming and shooting at something behind him as he headed for the stairs. He tripped and fell back over the stairs, still firing at something in the doorway. Then a large shape came into view and Rose gasped loudly. It looked like some kind of mummy, wrapped in heavy bandages, but it was much too tall with a strangely shaped chest.

The bullets seemed to harmlessly bounce off of the mummy as it reached down and grabbed the leg of the soldier. He kept screaming and the police along the barricade all started shooting as the camera man flinched, causing the camera to jostle. It had no effect and the man kept screaming as he was pulled back into the museum.

The camera jolted as it was tilted upwards as the sky above the museum shimmered. Then the smooth surface of a massive floating structure came into view and Rose could barely breathe. At the angle the camera was at, almost nothing was visible of the ship, but the dark shaded underside, just above the museum sent shivers down her spine. There were screams all around the camera and she could hear the camera man swearing and starting to pray.

“Apep…” Rose whispered, the name coming to her lips without a thought. She slammed her eyes shut, trying to drown out the screaming, but unable to move to turn off the television. There was a sword in her hand, she was fighting, but she wasn’t. A serpent head and an oily voice flashed through her mind.

“We have lost the transmission from New York City,” a new female voice said from the television, sounding badly shaken. “Please everyone remain calm. We will keep you updated as information comes in, but it appears that we are once again facing aliens.”

“Apep,” Rose repeated as she opened her eyes and looking at the television. “What is going on? Who are you? What are you?”

The questions didn’t stop there no matter what everyone tried. A sense of dread had settled over the whole world and the only good thing that Rose could come up with from the whole messy affair was that at least a lot of the fighting in the Middle East and Africa had stopped. Weeks drug on with images from the slowly recovering Los Angeles appearing on the news every hour or so and the images of the spaceship in New York hovering over the museum just before it vanished, leaving dozens of corpses in its wake.

Then there had been the reports from South America, Rose forgot where, but some kind of disaster had killed thousands of people near a tourist site. Something about some old ruins, she just couldn’t remember clearly. Just like New York, the shop dummies and Bane there was no closure to it. The cause had just vanished without a trace and humans were left frightened and confused. Rose wondered if whatever had killed all those people, well maybe not killed. They’d all just vanished without a trace in what the only witness had described from a mile away as a burst of white light caused some a strange giant bird.

But there was nothing that she could do, no matter how many weird dreams she had. Rose went to her college classes and tried to laugh with her friends and ignore the tight painful feeling in her chest. It couldn’t be ignored anymore, the sense that something was very wrong. It hung over her head every evening at dinner as she watched her parents pretend not to be fighting and working
with divorce lawyers for her sake. Nighttime was the worst when she lay awake and tried to understand.

She should back and see Doctor Blake, she told herself as she stared up at her canopy one night. There was nothing normal about feeling guilty and responsible for terrible tragedies. It wasn’t healthy to have flashes of what you could have done to make things turn out differently. Her journal was becoming filled with records of strange dreams and visions and there were moments where she was beginning to wonder which memories were real. But she couldn’t bring herself to go back to the doctor; she didn’t know what to say.

With a sigh, Rose sat up in her bed and turned the television on, hoping to find a late night movie or old reruns. She flipped through the channels in silence until she found an old black and white alien invasion film. With a frown, Rose set the remote to the side and pulled her knees up to her chest as the strange black blobs stumbled out of an obviously tin foil covered ship.

“Alien films on television,” Rose chuckled before a loud sigh escaped her. “The world is starting to drown and yet still watching this stuff.”
The world began to truly end on a Tuesday. Rose had just finished classes for the day and after some pleading from her friends, headed out with them to a nearby café to relax and talk. She was mostly silent, uncertain about speaking about her own distraction lately. In her shoulder bag, Rose could feel the journal she’d been keeping pressing against the side of her leg. The sonic screwdriver had taunted her for days until she’d finally surrendered and slipped it into a small pen hole in her purse. Most of the time it was easy to ignore, but not always.

“Are you okay Rose?” Elizabeth asked with a small pout and a raised eyebrow. “You’re acting very odd lately.”

“I haven’t been sleeping well,” Rose lied easily, it wasn’t completely false. She gave them a forced smile. “Don’t worry; I’m seeing a doctor about it.”

“Oh well that’s good,” her other friend remarked. “You’re not as much fun lately.”

“Sorry Chelsey,” Rose apologised. She was about to say more when sudden noise from the other side of the café near the news television caught her attention.

“Oh God not again!” Someone shouted, pointed wildly at the screen. “The aliens are back!”

“Bloody hell!” another voice called, “Look at those things.”

Before her friends could say anything, Rose grabbed her bag from the floor and her coffee, stalking over to the television. She squeezed her way through the gathering crowd until she could clearly see the television screen. Her heart began to race as the screen showed footage from a high up camera of rows and rows of troops marching into Time Square New York. It was hard to see what was going on, but at the edge of the frame was what looking like the same shining ship from the Met incident.

Then the footage changed, showing a nervous looking reporter a few yards ahead of the soldiers. Rose couldn’t make out what he was saying and a moment later, the camera shifted off of him and zoomed in on the advancing forces. The soldiers were stone; at least they looked like it as they walked in long rows. They glinted in the sunlight, a pale golden sort of colour that would have been beautiful in any other circumstance. Their faces were unmoving with Egyptian looking headdresses carved into the top of them. Each one carried an odd looking staff that glowed on one end. The camera shook as the cameraman backed away from the advancing forces. Mixed in with the soldiers were several of the large slow moving wrapped creatures from the museum footage.

Words from the reporter were drowned out as people rushed to get away from the soldiers.
Another blast of light from above the camera was followed in seconds by another line of the stone soldiers appearing only a short distance from the news camera. The images shook badly, turning towards the ground and then showing the backs of people as they ran away. There were screams and then were with strange high-pitched whining noises. An explosion near the cameraman sent him flying as flames appeared at the edge of the frame. The camera hit the ground on its side but somehow kept filming and transmitting. Hundreds of feet were visible as people kept running, but debris began to rain down on the street.

The television went to static and a moment later a familiar-looking British newscaster appeared on the screen.

“I’m afraid ladies and gentleman that we are facing an invasion. While there was originally only one ship in New York City, reports are coming in from many major cities across the globe of similar ships and armies being deployed.”

The café was completely silent, everyone holding their breath.

“As of yet, no ships have been seen above the United Kingdom,” the newscaster said with shaking hand. “But people are urged to prepare themselves-”

Rose didn’t wait to hear the rest. A small voice in her head was whispering the word ‘run’ over and over again. Barely holding back a shiver, Rose waved farewell to her confused friends and rushed out the door. Her small car was parked just down the block and Rose jumped into it, starting it up with shaking hands. Even as a voice in her head told her that she’d never make it out of London, the city was too big and she was right by Soho! But the other voice just kept whispering: run and so she started to run.

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Traffic was normal for the first fifteen minutes or so before the news spread and people began to panic. She’d made her way to M1 and was keeping her foot on the floor as she raced towards home. Rose didn’t dare take her eyes off the road as more and more cars began to crowd onto the roads. The urge to look back was growing and Rose finally risked a glance into her rearview mirror.

During the initial report there hadn’t been a ship in London, but now that had changed. A large ship shaped like a pyramid was hovering over the centre of the city behind Rose. Fear clawed at her heart and Rose had to force herself to focus on the road, shaking off the sense that the ship looking familiar.

Then she saw a car fly off the road ahead of her. Slamming on the brakes, Rose barely avoided hitting the car in front of her. The driver stumbled out of the car and took off running past her car, screaming something she couldn’t make out. There was another explosion up ahead and Rose flinched at the noise. Her hand went to her seatbelt as another car went slamming into the barricade to the right. Fumbling with the seatbelt, Rose finally got it off and kept her eyes on the car in front of her. But a moment later it was hit with a bright red blast and knocked to the side of the road. Rose gasped, suddenly staring down a long empty corridor in the road as one of the stone soldiers she’d seen on television, used some kind of staff weapon to blast cars out of his way. She couldn’t move as it turned and looked right at her and started walking towards her.

It had dull painted looking eyes that suddenly glowed red before it raised its staff. The end of it glowed, as it glared at Rose through her windshield. Flailing, Rose knocked her bag open as she
tried to duck out of view and hopefully out of range. The sonic screwdriver slipped out of its small holder and rolled out onto the seat next to her.

The high pitched whine of the weapon made Rose flinch, she struggled to breathe. Then her hand moved, grabbing the sonic screwdriver before she could think of what she was doing. In one smooth, unfamiliar and yet… practised action, Rose sat up and raised the sonic screwdriver. Her fingers moved on it like she was adjusted the tightness of her violin and just as the staff turned a violent red, the end of the sonic screwdriver came to live as a vibrant blue.

There was a moment of utter stillness, Rose couldn’t hear anything and couldn’t breathe. The staff sparked in the soldier’s hand, the red glow fading instantly. As the soldier looked down at it, Rose’s fingers pressed the sonic screwdriver again. It whirled loudly and the blue diode flashed. The soldier jerked and stumbled, dropping the staff. Spinning on its heels, it moved away from her car and then clattered to the ground at the side of the road.

Rose sat completely still for only a moment before the sharp whisper to run returned. Stepping on the gas, Rose carefully steered the car around the remains of the others cars, trying not to look at what remained of the drivers. She could feel tears running down her cheeks as her vision blurred, but she couldn’t bring herself to stop. In the rear view mirror, smoke was rising out of London and she thought that she could hear screaming. Up ahead there was a small passage between the scattered cars and Rose forced herself to focus on it and drive.

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After what felt like days later, Rose sighed in relief as her house came into view. There’d been no sign of the soldiers for the last few miles. Everything was focused on the city and she’d gotten out just in time. Her stomach turned and she wondered about the friends she’d left behind. She hadn’t been thinking about an invasion of London at the time, she’d just needed to get away. If she’d….

Rose shook her head.

“Don’t go there Rose,” she told herself firmly. “You didn’t know. You can’t save everyone.”

She shivered at the words and fought down a wave of nausea. Those words were too familiar, too cold and she had the terrible feeling she’d said them before. She pulled up to the house, her entire body shaking as the car came to a stop. Her father’s SUV was parked just ahead of her and the back was open, revealing several metal boxes. The front door of the house opened and her father rushed out, a phone to his ear. He froze when he saw her, a look of overwhelming relief on his face.

“Daddy,” Rose called weakly. “Daddy…. the aliens…”

“I know,” he told her calmly, moving towards her and pulling her into a tight hug. Rose muffled her soft cries in her father’s chest. “I know sweetheart.” Then he changed the angle he was holding the phone. “I’ve got my daughter; we’re leaving for the landing strip now. I’ll be there soon.”

Her dad hung up the phone and tugged her towards the SUV. “Get in and buckle up Rose.”

“Where are we going?” Rose asked even as she obeyed the order, climbing into the passenger side.

“Somewhere that is hopefully safe.”

“Where’s Mum?” Rose asked, looking back towards the house as her father started the SUV.

“Don’t go there Rose,” she told herself firmly. “You didn’t know. You can’t save everyone.”
“I don’t know,” her father admitted after a long pause. He sighed and shook his head. “She went into London earlier today… I haven’t heard from her.”

“We have to find-”

“Rose!” her father snapped. “I don’t know how the hell you got out of there. I’m grateful that you did, but I am not taking you back into London.” The doors of the SUV locked with a loud click and they pulled away from the house.

“I’m calling her, maybe she’s nearby,” Rose said urgently, scrambling for her phone. Her fingers brushed the sonic screwdriver and she couldn’t help but shiver.

The phone rang and rang, Rose’s heart sinking with each moment. Her father was driving them away from London and Rose resisted the urge to yell at him for giving up so quickly. Then finally, her mother picked up.

“Mum!” Rose called in relief, fresh tears flowing down her cheeks. “Are you okay? I made it home, I’m with Daddy. Where are you?”

“Rose I’m in town. The aliens…. Oh god, they’re destroying everything. Don’t you dare come back into London.” There was a loud crash over the phone.

“Mum?” Rose called. “MUM!” She shouted as her fear and desperation rose harshly.

“Rose, sweetheart, I love you,” her mother’s voice said softly into the phone, barely a whisper. “Go with your Daddy. He’ll keep you safe.”

Rose looked desperately over at her father as he jerked the steering wheel and turned them onto a paved side road. He didn’t look at her.

“But Mummy-”

“You can’t come into London, it’s a disaster here,” her mother whispered, her voice sounding choked. “And you’d never find me.”

“Mum…”

The phone was gently tugged from her grasp and her father brought it up to his ear.

“Where are you Jacks?” he asked and Rose swallowed, hoping that maybe they’d turn around. But then her father’s shoulders sagged and he took a shaky breath. “Yeah, you’re right. We can’t get there…. I’m sorry.”

“Daddy?” Rose asked, half whining in desperation. “We can’t leave her-”

“She’s pinned down in a mall Rose,” her father said sternly, his eyes shining both with tears and determination. “There are soldiers just out in the halls, we won’t get in and it’s only a matter of time before they find her.” He paused and took a deep breath. “Jacks, just in case you do escape. I’m taking Rose with me up to Mount Snowden, I know it’s a long way, but-” He went silent, swallowed and nodded. “Yeah, I’m sorry too, Jacks. I love you and I don’t regret a thing.”
He nodded again, blinking back a wave of tears and then pulled the phone away from his ear, handing it off to Rose. Without a word, Rose took the phone again and held it up to her ear with shaking hands.

“Mummy?”

“They’re sweeping the mall sweetheart,” her mother whispered. “It won’t be long… oh god, they’re coming. Rose, I’m very proud of you and I love you. Stay with your Daddy and don’t do anything foolish. I want you to get through this.”

“Mummy! Please, Mum… I love you,” Rose choked out, her fingers clutching the phone tightly.

There was a sudden high pitched sound on the other end of the phone followed by a small explosive sound.

“I’m going to go now Rose, don’t call back. I don’t want you to hear this,” her mother told her in a clearer voice, sounding far too resigned. “I love you baby, you and your Daddy.”

The call ended and Rose sat frozen in her seat, still gripping the phone. Every instinct screamed at her to call her mother back or make her father turn the SUV around, but she didn’t move. A moment later the phone was pulled out of her hands by her father who carefully tucked it back into his suit jacket. With one hand on the wheel, he reached over and took her hand, squeezing it gently.

Exhaling slowly, Rose was only aware of the sheer numbness that she was feeling. Out the window, she could see only the outskirts of London and when she turned her head, she saw an ominous black cloud rising in the distance. She wondered just how much of the city was on fire and if anything could be salvaged. The sharp sound of a jet overhead caught her attention and Rose twisted so she could see a small group of jets flying towards London. Would they be of any help? The black columns of smoke rippled in the air and Rose took a shaky breath as the reality of it all began to sink in.

“Mum’s dead,” she whispered to herself, but she heard her father make a soft sad sound. “Those aliens killed her.”

“Rose…” her father began to say. “I’m sorry sweetheart.”

She nodded, unable to speak and lowered her head into her hands, starting to cry. Rose didn’t move and didn’t talk as the SUV sped down unfamiliar roads. Tension was radiating off her father and Rose wished that he’d explain what they were doing. They were going north, maybe heading for Scotland or Wales, less populated area. Who’d he been talking to?

“Rose,” her father called some time later. “We’re almost to the airstrip.”

She looked up and saw what looked like a small airport. A shining silvery plane was sitting on a runway and people were boarding it in a hurry. Her father jerked the wheel and the SUV made a sharp turn into the small entrance in the chain link fence. He parked the car and left the keys in the ignition.

“Come on,” he told her. “We need to unload quickly.”

“What is that stuff?” Rose asked softly as she unbuckled her seatbelt and put her phone and the sonic screwdriver into her pockets.
“Gear that I grabbed from my lab, we need everything we can get.”

As they climbed up, three men in uniforms marked with UNIT patches and wearing red hats rushed up to them. Her father opened the door of the SUV and she grabbed the smallest box. The men grabbed the others after a quick word with her father. Rose turned and looked at the plane as a woman with a young boy climbed up the small flight of steps and onto the plane. The boy was crying and screaming and Rose wondered briefly if that helped.

“Come along miss,” one of the soldiers said quickly. “We have to take off soon, you’re the last arrivals.”

Unsure of what to say, Rose nodded and followed the soldier to the plane. She set the box down on a small conveyor belt that led up to the cargo hold of the plane and walked over to the steps. Her father met her there and placed a hand on her back, pushing her forward. With a deep breath and resisting the urge to look back, Rose climbed the stairs and stepped into the small plane.

Her father found them a pair of seats and gently pushed Rose down into the window seat. He sat down a moment later and put on his seatbelt as the soldiers boarded the plane. One of them knocked on the door to the cockpit and then reached for a speaker.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please buckle up. We will be leaving immediately for Mount Snowden. I know that a lot has happened in a very short span of time, but please try to remain calm.”

Rose stared down at her hands; they were shaking softly no matter how still she tried to hold them. Behind her, she could hear the others crying and sobbing. No one was talking, no one was trying to say anything or explain anything. She swallowed thickly, unable to fully process what had just happened. The plan began to move and Rose leaned back in her chair, gazing blankly at the ceiling as they took off.

Turning, Rose looked over at her father. His face was buried in one of his hands and he wasn’t moving, wasn’t crying and wasn’t even looking at the PDA in his other hand. There was so much she wanted to say to him, wanted to ask him, but her mouth was dry now.

“What’s at Mount Snowden?” she finally managed to ask.

“Yes, there is a UNIT base there. I’ve been in contact with them for the last few months. They know the plane and we have permission to land at their airstrip.”

“What?” Rose heard herself ask, the name UNIT making her heart jump painfully. “Who are they?”

“They’re alien experts,” her father replied sadly. “Just after that thing with the shop window dummies, myself and a few other inventors were contacted by UNIT due to the rise of alien activity across the globe. We’ve been trying to create new weapons to stop them.”

“But… but you’re a business man,” Rose whispered in confusion.

Her father chuckled and waved off the pilot who quietly returned to the cockpit. “I started out as a lucky inventor Rose, but that was years ago. My company hasn’t stayed at the top out of luck alone. I may not have any fancy degrees, but over the years your old man has learned his way about advanced gadgets and knows a thing or two about turning one thing into another.”
“And that’s why they contacted you.”

“I got the impression at the time that they had just lost someone important and were scrambling for new talent,” her father answered with a shrug. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you or your mother, but it was top secret and I wasn’t sure that your mother could handle the idea.” His expression turned sad as soon as he said the words and he swallowed thickly.

“So what happens now?” Rose asked, her voice barely a whisper.

“When we get there, you’ll be protected and I’ll see what, if anything I can do to help,” her father said with a sigh. He gave her a small forced smile, “In the meantime sweetheart, try to get some rest.”

Rose nodded, unsure of what else to do. She leaned her head back against the soft fabric of the seat and looked out the window. All around the plane were soft clouds and she could catch only glimpses of the ground below. It looked normal with green fields and cities dotted all over, but Rose shivered, knowing that down below the world as she had known it was already gone.
The Greatest Deal: Mount Snowden

The Tyler Factor
By Lumenda
Chapter Thirty-One: The Greatest Deal: Mount Snowden

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

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Rose managed to come out of the haze of fear, grief and helplessness that had clouded her mind just as the plane began to descend. As they left the clouds, Rose could see sprawling farming fields of gold and green, tiny sheep in the pastures and a few cars on the road, no doubt looking for a safe place to run. She wondered what they’d find and silently wished them the best. Maybe they’d find shelter in less populated areas or escape on a boat to one of the tiny northern islands and be safe there. Rose shook her head and tried to put the what-ifs and dark thoughts out of her mind. Instead, she focused on looking ahead of the plane as best she manage. Up ahead, the rolling hills turned to mountains and Rose felt a twinge of worry for just where they were supposed to be landing.

Rose tightened her seatbelt and held tightly to the armrests as the plane descended further. The small plane shook in the winds around the mountains and Rose felt her stomach begin to turn over as her heart pounded. She’d never been this nervous in a plane before, but as it shook again Rose closed her eyes. Her father reached over and put his hand over hers, squeezing it gently. For a moment the tight knot in Rose’s chest eased a little at the reminder that she wasn’t alone and she forced herself to take a deep breath and open her eyes. Around them, the mountains came into view as they flew into a narrow valley and Rose hoped that the pilot was very good at their job. She didn’t even have a chance to see the ground rise up to meet them before the plane was bumping on a runway.

“That wasn’t so bad was it,” her father teased gently as the plane slowed down and rolled along the runway. Then he turned serious. “Now Rose, I don’t know what is going to happen once we get in there. I’ll try to keep you close to me, but if I can’t or if I get really busy please remember that I’m trying to help stop this and that I love you more than anything.”

Her father’s need to say that made Rose nervous, but she forced a small smile and nodded to him. “I love you too Daddy and I’ll do whatever you need me to do.”

The plane stopped and a few moment later the doorway and opened and the stairs folded down. Rose slowly stood up, her legs a little shaky and as everyone filed out, she realised that no one had luggage with them. It hit her how much of a fleeing flight this had been and she almost started to laugh as she stepped outside. What little had been loaded on the plane like her father’s supplies was already being offloaded into a jeep by men who kept looking nervously up into the air. Rose wondered how long it would take the aliens to find them, a thought that made her chest tighten painfully.

Up ahead of her was a huge mountain with a snow capped peak. There was a large doorway into the mountain and small jut outs where satellite dishes and other technology could be seen. Rows of jeeps and heavy vehicles were vanishing through the doorway and Rose exhaled softly as they were loaded into a jeep. As they drove into the mountain, Rose looked over her shoulder at the
blue sky, wondering when she’d see it again. Soon enough the sky was gone and the thick rock in which the base was carved took its place with artificial lights glaring overhead instead of the sun.

The jeep drove down a curving road deeper into the mountain and just as Rose was beginning to get carsick from all the turns, it finally stopped in front of a huge heavy metal door. There were guards on either side of the door and small guard posts just off to the side with heavy looking guns in plain view with another pair of soldiers manning each one. Rose felt a flicker of nervousness. What if they weren’t okay with her being here?

She looked back at some of the other civilians who had been brought in on the plane. There were a few children younger than her and Rose calmed herself down. They wouldn’t throw out children, not now. That would cause the people they brought in distress and they needed them. If nothing else she could help take care of them maybe. She breathed out slowly as she climbed out of the jeep and the doors slid open. A long grey corridor was in front of them and Rose felt a little disappointed. A female colonel stepped out and nodded to all of them.

“Welcome, I am Colonel Tia Karim. I am the commander of this base, though under the circumstances more senior officers are now in charge of the operation,” the attractive dark haired woman greeted with a nod. Rose felt a strange hot flash of anger when she looked at the woman, followed by a sense of surprise. It was difficult to ignore and she missed the colonel speaking with them. “Follow me,” the Colonel ordered them as she turned on her heel and began to lead them into the main base.

The UNIT base was a long maze of grey corridors, bright doors, flashing lights and fast walking people that gave Rose a headache. People were moving about them in uniforms, lab coats and jumpsuits, almost none of them looking at them too long. Rose wondered how long they’d been here and if their own families were safe.

With every step they took in the base, there was a sharp pain at the side of her head that almost felt like she needed to reach into her own brain and scratch at it. Something about the place just seemed too familiar, but she couldn’t place it. The colonel made her feel angry and there was a nagging little voice at the back of her head that said: traitor over and over again. As one young UNIT man walked by Rose felt the odd certainty that she’d seen him before and his name was Ross. Then she glanced at his nametag and her stomach turned when it was confirmed.

Forcing herself to take slow deep breaths, Rose focused on following her father down the long corridors. She tried to ignore the little things that kept popping into her head. As they passed a cafeteria, Rose couldn’t help but remember making a phone call on the phone just outside the doors. The names Shareen, Sharon and Spock echoed in her head for some reason. When she glanced into the cafeteria, Rose had a strange vision of odd smoke filling the place, making it hard to breathe. She shook her head, pushing the odd flashes and visions away. They were of no help.

Except, that wasn’t completely true was it. Somehow she’s used the sonic screwdriver to save herself while escaping London. A part of her, some distant and buried part of her knew how to use the sonic screwdriver. And that part of her knew this place, had known that man that the UNIT soldiers took away from the banks of the Thames. She couldn’t even begin to explain it, but she couldn’t deny it anymore.

They stepped into a large conference room that looked out over on a large control room filled with monitors. Many of them were black and a few were filled with static. Rose peeked down to see rows of computers set up and men and women in the UNIT uniforms working at them, no one looked up into the room at them. The far door opened several men in the UNIT uniforms stepped
into the room, one of them much older than the others.

“Mister Tyler,” the older man greeted her father. He was fairly tall despite his age with heavy worry wrinkles, grey and white hair and a thick moustache. “I’m glad that you made it out of London. We’ve lost over half of our British agents and other countries are reporting even worse losses. I am—”

‘Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart,’ Rose’s mind provided suddenly making her shiver.

“General Lethbridge-Stewart, under the circumstances I am in command on UNIT UK. We have contact with most of the other branches.”

“I’m glad to hear that at least,” her father replied, oblivious to Rose’s internal breakdown. She had to fight back the urge to hyperventilate. Her hands were shaking and Rose shoved them into her pockets to try and hide her discomfort. What was happening to her? Was she crazy? Was she suddenly physic or in some kind of crazy half remember time loop?

“Your daughter will be quite safe,” the General said, drawing Rose’s attention back to the conversation. “This base is hidden deep in the mountain and we’ve begun to withdraw exterior units to limit aerial visibility of our location. Higgins.”

Another soldier with the red UNIT hat stepped forward at the General’s call. “Yes, sir?”

“Take Miss Tyler down to the civilian quarters.”

“I’d prefer to keep her with me,” her father said quickly, reaching over and putting his hand on her shoulder.

“Mister Tyler, this is a military base—”

“I understand that General,” her father cut in with a nod. “But how much does any of that really matter. The population centres are under attack which means that secrets really don’t mean much anymore. I’ll work better and think better if I can see my daughter and know that she’s safe.”

The General was eyeing her father, his expression guarded, but there was a shadow of sadness in them. The name Kate echoed in Rose’s mind and she suddenly felt like she was going to be sick. Rose couldn’t help but wonder if something had happened to her to put that look on the General’s face. Then the General nodded, his expression becoming blank and professional and Higgins stepped back.

“Very well Mister Tyler,” the General turned his attention to Rose. She felt her back straighten a tiny bit and there was a strange warm sensation in her chest. Fondness… for this man that she couldn’t explain. “Do stay out of trouble Miss Tyler, we cannot afford any accidents or mistakes right now. We have to find a way to stop these things.”

“Understood,” Rose choked out. “I promise I’ll do nothing with instructions or permission.” The words were difficult to get out, her lips tripped over them as if she’d been about to say something else.

The General nodded satisfied and then turned back the series of monitors. Her father took that as them being dismissed and pulled gently on her hand, leading out of the room where their escort was waiting.
“You okay?” her father asked in a low voice as they walked down the corridor.

It was a stupid question. She’d just lost her mother and was keenly aware that the world was being destroyed. Her father was just as lost as she was, but at least he had some knowledge that could potentially help. Rose just felt useless, confused and frustrated. The pain in her head was getting worse and worse and the sense that she was supposed to be doing something was fading way anymore.

“I’m fine,” Rose muttered softly. “As much as can expected at least.”

She followed her father and their escort down two levels, her eyes catching sight of the large ventilation system. A smile tugged at her lips before she could think about it. Those ducts weren’t so bad for climbing around in and Rose almost tripped at the strange thought. She kept moving, her mind turning over the odd detail that it had just provided her with. As they walked into the large work area, already filled with people, a table covered with odd bits and pieces, Rose sank into a nearby chair and took a deep breath.

Yes, there was a part of her that knew this place, these people and it was definitely getting stronger. Rose swallowed, her fingers slipping into her pocket and touching the sonic screwdriver. Even if it had saved her life, she couldn’t help but feel afraid of it. Where had it come from? How was it happening? How could it help her? And worst of all, if she gave into it, what would be left of her?
The Greatest Deal: Advance

The Tyler Factor
By Lumenda
Chapter Thirty-Two: The Greatest Deal: Advance

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

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There was no sense of time in the mountain base. Rose sat quietly at the side of the room and watched her father and the other scientists move between tables, argue with each other with words that she didn’t really understand and speak with any officers that came in. She did her best to be invisible and quiet, but boredom was difficult to hold off. Sitting quietly so soon after losing her mother and while knowing that the rest of the world was in terrible danger made it far too easy to think about regrets and cry. Rose wished that she’d spoken to her mother that day outside of the phone, she couldn’t remember the last time that she’d hugged her Mummy and now….

Rose sniffed and wiped at her eyes, trying to distract herself. She wished that she could be of help in the lab and help in the brainstorming, but she was a music student with a few business classes. This wasn’t her domain…. Rose paused and then shook her head. She didn’t want to think about the odd dreams and strange visions, but her hand crept into her bag and pulled out the journal.

Rose looked at it with a frown, of all the things she’d owned and cherished, what she’d ended up with was a couple of textbooks, this journal and a sonic screwdriver.

Opening the journal, Rose skipped over the pages with faces drawn on them. She couldn’t face the odd pang in the heart that she felt when she looked at them today, there was too much else weighing her down. Her fingers stopped flipping pages as she found a rough drawing a serpent headed creature with the name Apep scribbled next to it along with the words: Osirian and ‘cut off his head.’ There was a drawing of a mummy with a large chest near the bottom of the page. Biting her lip, Rose stared at the images, actually wishing that she knew more. This was the invading alien, she was sure of it.

Rose tried to remember more about the dream she’d had before writing this down. Her notes on the page were messy, little fragments of thoughts. It said Horath Academy, New York and Egypt in different places, no doubt scrawled when she was still asleep which only confused her. There was a note that said ‘incompatible with sword’, but she had no idea what she’d meant when she wrote that down. Groaning in frustration, Rose ran a hand through her messy blond hair and told herself sternly to breathe.

“I know this facility isn’t much Doctor Shaw,” General Lethbridge-Stewart said as he and an older woman in a lab coat strode through the door. “But I’m grateful that you’re here. I’m afraid with the loss of most of the Science Department and only a few of the new recruits arriving here we are lacking direction.”

“Of course General,” the woman replied with a nod. “I’ll do everything that I can.”

Rose stood up nervously, gripping her journal tightly as the woman glanced her direction. Her stern expression softened as she took her in and Rose had to wonder how bad she looked.
“This is Peter Tyler’s daughter,” the General said before frowning, clearly not recalling her name.

“Rose ma’am.”

“I’m Doctor Elizabeth Shaw,” the tall older woman greeted her. She had greying hair, sad eyes, but a determined frown on her face. “I’m sorry you are stuck here young lady.”

“It’s better than being out there,” Rose admitted in a soft voice. “But thank you.”

“Indeed, I was stationed on the UNIT moonbase,” Doctor Shaw informed her with a shake of her head. “I was only back on Earth for a short time.”

“There’s a moon base?”

“There was, the ship neutralised it six hours ago,” Doctor Shaw replied, her eyes flashing before she turned to the General. “Brig- General are they any ships available for us to use, any alien technology at this point could be helpful in launching some sort of counter-strike.”

“Nothing I’m afraid. We took over some wreckage a few months ago, but it was a merchant ship.”

“Any aliens who might be able to help us?”

“They were transported to a facility in Africa,” the General admitted with a strange expression. “I’m afraid that we don’t have the ability to move those distances anymore without running a high risk of being injured.”

“And no chance of the Doctor, none at all.”

“You were informed of his passing,” the General said and Rose felt her heart clench painfully again. She knew she wasn’t a part of this conversation, but she kept listening.

“He has a time machine, surely there is a chance that a younger form of him could appear.”

“There is a chance Doctor Shaw, but I’ve known him a long time. He may not have the best sense of time, but even he wouldn’t be this late.” The General shook his head, “No I’m afraid that we are truly on our own.”

Doctor Shaw nodded slowly, her eyes glistening. “I’m sorry about Kate,” Doctor Shaw said gently. “She was a wonderful young woman.”

“She was going to join with Science Department soon,” the General replied thickly. “I was very proud of her.”

Rose nearly started crying, she wasn’t sure why, but she could feel hot tears prickling in her eyes. Sitting down in her chair, Rose tried to appear small and avoid attention from Doctor Shaw and the General. They glanced towards her, both with worried expressions on their faces, but they said nothing. The General and Doctor Shaw walked further into the room and called everyone to attention. Rose closed her eyes tightly and tried to ignore the sudden rush of strange memories about a woman named Kate, a man named Malcolm, a woman named Tosh, her mother and most of all a brown eyed, sometimes blue or green-eyed man.
Rose woke up slowly as she heard an alarm echoing in the distance. Her eyes were heavy and she was very groggy. An ache in her shoulders made itself known to protest her falling asleep in a chair rather than the comfortable bed at home or at least a small bunk beds down the corridor. A moment later the alarms began to blare in the room with her, jolting her awake just before her father rushed over to her.

“Rose!” He called, grabbing her hand and pulling her up from the chair. “We have to go!”

Across the room, Rose saw Doctor Shaw grabbing something from a table as UNIT soldiers rushed into the room and began escorting people out.

“What’s going on? Where are we going?”

“Into the lower levels of the base,” Doctor Shaw said quickly as she walked over to them and nodded towards the door. “I’m afraid the alien forces have located us much more quickly than expected.”

Rose allowed herself to be pulled out of the room and began walking with the crowd towards a large set of double metal doors at the end of the hallway. Doctor Shaw stayed near Rose and her father as they walked, a frown on her face.

“How could they have found us so quickly?” her father asked, his face pale. “It’s only been a few hours since…. And this place is supposed to be shielded.”

“They may have access UNIT information during the first wave of the invasion,” Doctor Shaw said with a slight shrug. “Or someone told them.”

‘Colonel Adams,’ a voice whispered in Rose’s head. ‘Traitor, freed Apep from the Black Archives.’

“What are the Black Archives?” Rose asked out loud before she could think better of it.

Her question got her a confused look from her father and a startled and then suspicious look from Doctor Shaw and she instantly wished that she could take back the question. None the less, they walked through the double doors which sealed with a hiss behind them. Doctor Shaw reached over and gripped Rose’s arm.

“Come with me,” she ordered sharply, pulling Rose towards a door just to the right of them. Rose heard her father begin to protest, but she was tugged into the room before she could say anything.

“General!” Doctor Shaw called as they entered the control room. “This girl-”

“Not now!” The General barked, looking up at monitors of the corridors beyond.

The cameras near the front door showed a blasted in, twisted pieces of metal that used to be the base’s first line of defence. Stone soldiers were marching into the base, stepping over the corpses of the human soldiers they’d already killed. Even over the cameras, Rose could see the telltale glow of their staffs each time one of them blasted a human trying to fight back. A moment later that camera went dead.
“Blast!” the General snapped, reaching for the intercom. “All units converge on the main corridor. We have to try and push them back.”

“Isn’t there a way out?” her father asked, his face determined, but pale.

“No Mister Tyler, not anymore,” the General replied before glancing their way. “Shaw, what the devil are these civilians doing here?”

“This girl knows about the Black Archives,” Shaw said quickly, pushing Rose forward.

The General studied Rose for a moment but then turned his attention back to another monitor as the soldiers came into view. Rose could see in another monitor further down the hall that UNIT soldiers were taking up defensive positions behind barricades, their weapons perched and ready to fire.

“I don’t see how that matters right now,” the General said, sounding very old and weary. “If we drive them off then we can have this conversation.”

“But sir, she might know something,” Doctor Shaw gave Rose a calculating look. “Or she might be working with the aliens.”

“I would never help Apep!” Rose snapped, a flash of red hot anger shooting through her that she didn’t completely understand. The General, her father and Doctor Shaw all gave her stunned looks.

“Apep?” the General questioned, his attention now focused on Rose. “Is that its name? How do you know that?”

“I… I,” Rose stuttered.

An explosion rocked the room and Rose stumbled to the ground as the General shouted orders through the intercom system. The corridor shuddered as the soldiers marched further in and echoed with the steady rhythm of their footfalls. Rose shivered and tried to curl up into a tighter ball as the UNIT personnel in the room took up their weapons and readied them. Her eyes traced the outline of the weapon and Rose’s chest tightened as she mentally listed off the parts. There was a strange echo in her fingertips, a memory of what one of those felt like that Rose didn’t understand. She’d never held a gun in her life.

They were getting closer and closer, Rose could see the soldiers getting closer to the barricade down the hall. Those men and women were about to die. Her fingers tightened around the sonic screwdriver and she remembered how the one soldier that attacked her car had gone down. Pulling it out, Rose stared at the sonic screwdriver for a moment. Something was tingling painfully at the back of her mind and Rose had to breathe out slowly. If she used this, something was going to change. She knew that somehow, she didn’t know how or what would change, but something was going to change. Her instincts were screaming against it, but a small little voice at the back of her mind was urging her on. Rose sighed and began to stand up, trying to figure out what the bloody hell she was actually going to do. The little voice at the back of her head sounded much more confident than she was and as crazy as it seemed, that made her feel braver.

The General snapped another order in the intercom system and Rose’s eyes widened as she looked at it. There were a variety of controls, but one of them was a larger than normal and looked like something slotted down into it. Transducer, her mind whispered and Rose leapt forward, pushing past the General. In one smooth motion, she pressed the top of the sonic screwdriver down into the
transducer and flicked the controls.

A terrible deep ringing sound filled the base and Rose’s knees threatened to buckle. She saw the others cover their ears around her, but didn’t dare move as she looked up at the monitor. The stone soldiers were shaking violently, the weapons dropping to the ground. Then one of their faces began to crumble as it fell to the ground. One after another they dropped and Rose stayed completely still, her ears ringing painfully until the last one had fallen. Sucking in a deep breath, Rose pulled out the sonic screwdriver and ended the terrible noise.

Everything was silent around her, even though through the cameras she could hear the soldiers moving and the firing of their weapons into the more intact stone soldiers. A hand came up and rested on her shoulder and Rose was suddenly swept up with the instinct to grab the hand and do some kind of shoulder throw. Her father’s voice cut through the haze of instinct.

“Rose, how did you do that?”

“Indeed Mister Tyler,” the stern voice of the General suddenly said behind her. “How did you know to do that and how did you get ahold of a sonic screwdriver?”

Rose turned around to face three faces ranging from worry, anger and curiosity. But she had no idea how to even begin as she clutched the sonic screwdriver like a lifeline. Then with a sinking feeling, she realised that it was.
“Miss Tyler,” the General said slowly and deliberately. “Explain yourself. How did you know to do that and how did you get ahold of a sonic screwdriver?” He repeated giving her a stern look before his eyes dropped down to the sonic screwdriver that Rose was clenching tightly.

Rose fought back the urge to squirm and swallowed quickly, fighting back the fear that they were going to take the sonic screwdriver away from her. While she hesitated, the General motioned one of the officers out of the room and she guessed he was going to secure the barricades and get the base locked down again. Briefly, she wondered how bad the damage was, but it wasn’t enough to distract her from the heavy gazes locked on her.

“I found it, the night all those shop window dummies came alive. I was by the river and a man…the Doctor was taken away. His hand dropped off the gurney and the sonic screwdriver rolled away.”

“And how did you know how to use it?” Doctor Shaw asked urgently.

“Well… after I picked it up… this is going to sound crazy, but I started having dreams and flashes of… different things.” After hesitating a moment, Rose reached into her bag, noting that the General tensed up and one of the soldiers behind him had his weapon trained on her. Carefully, Rose pulled out her journal and held it out. Doctor Shaw snatched it up eagerly and began flipping through it. “I’m not really sure what is going on, but sometimes I just… know things.”

“Know things?” the General repeated carefully. He looked doubtful but was keeping his express mostly in check.

“I knew your name before we were introduced and I know what your daughter Kate looks like, what her voice sounds like and that she has a really pretty laugh. It’s like I’ve met her, but I haven’t before,” Rose admitted in a rush, looking at the floor to avoid seeing the General’s face when she spoke about his daughter. The revelation that Kate was probably dead still stung.

“And some of the UNIT personnel are really familiar; this place is familiar like I’ve been here before. I know how to use at least some features of the sonic screwdriver and other machines and pieces of technology that I shouldn’t understand.” Rose sucked in a deep breath. “Sometimes I find myself remembering things that I know didn’t happen to me, I can do weird mathematical equations and…” Rose shook her head and leaned back against the edge of the control panel. “And I don’t know why.”

There was a moment of silence in the room and Rose desperately ignored the horrified and worried look from her father. It actually felt good to have said those things out loud. Even when she was
seeing a doctor about it, she’d never wanted to say everything. Aliens and all that, she would have been sectioned in seconds.

“It all started when you picked up the sonic screwdriver correct?” Doctor Shaw asked eagerly.

Rose nodded and Doctor Shaw held open Rose’s journal and showed a couple of pages to the General. “What is it?” Rose asked.

“You’ve drawn the Doctor,” Shaw informed her, turning the journal to show the assortment of faces that Rose had drawn. “And the TARDIS.”

“TARDIS…” Rose repeated thoughtfully as her mind suddenly called up weird images of glass and bronze, coral and a blue box. There was a rush of warmth through her mind.

“We found it soon after the Doctor’s death,” Shaw added, “Nearby on the South Bank.”

“Unfortunately the TARDIS was being stored elsewhere and we no longer have access to it. Do you have a theory Doctor Shaw?” the General asked, still very tense.

“Perhaps the Doctor’s death made some kind of imprint on the sonic screwdriver. A way to pass on some of his knowledge and experience. He was telepathic after all and he may have believed that a UNIT personnel would be the one to pick it up. It would be a way for him to help protect Earth even after his death.”

“He died too quickly to regenerate,” the General countered with a frown. “He wouldn’t have had time.”

“Maybe there is a limit to how many times he can regenerate and this was his final death,” Shaw suggested sadly before looking at Rose. “What about me Miss Tyler? You knew who the General was; do you know who I am?”

“No,” Rose said with a frown and a shake of her head. “You’re not familiar to me.”

“Well he did spend more time with you than me,” Doctor Shaw said to the General. “Back in the old days.”

“But I remember the General as he is now,” Rose interrupted. “Not as a younger man, but at this age. But I also remember a …. Brigadier Benton,” Rose said slowly, testing the name. It sounded right.

“Sergeant Benton knew the Doctor in the past, but he does not hold that rank. He was long retired when all this started. Had there been time I would have requested him,” the General informed her, giving her a careful look. “What other names do you know? Does the name Jo Grant sound familiar?”

The name sent jolts through her mind and Rose couldn’t help but smile. “Of course, Jo Jones, formerly Jo Grant. Sweet, compassionate, protester on environmental issues, tons of grandchildren…” Rose paused and closed her eyes as the conversation started pulling other faces and names to the front of her mind. “Ian and Barbara Chesterton, teachers at Cambridge University, they’ve barely aged due to using a different time ship to get back to Earth. Their son Johnny married Sarah Jane Smith, the journalist who travelled with the Doctor. She’s the adoptive mother of Luke who as made by the Bane as the archetype. The Doctor sent her K-9 to look after
her since her curiosity gets her into so much trouble.”

Rose opened her eyes, but she could barely breathe. She wanted to stop talking, the flow of names and information frightening her deeply. “Tegan Jovanka works on Aboriginal rights in Australia, there was a ship inside Uluru. Ace runs A Charitable Earth, it’s not her real name…. Dorothy is and she calls the Doctor the Professor and likes chemistry. Victoria is married to an ambassador who doesn’t know she’s from another time, but she travelled with Jamie who was from Jacobian Scotland for a time. I don’t remember him, but I’ve heard of him. Ben and Polly got married and run an orphanage in India. Mel lives in California and still works with computers. She’s sweet, but a serious chatterbox and—”

“Miss Tyler!” the General cut in, stepping forward and grabbing her upper arms. “Breathe.”

The order cut through the haze and panic that had taken her over and Rose sucked in a fast breath. She exhaled only a little before taking another breath. Her head felt fuzzy and light, but it was starting to go away.

“But you don’t know me,” Doctor Shaw said with a frown beyond the General. “I’m not at all familiar to you.”

“No, I don’t,” Rose agreed a moment later. “I’m sorry, but your theory isn’t right. What I… remember doesn’t feel like it came from the Doctor. It feels more… personal.”

“Then what happened? Do you have any theories?”

“I don’t know,” Rose said softly, shaking her head. “But this isn’t something left by the Doctor. Those memories…. I think they really are mine, just… not mine.”

“What does that mean Miss Tyler?” the General asked, stepping back from her.

“I don’t really know sir,” Rose replied sadly. “I’m sorry, but I don’t know.”

“Sir,” Doctor Shaw said as she stepped up next to him and showed him another page. “These mummies look familiar don’t they?”

“Indeed,” the General took the journal and showed Rose and open pages with the drawings of the mummies and Apep’s snake head. “Miss Tyler what do you know about these invaders.”

“I think his name is Apep,” Rose told them carefully. “He is an Osirian, probably the last one… no in New York he was trying to get another one to wake up. One of the mummies on display there was really a comatose Osirian…. Sekhmet. Maybe he was successful in New York City and now there are two of them. She might have known where more Osirian technology was hidden on Earth, that could explain them having so many ships and such a large force,” she rambled off thoughtfully, her mind jumping sharply between the facts. It was a bit scary, but exhilarating at the same time.

“What’s this about cutting off his head?” the General asked, tapping the words she’s scrawled.

Rose risked a glance at her father. He was pale and staring at her with barely concealed shock and terror. She wondered what kind of thoughts were going through his head right now and felt a terrible stab of guilt for not telling him anything about this in the past couple of months. Reaching towards him, Rose was relieved when he stepped over and took her hand. Thankfully, the General
was silent and gave them a moment.

“Miss Tyler?”

“I’m not sure,” Rose said softly, squeezing her father’s hand. “I… sort of remember fighting him, I had a sword. At least I think it was a sword, but it was really light. Anyway, he was on his knees, his snake head… and I cut it off. It’s been a dream I’ve been having.”

“You killed him,” the General repeated carefully.

“That doesn’t make sense, clearly that hasn’t happened,” Doctor Shaw insisted. “Perhaps it was a different Osirian.”

“Maybe,” Rose offered doubtfully.

“Are there are consistencies in these memories?” Doctor Shaw asked after taking a slow breath. “Anything that always seems the same?”

“Not really, I mean I can’t see what I look like, but it feels like I’m myself. I don’t seem taller or shorter or anything like that.”

“Any people who are consistent?”

“A few people who appear a couple of times, but there isn’t anyone who is always there. There are these two girls my age, but I’ve never seen them before who I’ve seen several times. Sarah Jane Smith appears in a lot of the memories along with the Chestertons,” Rose admitted before reaching cautiously for the book. After a moment it was surrendered to her and Rose regretfully let go of her father’s hand. She flipped to the page filled with drawings of the Doctor and pointed at the last three images. “But these men reappear the most; it’s always a little different.”

“His personality changes,” the General observed. “But you know that already don’t you.”

“I guess so,” Rose agreed carefully. “That’s the thing, there’s a lot… rattling around in my head now for some reason. I know things, but I’m not … aware of them.”

“Is my daughter in trouble or in danger?” her father suddenly demanded, stepping up next to Rose and wrapping an arm around her.

“Mister Tyler your daughter clearly is under some kind of influence,” the General said bluntly, slightly raising an eyebrow at her father. “Surely that concerns you?”

“Of course,” her father replied sharply. “But she doesn’t know what is happening any more than you do. Are these questions truly going to help? Are the priority right now?”

“We have to know if Miss Tyler is a threat,” Doctor Shaw informed her father, glancing towards Rose in time to see her flinch.

“You must be joking!” her father gasped, glaring at them both. “She just saved this base.”

“Using alien technology that even she has no explanation for how she knows how to use it,” Doctor Shaw countered while the General watched the exchange. Rose looked at him and met his eyes, trying to hide her own nervousness and fear.
“Enough,” the General ordered a moment later, still looking at Rose. “Miss Tyler, you said that you knew me, please elaborate.”

“Uh… Rose stumbled for a moment, playing nervously with the sonic screwdriver. “Well, when I met you I had this really strong feeling of familiarity and… I guess affection. But I knew that I could trust you, that you’re a good man. A bit stubborn, but a good man” Rose pondered her thoughts for a moment and closed her eyes. The others were quiet, giving her a few moments.

“Well,” the General said slowly. “I’m afraid Miss Tyler that you just became our best chance to stop what is happening.”

“Wait what?” Rose asked as her father made a similar sound of displeasure and disbelief.

“I could take the sonic screwdriver from you of course, but then what? You seem to at least have some idea of how to use it to stop these things while my people don’t.”

“General-”

“I dislike not understanding this as much as you,” the General said to Doctor Shaw sharply. “But we don’t have the time or the resources for trial and error right now. We need a plan of attack and we need it fast.”

“I’m not sure I can really help,” Rose protested softly. “I don’t understand it myself.”

“But it is inside of your head,” the General reminded her before he sighed loudly. “Miss Tyler if you have an alternative then speak up, otherwise you’re what we’ve got.”

“The other UNIT-” Rose’s father began to cut in.

“We’ve lost contact with most of them Mister Tyler, right now we have limited contact with the American’s Section 13 and the Welsh branch of Torchwood."

Both names sent a shock through Rose’s brain, a disturbing blend of worry and fondness teamed with a sharp bolt of loathing that she couldn’t explain. The General was watching her, his eyes sharp and calculating.

“Those names mean something to you, Miss Tyler.”

“I… I guess so. Section 13… I think they’re okay, but I… I felt anger towards Torchwood.”

“Interesting and perhaps not surprisingly. Officially Torchwood and UNIT have no relationship and previous to this we acted as if we didn’t know they existed. They are the UK nationalist focused alien agency.” He gestured towards her journal. “And if you are connected to the Doctor then you might know that they want him arrested.”

“Hartman,” Rose supplied quickly, blinking in surprise at herself.

“Indeed, Hartman was their leader. Torchwood headquarters was destroyed after they used one of their weapons on an invading ship. Acted too quickly, not that I completely blame them under the circumstances. But you shouldn’t know her name Miss Tyler, I don’t believe even the Doctor knew of her and Torchwood,” he added with a glance towards Doctor Shaw. “I’m sorry Miss Tyler, I
“wish we could help you with an explanation, but right now that has to wait.”

“What should we do with her?” Doctor Shaw asked calmly and Rose gripped her father’s hand tightly, suddenly frightened.

“She has information locked in her head, brief Doctor Henderson and see what he can do.”

Rose tensed, her heart tightening and the feeling of something heavy on her chest. What did they mean by that?! Her father stepped forward, carefully blocking her and the General turned to look at them. There was an odd flash of something in his eyes.

“Doctor Henderson is the base’s counsellor,” the General explained, his voice becoming a touch more gentle. “She has successfully used hypnosis in the past on some of the troops suffering from combat-related stress problems,” he explained calmly making Rose’s father relax.

Yet Rose couldn’t quite shake off the fear, the idea of hypnosis of someone being in her head alarmed her in a way that she couldn’t understand. She stayed silent and tried to bring the ear under control while Shaw spoke in a low voice over a nearby phone. None the less when an escort arrived for her a few minutes later, Rose forced a smile for her father and followed them into the base. She glanced back only once to see staff reinforcing the base’s defences and her father speaking with Doctor Shaw.

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The room was small and tucked away near the medical wing of the base. There were groans spilling out into the corridor that made Rose feel very ill. A simple door with the sign ‘Doctor Henderson’ hung up next to it gave her pause as she heard someone moving inside.

“Here we are,” the private said kindly and Rose glanced at him. To her relief, she didn’t recognise him and managed to give him a shaky smile. He nodded to her, no doubt trying to be comforting, but he was clearly uncertain.

“Thank you,” Rose managed, wondering if he was going to leave now, but he reached forward and knocked on the door.

“Rose Tyler, Doctor Henderson.”

“Come in, come in,” a feminine voice called from inside and Rose released a small breath of relief, unsure of why.

The private pushed the door open and Rose could see into a small office with no windows, but a handsome wooden desk and comfortable looking chairs. There was a lounge set up where a dark haired woman was moving some boxes off of. She turned around and gave Rose a small smile.

“Miss Tyler, Doctor Henderson. I’ll be outside if you need anything,” the private informed them both as Rose stepped over the threshold. The door clicked shut behind her a moment later and Rose did her best not to fidget.

“Hello Miss Tyler, I’m Doctor Henderson,” the woman said calmly. His introduction was professional, but there was a hint of warmth and gentleness in it that helped Rose calm down. “I’m one of the base’s counsellor,” she explained to her. “People who work for UNIT see and live through a lot of things that are beyond the normal human experience. People like me try to help
them cope in whatever why they need.”

There was a sudden face of a smiling face in her mind at the descriptions, a very familiar one that Rose thought she might have seen in a dream before. Doctor Henderson noticed, “Did you remember something, Miss Tyler?”

“Sort of, but not really,” Rose told him with a shrug as she tried to ignore the nervousness churning her in the stomach.

“Do you understand why you’re here?”

“To help me remember things,” Rose muttered, looking down at her hands. “So I can help fight the aliens.”

“Yes, that is the short of it,” Doctor Henderson agreed with a nod. “We don’t want to hurt you and to honest, I have no idea why you have these strange insights. Doctor Shaw has a few working theories, one of which includes alternate realities if I understand her correctly. The explanation I got while you came down was very rushed.”

“I don’t know either,” Rose replied quickly. “I have no idea if you can help or not.”

“Well, please have a seat and we’ll try. I’m going to hypnotise you,” she said as Rose sank down into one of the overstuffed chairs. “Have you ever been hypnotised before?”

“No-maybe,” Rose said with a frown. “Maybe,” she finally repeated and saw Doctor Henderson scribbling something on a notepad.

“Alright then, Rose close your eyes. I’m going to guide you to sleep and we’ll see what we can find out.”

Nodding, Rose leaned her head back against the back of the chair and closed her eyes. For several minutes it was almost impossible to push away the chaotic thoughts on the surface of her mind: her mother’s death, her confusion over what was happening to her and an overwhelming fear of the aliens coming back. But the soothing voice of Doctor Henderson slowly and surely pushed its way through the haze. The soft chair beneath her and perfect temperature of the room slowly pushed her under and Rose drifted off.
The Greatest Deal: Awaken Rose Tyler

The Tyler Factor
By Lumenda
Chapter Thirty-Four: The Greatest Deal: Awaken Rose Tyler

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

Everything had faded away, leaving only a vague feeling of warmth and safety. Whatever concerns she’d had before were gone. She was floating in a haze, there was really no other word for it. It was like being wrapped up in a thick duvet with extra blankets on top, sort of how her mum had wrapped her up that times she’d gotten the flu really bad when she was ten. Around her, she could hear voices and other strange and unfamiliar noises, but they were all muffled.

“Rose,” a soothing voice called, cutting through the din. “There isn’t much time. I need to you try and remember.”

She couldn’t quite place the voice and couldn’t help the instinctive shudder that ran through her. Rose didn’t want someone influencing her, this was her mind. A place that was important to her, to who she was and other people weren’t supposed to be in here. On instinct, Rose retreated from the voice and wrapped herself up tighter in the vague warmth surrounding her. Everything became more muffled even as she could hear the voice calling to her. Then slowly it began to fade.

It was like dreaming as images and sounds began to slowly and softly replay around her. The sight of a woman with blonde bleached hair who was older than her filled Rose with warmth, happiness, regret and sorrow for reasons she didn’t fully understand. Like a parade, memories slowly played themselves out as she watched detached from it all, removed from the joy, horror, excitement and sorrow of them.

“Rose, please try and wake up,” a voice called to her an unknown time later. It sounded very familiar, warm and worried. A jolt of memory surged through her head and provided the words: father and dad, but it was soon followed by a feeling of confusion and regretful grief.

But that didn’t make sense, her father was dead. He wasn’t in the memories, he was dead and gone. Her mother had told her the story often enough: her father had run out of a wedding and been hit by a car. A blonde woman had held his hand as he died while her mother kept her baby self away from the scene. So why was he here? Why did she know that was his voice? The fog closed in around her and Rose sank deeper down, surrounded by a wave of moments once again, but once more detached.

“Why won’t she wake up?” a stern voice demanded, cutting through the fog. “It’s been three days Doctor Henderson and our best chance is in a coma.”

“I don’t understand it, sir,” the voice she’d been hearing so often said, sounding frantic. “I’ve never seen anything like this. Whatever caused Miss Tyler’s odd behaviour and mental state seems to have activated once I put her into the hypnotic state.”
“But we are still no closer to understanding what is happening?”

“No sir, I still don’t understand,” the voice confessed softly. There was a long pause, “Any luck with the sonic screwdriver?”

“Doctor Shaw is testing different settings. The controls on it are extremely tiny and require very delicate touches. She suspects that it might actually have a neural interface for the Doctor’s telepathy that helps him use it.”

“Can it help in the base defence?”

“She is trying to isolate the setting Miss Tyler used with the sound system. Mister Tyler is assisting her the best he can around his visits,” the deeper voice replied, sounding tired. “I never should have suggested this. Her memories might have helped us, but now…”

“There was no way to know sir,” the other voice offered carefully. “And we don’t know what’s going on in her head right now. Maybe…” the voice trailed off as the fog swallowed Rose again, but a few things kept echoing in her mind:

Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart, Doctor Shaw and UNIT. A sense of danger and urgency tickled at her consciousness and Rose struggled harder against the fog. Earth was in danger, she was its Defender. She was its Champion, a thought reminded her and Rose could see a strange creature with a sword. She’d won, her mind provided, won and given a Champion’s command for the sake of Earth.

More thoughts and memories trickled to the surface, little things like her mates Sharon and Shareen whose faces she could suddenly see clearly. A familiar sounding laugh, a manic grin, icy blue eyes, warm brown eyes and cheerful green ones. But it wasn’t enough to break through the haze completely and a few moments later Rose was pulled under once more.

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“Rose!” the voice shouted, this time sounding desperate and scared. “Rose! Wake up, you need to wake up now. The base is under attack again! The main defences have fallen.”

Someone was touching her arms, but Rose couldn’t quite react to it.

“There’s no time for this!” an unfamiliar voice shouted at a greater distance. “We’ll have to try moving her.”

“That might not be safe! She’s still in a hypnotic state, much deeper than normal. The more we disrupt her the greater the danger!”

“We’ve got to move her! They’re inside! I don’t think those aliens are going to be concerned about her health.”

“What about the sonic screwdriver?”

“Doctor Shaw has it, she went to the main doors to see if she could replicate what Tyler did, but we have to move her. This floor is being evacuated to the lower levels.”

“Going further into a mountain with no way out,” the other voice grumbled and Rose felt herself
being shifted, but couldn’t quite get herself to move.

There was a growing sense of urgency in her chest, fear whispering in her ear that she was in danger. Rose could feel her heart speeding up just as she was suddenly lurched about and moved. Loud noises in the distance battered at the thick fog and it started to clear a little bit. She tried to remember where she was, why she was here and what was going on. Something had happened, something terrible was going on. There was fear, desperation and resignation in the voices around her.

She was aware of her closed eyes suddenly as a bright light appeared and vanished over her in rapid succession. Moving… she was moving, probably on a bed of some kind. There were soft straps around her wrists, but they had a long length to them. They were the sort meant to keep patients from pulling on tubes, she recalled. She wasn’t a prisoner, but the feeling and urgency and fear was still strong.

They stopped a short time later and Rose was aware of the two leaving her side. She tried to move, but the fog was too strong. It was wrapped around her mind, dulling her sensations, her thoughts and ability to move. It was familiar somehow, like a thick heavy blanket with no end that was thrown over her head. She couldn’t see, but she could see flashes of memory…. It was all so familiar.

Rose Tyler Defender of Earth, she repeated to herself in her head. Sonic screwdriver: that sounded important and caused a spark of something in her chest. This was just too familiar… what was happening to her. Rose fought against the fog, pushing against it as if trying to push wet snow off of a box. It retreated for a moment, but that moment gave Rose a chance to glimpse something important.

She was by a lake and surrounded by something thick and dark. There were flashes of images, sounds and waves of feelings that didn’t belong to her. She saw others of herself, the children she might have had, the lives she might have lived and the deaths she might have faced. It had been locked away to keep her safe, but now it was the only thing she had. A loud scream echoed around her, a flash of fear pushed away the last of the fog. Desperation to survive, the human survival instinct shattered a lock.

There was an audible snap. Everything was suddenly in place. Memories of the Piped Piper, living on the Powell Estate with her Mum, Sharon, Shareen, the Mona Lisa, an alien friend named Eve, Horath Academy and Astra. Hundreds of emotionally raw, exciting and frightening events fell into place, overlapping the quieter memories of a life with Pete and Jackie Tyler. Rose sucked in a deep breath, her back arching slightly off a bed as she tried to force her eyes open.

The sounds of screaming broke through the fog, banishing the last vestiges of it. Eyes flying open, Rose barely spared a glance towards the ceiling and tried to roll off the bed. Velcro straps were holding her in place and Rose realised with a grimace that she had tubes in her arms, down her nose and coming out of certain places. A woman in medical scrubs ran into the small room, a look of panic on her face. Her eyes widened when she caught sight of Rose.

“Oh my-”

“Get these things out of me,” Rose ordered sharply as another scream echoed outside of the door. They weren’t in the base’s medical wing anymore, more like a supply room in the lower level. “Now!”
Her entire body ached, her legs shaking badly as she forced her feet into the shoes provided by the medical aid. The woman’s body language was frightened even as she’d focused on Rose. The process of removing all the tubes was more painful than Rose figured it was supposed to be. Her throat was aching, but there had only been a small glass of water available to ease it. Forcing herself to ignore the physical pain, Rose tied her shoes and stood up.

The room shuddered for a moment as Rose felt a rush of dizziness, but she closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

“Miss Tyler I’m not sure that you should be up,” the medical aid told her, glancing fearfully towards the door as another explosion could be heard in the distance.

Rose frowned at being called Miss Tyler. No one at UNIT really called her that anymore. She was usually Thorn or simply Rose. Shrugging it off, Rose rubbed her right wrist absentmindedly and then froze. Her bracelet was gone and she noted that her skin showed no sign of always having a bracelet on. Rather than the band of white skin that she should have there was only normal skin tone.

“What is going on?” Rose asked out loud.

“The aliens have come back,” the medical aid informed her. “We’ve evacuated down to the lower levels.”

“Who is in command?”

“General Lethbridge-Stewart.”

Rose frowned again, wondering when Alistair had come out of retirement again. He’d seemed very happy to turn everything over to Benton not that long ago.

“Where is he?”

“Probably in the lower control room.”

Another explosion made the walls shudder and Rose looked up towards the ceiling in alarm.

“Where are the invaders?” Rose asked sharply getting a terrified look from the aid.

“The soldiers were reinforcing the alpha sector to try and keep them out of the base.”

“How do I get there?”

“The stairs are just down the hall, but you can’t be seriously considering-”

Rose was rushing down the hall before they could finish the sentence. As difficult as standing had been, somehow running was simple and natural. The halls were horribly empty even as the alarms blared and Rose felt horribly naked without her sword as she raced forward. She rounded a corner without slowing down, coming to a frantic halt as two soldiers made of stone appeared at the far end of the hall. One of them levelled a staff towards her and moment later it flashed red.
Rose dodged the bolt of energy, pressing herself against slanting wall as instinct kicked in. Her eyes traced the advancing stone soldiers as her frown deepened. The haze was still clinging to her mind and she wasn’t sure what exactly was happening. But she recognised the UNIT base and these things did not belong here.

They began moving towards her, much faster than she would have figured they could move. She ducked into a small access hatch area in the wall to avoid the blasts, trying to figure out what to do. Then they were upon on her and Rose felt her instincts take over. One of them held its staff up near her chest and with no expression of its painted face made the staff begin to glow.

Rose ducked the blast and grabbed the staff with both hands, pulling it to the side sharply to line it up with the second soldier. The red blast filled her eyes and she had to slam them shut, but heard the crumbling of stone. A harsh blow from the stone soldier into her chest knocked Rose into the wall. Gasping to catch her breath, Rose dropped to the floor to avoid another red blast. To the side in the pile of rubble that used to be the second soldier was its staff weapon. Rose grabbed it, bringing it up with a quickness born of desperation. Her fingers slipped into the small grooves on the centre area and she felt a tiny button. Pressing it, Rose aimed it at the soldier as she stepped to the side to dodge another blast. Her staff glowed red and the beam of energy collided with the stone soldier. It staggered and began to fall apart right in front of her eyes.

Taking a deep breath, Rose tightened her hold on the staff and peeked around the corner. There were more soldiers much further down the hall, but they weren’t moving. She realised with a sick feeling in her stomach that they were guarding the main entrance from anyone trying to escape. Rose knelt down and collected the second staff, shrugging out of her hoodie and using it to fashion a rough sling to carry the second staff on her back.

Her eyes traced the area for any other threats as she side-stepped towards the small control room. She stepped into the small control room and couldn’t contain a gasp of horror. Charred bodies were scattered in the room with two others half crushed by the collapsing roof. One of them she recognised as Ross with a small sound of despair. Kneeling next to Ross’ fallen form, Rose checked his neck for a pulse only to have his death confirmed by the glassiness of his eyes. She swallowed thickly and gently brushed his eyes closed. Across the room, she caught sight of another form and stopped short. It was an older woman, Doctor Shaw, she realised with an odd jolt in her brain. Rose nearly stumbled as memories raced through her mind, providing her with information.

“What the hell,” Rose gasped, grasping at the wall as she tried to steady herself. “Bloody hell what is going on here?”

No one answered the question and Rose was pulled out her churning shocked thoughts by the sound of an explosion too close for comfort. She looked at the nearby controls, they were for a sound system, but they had been fired by some kind of energy blast. Blue caught her attention in the corner of her eye and Rose turned slightly and caught sight of the sonic screwdriver on the floor. It was surrounded by debris, but with a sigh of relief, Rose realised that it was intact. Another explosion rocked the room and Rose scooped up the sonic screwdriver. With a glance at the two bodies, Rose gave them a sad smile.

“I’m so sorry, I’ll do what I can to help,” she promised gently before taking a deep breath and stepping back into the hall.

Running the other way down the hall, Rose forced herself to ignore the soldiers in the distance. She had to find the General, something very bad was happening and she had to keep running. Rose
tried to remember how to navigate the base, humorlessly reminding herself that last time a lot of ventilation ducts had been involved.

Rose had to blast two more stone soldiers in the back as she searched further into the base. The sonic screwdriver in her pocket gave her a little more courage and she wished that she had her phone. Where was the Doctor? She stumbled over the thought, feeling like she was forgetting something very important, but it wasn’t coming. The haze in her mind was still there, teasing her with glimpses of something.

Descending another level, Rose called out for anyone who was still around. A tentative voice called back and Rose headed towards it with relief. She followed it around two more corners and stopped short when suddenly confronted with a barricade of soldiers who all had their weapons trained on her.

“I have a present,” Rose said with a small smile as she held out the staff in her hands to one of the soldiers.

They glanced towards the officer who was staring at her in shock. Rose frowned at that, she had enough of a reputation that they usually didn’t look at her like that anymore. The officer nodded and the soldier stepped forward to take the staff. With quick movements, Rose showed him how to position his hands and pointed out the small firing control. She then swung the second one off her back and handed it to another soldier.

“I need to see the General,” Rose informed the officer firmly.

They blinked, but nodded and gestured to the doors behind them.

“He’s just in there Miss Tyler.”

“Thank you,” Rose replied with a nod, once again thrown off being called Miss Tyler, but she stepped through the doors.

It was a large windowless room that was mostly grey with one door on the far side of the room that only slightly ajar. A large table filled the centre of the room with printed out maps scattered across it. Computers filled one wall and there were stacks of boxes in a far corner. The General was standing by the table with two officers arguing over something. He looked up at Rose a moment later, his eyes widening.

“Miss Tyler I wasn’t aware that you were awake. I’m afraid we have little communication ability anymore.” He frowned and glanced at one of the officers, not picking up on Rose’s confusion. He tended to call her Thorn and where was Benton? “What is she doing running around by herself?”

“Rose,” another voice called as the door on the far side of the room opened.

Rose turned towards the voice and her eyes widened, her mind sputtered to a halt. Her father, her long dead father was standing right there, clear as daylight. His suit was messy and rumpled from days of wearing nothing else, he looked exhausted, but relieved to see her. Rose’s mind tripped over him being there and she could do nothing but stare at Pete Tyler as he stepped forward and hugged. Slowly, Rose brought her arms up and returned the hug, completely overwhelmed by the sensation and smell of her father. He was real, he as solid and he was here. She couldn’t hold back a sob of conflicting emotions: joy, sorrow, regret, relief, doubt and guilt.
“Mister Tyler Miss Tyler, I’m sorry but we are in a dangerous situation. There isn’t time for this.”

Rose pressed her face against her father’s chest, her knees buckling as the last little pieces began to fit together. In her brain, two sets of competing memories settled alongside each other, both feeling completely real. She couldn’t breathe and felt like she was going to fall if her father hadn’t been holding her up. Tears escaped her eyes, she had her father back. Somehow the universe had given him back to her.

Except… the Doctor was dead. It was like a knife was stabbed into her chest at that realisation. He’d died because she wasn’t there to save him, he’d been so lost and hurting after the Time War and had never met her to let the wounds start healing. He’d died alone because she wasn’t the girl who could help him.

And Apep wasn’t dead, she hadn’t killed him on top of a pyramid in ancient Egypt. He’d brought Sekhmet back in New York like he’d originally planned and apparently she’d had technology stashed somewhere based on the ships and army they suddenly had. Millions if not billions were dead and there was nothing that UNIT could do.

Her legs gave out as an agonised sob escaped her, muffled in her father’s chest. He gently lowered her to the ground and let her cry. Rose tightened her fingers in the fabric of his suit, telling herself to pull together. She had to do something, but what could she possibly do. Was she in an alternate reality? She had to be and it was dying. Everything was wrong, this wasn’t her, she’d been rewritten.

Rewritten!

The Doctor’s, her Doctor’s words about time being rewritten slammed into Rose. She was so startled that she stopped crying with a soft hiccup. Looking up at her father, Rose drank in the look of worry and adoration that she saw there before she wiped away her tears. She took a shaky breath and forced herself to let go of her father’s jacket.

“General,” Rose said slowly as she climbed to her feet and brushed her hair out of her face. She squared her shoulders and raised her chin. “I’m the person that you were digging for.”

“And just who are you?” the General asked carefully, his expression distrustful and cautious.

“I’m Rose Tyler,” she replied calmly with a sad little smile. “Except I’m a version of Rose Tyler that actually has a chance of helping you. Shaw was close, alternative realities isn’t too far off except…” Rose glanced towards her father, trying to make sense of the churning emotions in her chest. “It’s not actually an alternate reality; at least I don’t think it is.”

“Miss Tyler, we haven’t got the time for this.”

“If I’m right then you have to make time,” Rose snapped more harshly than she meant to. “Time can be written and I think it has been,” she added in a calmer voice after taking a deep breath. “That’s why I… she had some of my memories. It’s like…. a layer of paint over another layer of paint. If it gets chipped then the paint underneath becomes visible. The hypnotic state teamed with the crisis around me peeled the paint away. I now remember two lifetimes one as this timeline’s Rose Tyler and another as another Rose Tyler.”

“Let’s say you’re right about that,” Pete said, stepping closer to her a strange disbelieving look on his face. “How does that help us now?”
Rose turned to face her father slowly, her heart twisting painfully in her chest. She looked at him, really looked at him and tried to absorb every little detail. He has starting to grey and his hairline was receding, unlike all his photos. His face was full of laugh lines, but right now he looked terrified, like he was desperate to reach out to her, but couldn’t bring himself to. He looked exhausted, but his mouth was thin in determination, an expression that Rose recognised all too well from herself.

“Because time can be rewritten,” Rose intoned carefully, feeling a sinking sense of certainty. “And potentially restored.”

“Miss Tyler—” the General began to shout.


Her father stumbled back with a confused and worried look on his face that gradually began to become both horrified and resigned.

“I… I was hit by a car outside of Sarah and oh what was his name’s wedding. I thought I was dying, I was dying and this… vision in a white cloak appeared. It frightened me at first, it didn’t have a normal face except for a toothy mouth, but it promised to help me.”

“The Trickster,” Rose realised with sharp painful intake of breath.

“He never told me his name,” her father confessed with a thick swallow. “But he offered me a chance to live, to survive the injuries and walk away.”

“What did he want in return?” the General demanded looking thunderous. “What did this alien want?”

“He just told me to be a good father,” Pete replied quickly, glancing towards the General and then turning his attention back to Rose as her face showed only despair.

Rose’s knees threatened to give out and her father reached out quickly to take hold of her arm. She heard him call her name, his voice thick with worry and had to struggle against the urge to break down crying again.

“Yeah,” she finally managed. “Yeah, that was all that he needed. You lived and everything changed.”

“What are you talking about?” her father asked urgently. “What does it have to do with this?!”

“The Trickster… he’s well it was explained to me that he’s an extra-dimensional being who along with the rest of the Pantheon of Discord was banished from this universe. They liked chaos too much and their actions were dangerous to the fabric of reality. But he still has enough power to manifest himself within the universe for short periods of time. His goal is to create chaos which gives him power and allows him to do more. He’s called the Trickster because he offers people deals and uses the little power he has to alter something about the world. On the surface, it seems like a good thing since he needs agreement, but it blows up in your face.” Rose pushed a strand of blonde hair behind her ear. “He’s an enemy of mine, he’s tried to get me to make a deal before.”

An explosion from the upper levels caused the room to shake and Rose risked a quick glance up at
the ceiling as a thin layer of dust fell around them.

“And I made a deal with him,” Pete said carefully as he looked up fearfully. “But what was the point? What was it he was after?” Desperation was creeping into his voice and Rose wanted nothing more than to drop the line of conversation, but the distant sound of energy weapons alerted her that Apep’s troops were trying again.

“You didn’t die,” Rose admitted softly as she forced herself to look back at him, holding back the tears. “In her–my–our original life you died that day.” Rose reached out and gently touched her father’s chest with a shaking hand. “I didn’t have a dad growing up. Mum and I lived in council flats until I turned our lives around, but I–I never knew you.”

“Why would the Trickster want to make such a change?” the General asked sharply looking between them both carefully.

“Because my whole life was altered,” Rose admitted. “He couldn’t get me to make a deal so he went and made a deal to change an event that shaped my entire life. I never met the Doctor when I was eleven; I wasn’t there to save the Doctor’s life against the Nestene Consciousness and I… I’m not the Defender of Earth that I would have been.”

“Defender of Earth?” her father repeated in a stunned voice.

“Yeah,” Rose laughed bitterly. “In that life, I’ve stopped a lot of aliens, the Doctor jokes that he doesn’t have to come to Earth anymore. It’s not true of course, but…” Rose shook her head, “But I have a pretty good reputation and aliens friends that I call upon when things get really dangerous: aliens that I’ve helped and saved in the past, but none of that happened.” She gestured towards the General and chuckled, “I actually work as a consultant for UNIT around the world. I was supposed to help stop the Bane and Apep was supposed to die before he ever had the chance to do this kind of damage.”

Rose stepped back feeling claustrophobic all of a sudden even though the room was large for the number of people inside. Her eyes were darting between the General and her father. She wanted to look at him, but at the same time felt utterly unable to keep watching him. The sudden cost of seeing him, the price of those happy memories was beginning to sink in. She could now remember the years of longing to know her father, wondering if she was like him and entertaining fanciful thoughts about what her life would have been like if he had lived. It was beyond all her imaginings. She could see herself, both versions of herself so clearly in him and had warm memories of a loving father and had enjoyed a privileged life.

But the Doctor was dead, her lover, her best friend and so much more was gone from this world. He’d been wheeled away while she watched and hadn’t even known just what she was losing. And the world… everything was destroyed. Maybe it could be rebuilt in time, but the wounds would leave scars and without the Doctor...

“Miss Tyler!” the General called, pulling her out of her troubled musings. “What can we do?”

“Right,” Rose managed with a quick nod before forcing herself to look at her father. He was pale and watching her with despair in his eyes.

“Rose?” he asked, reaching underneath his shirt and pulling out a chain that he’d worn for years. She’d stopped noticing it many years ago but suddenly felt aware of it. She was certain that the original Pete Tyler had nothing of the sort. There was a small square charm made out of metal
hanging from the chain that gleamed in the light. “The being gave me this when I made my deal with him.”

“What?” Rose repeated in confusion with a frown, her eyes narrowing on the small charm.

Pete lifted the chain off his neck, his fingers brushing the charm with a frown before he handed it to her. Rose held the thing carefully as if it might burn her at any moment. Nothing about it really stood out, it seemed very ordinary in shape with only a few small designs on it. If it was a language she couldn’t read it, suddenly very aware of her missing translator. Yet the shine of the metal seemed a bit off and she remembered the chronosteel that the White Guardian had once sent her to retrieve.

“I think that this is the conduit of changing the timeline,” Rose said carefully around a lump in her throat. “This and your agreement might be what holds the new timeline in place, anchors it.”

“So in order to set things right…. I have to be dead,” her father said carefully.

“Mister Tyler,” the General started to say, but Pete cut him off.

“Don’t worry General,” Pete said sharply, he looked ill but determined. “I don’t see another way out of this and…” he looked at Rose and managed a small smile. “I want to protect my little girl.” He stepped closer to her. “Rose… in this other life, were you happy?”

“Yes,” she answered after a moment, aware of a fresh wave of tears down her face. “I was, am… whatever the proper clause is.”

“But you know about aliens-”

“Yeah I do, but it’s okay,” Rose tried to explain with a shaky smile. “We don’t really have time for me to explain everything, but… well, the thing is that I’m actually involved with the Doctor.”

“What?!” the General snapped with wide eyes and Rose almost laughed at the expression.

“Relax Alistair, you know about it. Heck, you were one of the people who suspected it before the relationship became public,” Rose looked back at her stunned father. “I love him, he loves me and we look after each other. My work with UNIT lets me look after Mum, I bought her a nice place in Ealing before I started university. She has good friends, actually likes to garden. We’re okay, we don’t have you,” she explained weakly, “but we’re okay.” A soft sob escaped Rose and she dropped her eyes, unable to look at him any longer.

There was another explosion and in the corner of her eye, Rose could see a dark worried expression taking over the General’s face. He was eyeing her father carefully, his hand resting on his firearm, but Rose couldn’t even summon any real anger towards him. Not under the circumstances and barely contained another sob.

“I’m sorry love,” her father told her softly, reaching out and cupping her cheek.

Stepping closer to him, Rose let their foreheads touch as fresh tears slid down her cheeks. This had to work; it was their only chance, but… God, she almost wanted it to fail. Another soft sob escaped Rose as her father gently placed the small cube in her hands.

“I didn’t mean for this to happen,” her father whispered. “But I want you to know that I’m very
proud of you, both versions of you I suppose. I love you and I just wanted to be a good father.”

“You were,” Rose struggled to say around the knot in her throat. “You were and you are.”

“Will you remember?”

“I don’t know,” Rose whispered with a slight shake of her head. “Maybe, but maybe not.”

“Well if you do then remember that I love you and that I did my best.”

“I know.”

Pete Tyler took a deep breath and stepped back from his daughter. For a moment he looked lost and uncertain, but then he straightened his shoulders as the General and the UNIT personnel looked on with hesitant expressions.

“Trickster!” Pete called his voice echoing in the room. “Trickster I withdraw my agreement!”

“Do not say such foolish things,” an oily voice declared, the voice seeming to come from all around them. “Would you abandon your little girl and your wife to a life of poverty and grief?”

“I’m trying to save my daughter and Jackie,” Pete declared, looking less nervous now as anger began to take over his features. “You used me to hurt this world.”

“Such chaos,” the oily voice declared with glee. “The Doctor is dead, Earth is in ruins and so many things left undone by Rose Marion Tyler. All the things she’ll never do. I should have tried this plan years ago.”

“Well, it’s over now!” Pete snapped. “You need my agreement and I withdraw it!”

“You think it’s that simple?” the voice asked with a chuckle. “That my agreements are so easy to break.”

Pete turned towards Rose, doubt flickering in his eyes. Rose nodded to him and stepped closer, reaching a hand out to him, the charm dangling from it. Her father reached out and touched her hand, his fingers brushing the charm.

“I’m willing to die if it prevents this,” Pete said in a strong loud voice. “I want no part in your deal Trickster, I withdraw my agreement.” The charm in their linked hands flashed and there was a sudden roar of anger all around them.

A strong gust of wind began to fill the room and the charm began to flash over and over like a strobe light. On instinct, Rose tightened her hold on it and her father’s fingers. Their eyes met as the gust of wind turned into a whirlwind like a tornado in the small room. Then there was a white light so bright that against her will Rose closed her eyes and lost sight of her father.

Gasping for air, Rose tightened her grip on the small metal cube. The world seemed to be falling away from her and turning into a blur of colour. It was hard to breathe, she couldn’t see anything clearly. Voices were echoing around her, familiar voices saying familiar things.

“Nice to meet you, Rose Tyler.”
“Stay out of trouble.”

“Do you Sarah Jane Smith take Johnny Chesterton to be your husband?”

“I love you.”

“Stop this wedding now!”

Her knees shock and Rose felt like she was about to faint when suddenly the whirl stopped. She sucked in a greedy breath and looked around. At first, she thought she was in a different room, but after a rapid glance around the room, Rose realised that she hadn’t moved at all. There were more boxes in the corner and the large table was stacked with smaller boxes and a few random tools and clipboards. She was alone and back in her regular clothes. Behind her ear she could feel the familiar shape of the translator, around her neck hung the sapphire from Queen Jane and her longer chain with the odd things she’d collected and her TARDIS key. On her wrist was her golden bracelet shimmering in the light. But Rose’s mind was focused on one thing: she remembered.

Tears ran down her cheeks as she stood in the quiet storage room. Sooner or later she’d have to move and alert UNIT that she was here, but not yet. In her hands, she still cradled the tiny square charm that she thought might still carry a hint of her father’s warmth. Rose wanted to move, to reach for the mobile phone in the back pocket of her jeans. Her mind was a haze of what the date was, what was the last thing that had happened and the only clear thing was the overwhelming sense of loss.

Rose started to shake badly, wanting to hug herself, but afraid of moving her hands. Her legs felt ready to give out when a wheezing sound began to fill the room. Rose opened her eyes, unsure of when she’d closed them and managed a weak happy smile at the wonderful sound. The TARDIS began to materialise just to the right of her in front of the room’s second door. A moment later the TARDIS doors were flung open and her brown-haired Doctor in the pinstripe suit stepped out. His expression was pained and urgent as he rushed towards her. Rose didn’t even have a chance to make a sound before she was wrapped in his arms. Collapsing against him, Rose released a soft sigh of relief and inhaled a deep breath, taking in his scent.

He was real, he was alive and he was here. A soft kiss on her forehead made Rose tremble. For a terrible moment, she was relieved that Pete had made the choice to save the world and restore time as she now had the Doctor back. The stray thought was followed by a wave of grief and guilt that made her shut her eyes against more tears.

“I’m sorry Rose,” the Doctor whispered in her ear, holding her close. “I’m so so sorry.”

Rose was about to reply when the light in the room rippled. Pulling back from the Doctor she looked around in alarm as a shadow swirled together just in front of them. The Trickster appeared, dressed in his long black robe and his featureless face. He grinned at her with a mouth full of razor sharp teeth and chuckled. Rose’s eyes narrowed on him as rage boiled beneath her skin so hot that she barely noticed a flash of white and black as the White and Black Guardians appeared in the room.

“You!” Rose snarled, lunging towards the grinning Trickster. She was caught around the waist by the Black Guardian who secured her in place, ignoring her protests. As she struggled against him, the Doctor stepped up beside them and wrapped his arms around Rose. Thankfully the Black Guardian released her, but the Doctor did not let her go.
“Rose Tyler,” the Trickster greeted with a chuckle. “I suppose that I was not able to destroy you, but at least I have some small comfort in knowing that I have hurt you.” He long bony fingers reached towards her, but he came no closer.

“You’ve done enough for today,” the White Guardian announced sternly, staring at the Trickster as if he was some vermin on the floor of a kitchen. “Be gone.”

“Reverted or not Guardians I gained power from that little adventure,” the Trickster mocked happily. “All that chaos, the web of time beginning to fall apart as life all across Earth was extinguished… glorious.”

“Trickster,” the Doctor growled in a voice so dark and angry that Rose forgot her own grief for a moment and looked at him in worry. “Don’t test my limits today. I am angry and that’s never a good thing for those that anger me.”

“For once I am in agreement with the Doctor,” the Black Guardian announced in a tight voice that promised pain. “Be gone from here.”

There was a flicker of fear on the Trickster’s features as he surveyed those glaring at him. He gave Rose one last toothy smile and began to shimmer out of view.

“Trickster!” Rose shouted angrily, “Whatever it is that you’re so afraid of me becoming- I will become and I will come for you!”

The Trickster vanished without another word and the Doctor gently eased his grip on her. Rose had to fight down the urge to snap at him for holding her, but a small part of her knew that she was in pain and not thinking straight. Instead, the Doctor dropped his hand and gently took her hand in his threading their fingers together. Instantly Rose felt a tiny bit better and couldn’t repress a tiny shiver, remembering the feeling of knowing he was dead. She was gripped by a sudden desire to hold him and kiss him, but the Guardians were turning to look at them.

“Rose Tyler,” the Black Guardian said with a small nod to her before he looked towards the Doctor. With a small sneer, he nodded to the Doctor and vanished in a burst of darkness.

The White Guardian sighed softly and shook his head, turning to look at Rose. “We are very fortunate that the Silver Lord’s plan in Utah was of use today.”

“What?” Rose asked, completely thrown by the words.

“The Silver Lord in Utah created a connection between your alternate selves and you Rose,” the Doctor told her gently, rubbing her hand. “At least that’s how you’ve explained it to me.”

“So other versions of me can remember my life?” Rose asked with wide eyes, her world suddenly tilting terribly.

“Potentially, but it will take just the right circumstances for them to ever become aware of the imprint. You… her… connected because you were a rewritten version of the same person in what should have been one reality. The Trickster’s ability to rewrite time is imperfect and leaves scarring, that’s why it is so easy to force to revert.”
Rose tensed at the suggestion that her father sacrificing his life was easy, but the White Guardian merely gave her a soft smile. “Be warned though Miss Tyler that the door in your mind to the memories of alternative lives has been opened. Other things may start to slip through now and again.”

The warning was just vague enough while his voice had a ring of certainty to it that Rose felt her hairs standing on end. The White Guardian watched her for a moment, his eyes dropping to the small chronosteel square in her hands, but he didn’t comment on it.

“I leave Miss Tyler in your hands, Doctor,” the White Guardian said politely with a nod before he looked at Rose. “My condolences Miss Tyler, but if I may be so bold you do now have the memories of a life with your father. That is more than most people could ever dream of.”

Rose wanted to hit the White Guardian now too even as she felt a little of the rage draining out of her. Suddenly her whole body felt weak and beat down. The Doctor’s hand began to rub her back and the White Guardian vanished in a flash of light. As soon as the Guardian vanished, the Doctor pulled Rose back against him in a tight hug.

“He saved the world,” Rose whispered into the Doctor’s neck, grateful for his arms around her. It was the only thing keeping her on her feet.

“You stay with me until you feel ready to go back to life on Earth,” he told her gently. “One step at a time.”

Yeah,” Rose agreed with a little nod, finally stepping away from the Doctor, though she didn’t release his hand. “Once step at a time.” She looked down at the small piece of chronosteel in her hand and swallowed thickly. Then she turned the Doctor’s hand so it was opened. With a deep breath of determination, Rose placed the chronosteel square in his hand and closed his fist around it. “Keep this safe for me.”

“I will,” the Doctor promised her, leaning forward and kissing her forehead. “He won’t use it again, I promise.”

“Thank you,” Rose told him before she gave him a soft smile. “I love you. Even in a life with my father… I,” she couldn’t finish, but the Doctor nodded with a sad smile.

“Where do you want to go?”

Rose paused and swallowed thickly, shivering at a terrible memory. “London, I need to see my mother. I need to see that she’s alright… after that, I don’t know, but let’s start there.”
“Your wish is my command,” the Doctor replied, stepping back and carefully putting the chronosteel into a jacket pocket. He retook her hand and tugged her towards the controls. With a dramatic throw of a switch the TARDIS shuddered and they were dematerializing into the time-space vortex, leaving behind an empty room with papers blowing in the wind.
Nightmare: Don’t Fall Asleep

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Thirty-Six: Nightmare: Don’t Fall Asleep

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

………………………….

It was mid-February on a chilly weekend with dark thick clouds hanging over London with a promise of rain or if the temperature dropped a little more maybe snow. On a weekend such as this Rose Tyler would usually be found at Cambridge sipping a cup of tea and working on an upcoming paper in preparation for any alien menace that might come her way, but on this particular weekend, Rose was seeking some comfort among friends.

The flat that her mates Sharon and Shareen shared was very comfortable and looked much cleaner than her own. Throw pillows, random photos and personal items covered every surface in a sort of controlled chaos in contrast to her own flat that usually had pieces of half ripped apart tech and books scattered about that was nothing but chaos. Rose herself was seated on the overstuffed sofa with her legs tucked underneath her.

"Is it better or worse now?” Sharon asked kindly, handing Rose the glass of wine.

Rose sipped from the glass thoughtfully and then shook her head. “I’m really not sure. When it first happened I was so overwhelmed by the memories of my other life and what… what happened,” Rose said carefully. “I didn’t really notice those things if they were happening.”

“She thought the founding of the Church of England never happened today,” Shareen informed Sharon, giving Rose a worried look.

“There’s just a lot of information in my head now,” Rose defended quickly, trying to suppress the little spark of fear in her gut. “None of it is organised right at the moment, but my life, my real life is still dominant. I know who you are, who I am and I remember my history.”

“Still… some of that information could be harmful to you or draw unwanted attention,” Sharon told her with a glance at Shareen. “Not to mention the other changes.”

“What changes?” Rose asked with a frown, looking between the two women.

“Well your accent for one,” Shareen said delicately. “I’ve noticed over the last couple of weeks that you speak with less of a cockney accent, you sound a bit more… refined.”

“Are you serious?” Rose demanded with wide eyes, looking over towards Sharon who nodded.

“And you’re dressing a bit differently,” Sharon added. “Fewer hoodies and you’re doing more with your hair and makeup.”

Rose blinked at them, frowning at the words, but she stopped and thought back to the last few mornings. She’d gotten up a little bit earlier and braided her hair on a couple of occasions or curled
it a bit. Three months ago she hadn’t even owned a curling iron. When had that…?

“Oh,” Rose breathed. “Bloody hell… I didn’t even realise it, but yeah I went shopping a few days after I got back and…”

“You got things you wouldn’t normally get, but your other self would have,” Sharon finished calmly, putting a hand over Rose’s. “We’ve noticed the slight wardrobe adjustment.”

“What’s happening to me?” Rose asked as she glanced down at what she wearing. She had her usual jeans, but she’d bought a slightly dressier looking pair of boots that were more stylish than her combat boots. Under her t-shirt, she had a lacy bottom undershirt that she hadn’t even thought about when she put it on this morning.

“I’m inclined to say you’re experiencing regeneration,” Shareen told her with a chuckle. “But it’s just little things, you are right that you are still definitely you.”

“Just you with a couple of new additions,” Sharon added quickly.

“Like a slightly altered accent and sense of style.”

“And being musical all of a sudden,” Sharon finished with a shrug. “Don’t panic, but you need to be aware of it.”

“Mum hasn’t said anything,” Rose told them with a frown, tugging uncomfortably at her t-shirt and glancing down at her boots.

“Well your accent has been thinning for a few years,” Shareen assured her gently. “It’s just more noticeable lately.”

“It was probably just the result of university and being around a great verity of accents,” Sharon agreed with a nod. “I bet ours have changed a little too.”

Rose smiled and nodded, both pleased by the reassurance and suddenly finding herself worrying about just what she sounded like. She tapped her fingers absentmindedly on the armrest as she took a sip of her wine only to pause when she got a look from Sharon.

“What?” Rose asked as she set down her glass and frowned at Sharon.

“That’s a new quirk,” Sharon told her with smile. “Trying to play the piano, Rose?”

Freezing, Rose looked down at her fingers and watched them move for a moment. She sighed and rubbed the side of her head.

“I really don’t like this,” Rose grumbled.

“It could be worse,” Shareen told her kindly, reaching over and putting a hand on her shoulder. “Sure it’s weird right now, but you can play instruments and speak French now! That’s got to be worth something.”

“And you have memories of your dad,” Sharon added gently. “The weirdness of it will pass sweetie and soon enough this will all feel natural.”
“I know,” Rose sighed, shaking her head. “And I appreciate the support, but… I don’t know I guess I’m worried about what else is inside my head now.”

“Come again?”

“That other Rose… the other part of me now, the one I guess I sort of… fused with even though my personality traits are dominate, we were a lot of alike and our lives really weren’t that far off.” At the doubtful look, her friends gave her Rose shook her head. “I’m serious, the differences in our worlds were based on our history and family members, but in theory, I’ve got memories from all sorts of Rose Tylers from all sorts of worlds. I could have memories of a Nazi-ruled world rattling around in my head or the dark ages or a post-apocalyptic world and I have no control over when or if they come out.” Rose frowned. “I think that’s where that other stuff is coming from, stuff like forgetting about the Glorious Revolution and that scares me a little.”

“Hey,” Sharon said softly, reaching over to put an arm around Rose’s shoulder while Shareen did the same. “We’re worried too, but stressing about it isn’t going to help. That door in your mind if open, at least for a little while. Fixating on it won’t help anything.”

“Exactly,” Shareen agreed. “And besides Rose history has never been your subject so you’ll be fine if anyone notices.”

“Exactly, you’re studying scientific principals and those are well I’d say universal but they sort of transcend that don’t they.”

“Weak joke, but point taken,” Rose sighed with a little smile. “But enough about my drama,” she declared with a big smile. “Sharon anything new with you and that Andrew bloke you were telling us about?”

Sharon grinned and started talking. Rose couldn’t help it as a large yawn escaped her. Thankfully Sharon looked more worried than hurt.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yeah,” Rose said quickly, blinking her eyes. “I’ve just had nightmares the last couple of days.”

“Nightmares,” Shareen repeated with a frown.

“I’m sure that’s totally normal, I’m still dealing with a lot,” Rose told them quickly.

“Anything in particular?”

“I don’t really remember much about them,” Rose replied with a shrug. “They’ll pass, don’t worry so much.”

Sharon and Shareen shared a worried look, but thankfully a few moments later they resumed telling her stories about their own school days and apparently the highly attractive grad student that was flirting with Shareen. Leaning back on the sofa, Rose let the voices of her friends wash over her and tried not to fall asleep.

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It was weird being home. Bannerman Road felt odd to her now Rose realised as she climbed out of
her SUV and looked up at the brick house she’d bought her mother. Granted she hadn’t grown up here, but her mind kept flashing back to the mansion that she remembered living with her parents in. Rose swallowed and blinked back some tears that pricked at her eyes. There was a lingering sense of loss that Rose didn’t quite understand how to address. She’d spent a week with the Doctor letting him take her beautiful places, hold her when she broke down and cried and they’d sat in the TARDIS library and just talked plenty of times, but Rose still felt like she was struggling to grieve.

How did you grieve for someone that you’d both just lost and lost long ago? She’d almost mourned on some deep level not having her father, but the very real and recent loss of him was throwing her off badly. But her grief wasn’t just for her father, but for the Rose Tyler that she remembered being who had suddenly blinked out of existence. Sharon and Shareen saw it as a fusing, but in her darker moments, Rose wondered if she was really just walking around with the memories of a dead girl. And she couldn’t help but feel for all the people who had died in Apep’s attack even though it had never happened now, the memory of that fear and crushing despair was clinging to her. Rose shook her head and dismissed the depressing thoughts. She needed a good night’s sleep to break her out of this morbid mood.

The house was dark as Rose carefully slipped inside. Rita Anne was actually in the living room asleep on the sofa with the television on. Smiling softly, Rose glanced at the older woman to check that she was positioned alright before deciding to leave her be. Mickey’s grandmother was the definition of tough old woman: she’d raised Mickey and accepted aliens with a great deal more calm than her mother had. Not that the woman was happy with Mickey’s career choice. Rose was honestly still surprised that Mickey had forgiven her for her wedding letting the whole aliens thing out of the bag.

Rose turned on the lamp in the hallway on her way out to give Rita Anne a bit more light to navigate to her room by. Climbing the steps, Rose rolled her shoulders and frowned at how achy she felt. She shrugged it off and went to her room, busying herself and getting ready for bed. The turquoise duvet and curtains made Rose frown. The colour no longer appealed to her like it once had. Thinking back on her shopping trip, Rose realised that it seemed purple has usurped turquoise as her favourite colour… she supposed it was better than the pink that her other-self had favoured.

“How does the Doctor do this?” Rose asked out loud, shaking her head and feeling a great deal more empathy for her significant other’s occasional change of body and preferences.

Sighing, Rose climbed into her bed and turned the light out. She hadn’t anticipated it being this difficult to be near her mother, but every time they were alone and it was quiet all she could hear was the final phone conversation between her alternate self and her own mother. Rose slung back the duvet and stood up, grabbing her dressing gown. She tip toed down the hall and carefully peeked into her mother’s bedroom. Her mum was snuggly in bed, a mask of some kind on her face and moisturising gloves on her hands. If the sight hadn’t been so reassuring to her, Rose would have giggled. Instead, she nodded to herself and returned to her own room. Climbing back into her bed, Rose lay back and whispered to herself that everyone was okay, Apep was dead and she was fine.

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The darkness in the room felt heavy, unbearable and the stale air was a struggle to breathe. In her hands she was grasping some kind of weapon, the weight was familiar, comforting and terrifying all at the same time. Down the long dark corridor beyond where she could see she could hear the thumping of heavy footfalls.
“This is it,” a terrified voice whispered next to her, “We’ve lost. Earth is done for.”

She wanted to argue, wanted to demand an explanation. This… this wasn’t right, something was very wrong. She couldn’t remember what brought her to this point, but it was real. Every sense of tingling and her right arm was in terrible pain from some kind of injury. This wasn’t a dream, but how could it be real. Behind her, Rose felt something brush her shoulder and heard a soft high pitched laugh, but when she dared a quick look back there was nothing there.

Rose’s eyes snapped open and she sucked in a deep greedy breath. She became aware that she was lying down and her fingers were twisted in the fabric of her duvet as if she’d been holding on for dear life. Taking a slower breath, Rose looked up at the white ceiling above her, illuminated by the stray moonbeams coming through the window. Her heart was pounding, but beginning to slow down a little.

“It was just a dream,” Rose said out loud and flinching at how thin and weak her voice sounded. Sitting up slowly, Rose took another deep breath and tried to shake off the dream. Except it was lingering in her mind. She could recall all the little details, she could even remember the stricken faces…. Rose shook herself and pried her fingers out of the duvet fabric. They were sore and stiff as if they’d been gripping something for dear life.

Rose tossed back the duvet and slipped her legs out of the bed. She didn’t put them all the down of the floor and instead sat there with her legs hanging. Breathing slowly in and out, Rose told herself again and again that it was just a silly nightmare brought on by the stress of what was happening. The words didn’t help much and Rose glanced at the clock, frowning in distress at the time. Briefly, she considered laying back down and trying to get more sleep but shuddered at the idea of going back to that nightmare. She climbed out of bed and put on her slipped, grabbed her laptop and decided to get started on her term papers extra early.

Rose was dragging horribly the next morning but made a nice breakfast for herself, her mum, Rita Anne and Mickey who stopped by on Sunday mornings. He gave her a worried look but thankfully didn’t call her out on bad she looked.

“Any plans for this morning?” Mickey asked kindly as he helped Rose clean up the kitchen.

“Yeah I’m going over to Sarah Jane’s to check on Spock before I head back,” Rose answered with a small nod.

“Are you going to be okay to drive?” Mickey questioned, putting a hand on her shoulder. “I mean you could take the train back to Cambridge and I could drive your car up on my day off.”

“I’ll think about it,” Rose promised with a smile, leaning over and kissing him on the cheek. “You’re a sweetheart you know that right?”

“Yeah I’m a regular Prince Charming,” Mickey laughed with a shake of his head before he glanced at the clock. “But I’ve also got to get moving, I’ve got drills this afternoon.”

“I’d say have fun, but you know… drills.”

Mickey laughed, reaching over and hugging Rose tightly in a one armed hug. As she scrubbed the last of the dishes Rose heard him saying goodbye to his grandmother and smiled to herself. At least the big things in her life were still in place and dependable. When she finished dishes, Rose headed
for the front door and grabbed her leather jacket. She could already hear her mother on the phone with cousin Moe by the sound of the conversation and Rita Anne was in the living room with the television on. Shaking her head, Rose wondered how they didn’t get bored with the routine before stepping outside.

She started walking across the street, pulling out her phone and sending a quick text to Shareen. A sudden chill down her spine made Rose stop and glance around. There was the odd sensation of someone behind her and for a moment Rose stopped breathing. She heard someone breathe her name so softly that she almost missed it. Turning around, Rose searched the area but didn’t see anyone nearby.

Shivering, Rose wrapped her arms around herself and looked around frantically. It was so strange, but for a moment she’d been sure that there was something behind her. Rose turned slowly and looked around. Everything looked normal on Bannerman Road. Her Mum and Gita were talking over their shared fence, both them talking with their hands and grinning like fools. Luke, Clyde and Rani were chatting happily as they walked down the sidewalk of the street together, all of them holding ice cream bars either from the nearby shop or Clyde’s freezer. Rani’s father was washing the family car in their drive. She knew that Sarah Jane was probably upstairs in the attic at her desk working on an article.

Everything was completely normal for a weekend at Bannerman Road and yet… Rose couldn’t shake the feeling of dread that the nightmare that given her. She couldn’t help but remember the last time that she’d had dreams that vivid. Barely any time had passed since she’d found herself remembering her life as a different Rose Tyler and now here she was going through it all again.

“Might slip through on occasion my ass White Guardian,” Rose growled, shaking her head. “I barely had a week’s peace.”

Still, Rose put one foot in front of the other and strode over to Sarah Jane’s front door. Johnny opened it a moment after she knocked, a huge grin on his face that Rose couldn’t help but return.

“Rose!” he greeted, stepping forward and hugging her. Then he turned and called into the house, “Sarah Jane! Rose is here.”

“Thanks for the introduction Johnny,” Rose teased as she stepped inside. “But I know my way to the attic.”

Johnny chuckled and nodded to her, gesturing dramatically to the staircase just as Luke and his friends turned and entered the driveway. Rose waved to the teenagers and started climbing up the stairs. Above her head, she could hear the soft thrumming of Spock’s cooling system and thought that she could hear the clickity clack of Sarah Jane on her computer. With a soft smile, Rose stepped into the attic, taking in the various trinkets that Sarah Jane had displayed alongside photos of herself, the Doctor and UNIT staff. Rose’s eyes went to one of her favourite: the photo from Sarah Jane’s wedding with all their companion friends around them. Rose’s smile faded a little at the realisation that she should really try to make contact with Liz Shaw.

“Good morning Rose,” Sarah Jane greeted warmly as she stood up from her desk and hugged her tightly. Her smile faded after a moment. “Are you alright?”

“Just a little sleepy,” Rose admitted with a shrug. “Nothing to worry about.”

“Well if you’re sure,” Sarah Jane said uncertainty. “I’ll be downstairs if you need anything.”
“Thanks, Sarah Jane, this shouldn’t take too long,” Rose told her before she turned towards the brick wall that hid Spock. “Mister Spock, time to rise and shine,” Rose called with a smile.

As the wall began to unfold with the hiss of steam, Sarah Jane shook her head and headed out of the attic with her cup of coffee cradled in one hand.

“Good morning Rose,” Spock greeted. “Ready to begin diagnostics.”

“Lovely Spock then go ahead and begin,” Rose replied with a smile. She glanced around and frowned. “Uh, Spock where is K-9?”

“I believe the dog is in the yard,” Spock said distastefully as his screen began to change.

Chuckling, Rose sat down on the large sofa in the centre of the attic with a soft sigh. She picked up a notepad from the side table and started taking notes as Spock’s system information began to flash across the screen. Her eyes began to feel very heavy, but Rose tried to ignore it and kept taking notes. Then slowly, her eyes slid closed and the pencil slipped from her fingers.

“Rose Mum wants to know if you’re staying for lunch,” Luke called as he walked into the attic. He paused when he saw her asleep on the sofa, Spock still running diagnostics. “Rose?” he asked carefully walking up to her. He debated for a moment about waking her up, but then reached out and gently touched her shoulder as he called her name again.

Rose didn’t move or react in any way. Luke called her again louder this time, but she didn’t respond. Calling her even louder, Luke shook her shoulder, but there was still nothing. Shaking her with both hands, Luke paled and jumped back. He rushed to the doorway and yelled, “Mum! Dad! Rose won’t wake up! I can’t wake her up!”
Sarah Jane Smith jumped at her son’s cry of alarm and glanced towards her husband. Then years of instinct and practice kicked into gear and she set the butter knife she’d been using for sandwiches down. Johnny was on her heels as they rushed up the stairs with Clyde and Rani already several steps ahead of them. Bursting into the attic room, Sarah Jane found Luke nervously standing by Rose and calling her name. Clyde and Rani stepped to the side to let her past and Sarah Jane moved to Rose quickly and knelt down next to her. She called Rose’s name as she checked her pulse.

“She’s breathing normally,” Sarah Jane told the others waiting in the room. “Judging from her eye movements she’s dreaming.”

“But she won’t wake up,” Luke repeated with a hint of panic.


“Can’t you get Spock to stop running diagnostics?” Rani questioned as she stepped forward carefully.

“Rose gave the order for him to run them and she is his primary operator,” Sarah Jane explained with a sigh as Luke headed out the door and down the stairs. “I’m secondary so I can’t override an order from Rose.”

“How long will it take for him to be free again?” Clyde asked sounding irritated with the situation.

“Hopefully not long, his abilities are a bit more varied than K-9’s,” Sarah Jane admitted sadly just before Luke rushed back into the attic with K-9 in his arms. He set the robotic dog down with a small huff.

“K-9 run a scan on Rose,” Sarah Jane ordered as she stepped back from Rose’s sleeping form.

K-9 rolled forward and extended his scanner with a soft beep. There was a soft ticking sound in the otherwise quiet attic as he processed the scan.

“Mistress Rose is asleep,” K-9 announced making Clyde snort before he continued in his robotic voice. “Brain waves suggest a deep and potentially artificially induced REM cycle that is preventing outside stimuli from breaking through.”

“So she really can’t wake up,” Luke repeated with wide eyes. “Something is keeping her asleep.”
Sarah Jane bent over and pulled Rose’s phone out of her pocket and tossed it to Rani. “Rani, call Rose’s friends Sharon and Shareen. Sharon is a medical student and I want someone we can trust here with us.”

“What about the Doctor?” Rani asked as she looked up from Rose’s phone. “The TARDIS is listed in the phone.”

“Call Sharon first and then I’ll call the Doctor,” Sarah Jane told her as she looked back at Rose. Gently she brushed a strand of hair out of Rose’s face and sighed softly. “Poor kid never seems to catch a break.”

“Mistress,” K-9 called suddenly. “Detecting changes in brain waves, Mistress Rose’s brain is more active than normal for REM cycle.”

“Active? In what parts of her brain?” Sarah Jane asked with a frown.

“Scans indicate increased activity in the medial temporal lobe, part of the brain strongly tied to declarative and episodic memory.”

“Memory?” Sarah Jane repeated carefully as she looked back at Rose. “That could be very bad with everything that was just dumped into that section of her brain.”

The sky above her was dark with thick clouds and billowing pillars of smoke. Rose could barely breathe in the thick stench of rotting flesh and spilled chemicals, but she kept putting one foot in front of the other. She looked around nervously at her surroundings. Tall buildings made mostly of metal and glass surrounded her with only a few brick buildings scattered on the dark side streets. She didn’t recognise any of it and it filled her with a sense of horror and sadness.

Small fires were lit throughout the abandoned street with bodies draped over the flames to burn. The scent of cooking meat made her stomach turn as she realised what it was she was smelling. Lifting the scarf wrapped around her neck, she covered her nose and inhaled the scent of dust and smoke instead, but decided that it was better. Rose risked a look into the flames at the nearest body. The clothing had burned away and much of the skin was already on fire, but she could see strange sores still visible on parts of the arms. Shuddering, she stepped back from the fire and looked away from the terrible sight.

In the distance, she heard a scream followed by vicious laughter, but she just kept walking up the street. After a few minutes, the sounds died away and she let out a soft breath of relief and tightened her right hand around something cold and smooth. Slowly she took more in and realised that she was carrying some kind of metal baseball bat. There was a backpack on her back and heavy duty, but well-worn boots on her feet. She was covered in layers of clothing despite the heat of the… she couldn’t tell what time of day it was, but it was very warm and the heat of the scattered fires wasn’t helping.

Rose looked down at her wrist, tugging aside the leather gloves she wore and noticed the absence of her bracelet with a frown. She reached up and brushed behind her ear with a gloved hand checked behind her ear. Her translator was gone and Rose realised with a start that she had very short hair that was cropped close to her scalp. She looked towards one of the buildings and caught her reflection in the glass.
It was hard to recognise herself under the dusty and dark clothing. Around her waist was a belt that connected to the backpack with small pouches. A hood over her head hid the short hair, but her face was visible. The skin was rough and dry, looking cracked in some places. There was a long place scar on her forehead and into her hairline on the right side of her face. A bruise around her eye was mostly faded, but still visible and she was nursing what looking like a recent burn on the left side of her face. Rose was stunned and stared in shock at the ragged-looking woman before her.

There was a sudden whining noise over her head and she looked up sharply in time to catch sight of something silver zooming past overhead. A moment later she dashed towards one of the side streets, a sense of fear pounding in her veins. The back alley stank even worse than the street and in the darkness, she felt the fear only intensify. Backing into the shadows, Rose panted softly and tried to stay very still as more of the fast silver things zoomed overhead.

On the wall of the alley, she spotted a poster of some kind. The writing wasn’t familiar, but it seemed to rearrange itself in front of her eyes until she could read it. There was a warning for the plague urging residents to stay inside and wait for vaccination. A bitter and angry feeling that she didn’t understand rose up sharply in her and Rose leaned against the wall as she tried to calm down.

“Terrible isn’t it,” a voice whispered behind her. Rose spun with the bat at the ready, but there was nothing in the alley. “Plague cripples governments and chaos takes over. Humans killing anyone with the plague to stop it and taking to the streets in guerilla warfare.” The voice told her. “Such terrible things hidden away in your head Rose Tyler. The stuff of nightmares.”

Then a pair of pale blue glowing eyes appeared at the far end of the alley. A chuckle echoed out of the shadows and Rose took a shaky step back before reaching up and pinching her cheek. Nothing happened and the thing in the shadows laughed. A moment later Rose felt faint and darkness crept into her vision. She was falling and something was laughing gleefully.

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Sarah Jane paced nervously across the room with the phone in her hand waiting for someone to pick up on the other end. “Come on Doctor,” she growled with a glance towards Rose.

Clyde and Luke had moved her very carefully so that she was fully laying down with her head on a small throw pillow rather than sleeping sitting up with her head hanging back. Rani was downstairs waiting for Sharon and Shareen to show up from across town and Johnny was sitting patiently on the other side of the room watching her and giving silent support.

Sarah Jane yawned loudly just as the phone was answered. “Hello?” a small female voice said.

“Uh?” Sarah Jane replied blinking quickly in surprise. “This is Sarah Jane Smith.”

“I’m Amelia,” the little voice replied happily before she made a small cough. “Oh right, who are you calling for?”

“I’d like to speak with the Doctor please?” Sarah Jane told her gently before her curiosity got the better of her. “Who are you, Amelia? Do you travel with the Doctor?”

“Only sometimes. I wish I could all the time, but Rose says that I’m just too young and little to
travel with them all the time. I only get to go on trips when I get good grades and after my checkups.”

“How old are you?”

“I’m not sure I should tell you that,” the little girl said a moment later with a hint of suspicion. “Rose tells me to be careful about talking to strangers.”

“Is Rose there?” Sarah Jane asked earning a surprised look from Johnny.

“No she and the Doctor stepped out to stop an alien tyrant after locking me in the TARDIS,” the little girl replied obviously pouting.

There was a noise from the other end of the phone and Sarah Jane heard a familiar voice before it came over the phone. “Hello Sarah Jane, sorry about that,” Rose apologised.

“No problem, but are you and the Doctor adopting now?”

“Something like that I suppose. It’s no secret that Amelia listens to me far more than she does her aunt,” Rose replied sounding a bit out of breath. “What’s up?”

“Well I’m looking at you, younger you on the sofa of my attic, and you won’t wake up.”

“Oh… it’s that time isn’t it,” the older Rose said carefully. “Okay, I’ll make a call.”

“A call? Wait aren’t you coming to help?”

“No,” Rose answered shortly. “But it’ll be alright Sarah Jane, I have to go through this. I’m just sorry about… well, I’m sorry.”

“Rose!” Sarah Jane called into the phone feeling irritation rising in her, but the other woman had already hung up. Huffing, Sarah Jane tossed the phone onto the sofa where Rose was sleeping. She glared at the young blonde woman for a moment before sighing. “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

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Rose came back to herself slowly and looked around nervously, her eyes sweeping over the terrain. She seemed to be nearby her original location, but the buildings were crumbling and parts of the street had collapsed into underground tunnels. Beneath her was cracked concrete with grass starting to grow through. A bark made her jump to her feet as a dog rushed past her with a bone in its mouth and snarled in warning. Its fur was matted and Rose knew in an instant that it was feral.

Once it was past, Rose took another look around. There were no more fires and instead plants were starting to grow over everything, it was almost beautiful except for the horrifying meaning of the growth.

She didn’t doubt that she was in the same place as before, but it was like the fast forward button had been pressed. Walking forward, Rose noted that thick mossy growth covering what glass still remained in the buildings. She couldn’t see her reflection and wondered just how bad she looked but dismissed the thought as trivial. Looking around Rose tried to see any signs of other humans, but everything was horribly quiet. There were no fires burning corpses anymore or sounds of fighting in the distance, there was just nothing. It reminded her of the day that those alien robots
had taken all the humans except her.

Except this wasn’t just for a day, this was for a lot longer. She felt ill, but reached over and pinched her arm. Nothing happened and Rose struggled to keep breathing.

“It’s just a dream,” Rose reassured herself as she tried to pinch herself again. The jolt of pain seemed real enough and she wasn’t walking up. “Just a dream,” she repeated. “Probably some alien messing with me.”

A high pitched laugh surprised Rose and she jumped even as she spun around and looked around. It was a small crooked man that looked so ordinary at first glance that Rose thought he was merely part of the dream. He wore a well-worn three-piece suit and had a little bowler hat perched at an angle on his head. But he was staring at her with wide pale blue eyes that were horribly bloodshot. It was the small knowing smile on his face that made Rose shiver and really called her attention to him. She was torn between pretending she didn’t notice him and trying to observe him quietly and demanding to know what was happening.

“Rose Tyler,” the man cooed, exposing rotting teeth as he spoke. “Thank you, my dear, for inviting me.”

“I did not invite you,” Rose replied coldly, narrowing her eyes dangerously.

“Oh, but such things inside your head,” the stranger sighed dramatically. “The stuff of nightmares. Horrible imaginings, personal tragedies and dying worlds,” he added as he opened his arms dramatically. “All of this rattling around in that head of yours and an open door just waiting for me to step through.”

“Who are you?” Rose demanded as a sense of dread crept over her even as she began to understand where she really was and what was happening. “How are you in these memories?”

“Just call me the Nightmare Man,” he giggled cheerfully, exposing his rotting teeth again.

Rose kept herself from shivering at the dangerous hint in the being’s tone and instead raised an eyebrow and put her hands on her hips trying to look unimpressed. To her satisfaction, the being seemed less amused.

“That didn’t answer the second question,” Rose informed him in an even voice. “How are you in these memories?”

“Ah yes that famous Rose Tyler spunk,” the Nightmare Man said with a widening grin. “Never let them see you afraid.”

“I’m trapped in a nightmare that is apparently a memory about my species being destroyed by some kind of terrible plague,” Rose observed with bite in her voice. “Of course I’m afraid, I’m not stupid.”

The admission seemed to throw the Nightmare Man for a moment, but then he merely tilted his head at her. “Perhaps something more terrifying is needed,” he muttered thoughtfully, tapping his chin dramatically.

“What are you after?” Rose demanded. “Why can’t I wake up?”
“You’re in too deep,” the Nightmare Man replied with another giggle. “And what I’m after… well, we’ll get to that my dear Sleeping Beauty.”

Before Rose could say or so anything, the Nightmare Man raised his right hand and snapped his fingers. Rose tried to say something and moved, but the sense of falling took her over again. Once again darkness surrounded her.
Rose’s eyes flew open and she gasped for air only to start coughing as thick ashy air spilled into her mouth. Her eyes began to water as she looked around and found herself in a rocky hillside with thick dark smoke billowing in the air around her. Rose covered her mouth and carefully climbed to her feet. It took her a moment to realise that she had switched memories. The city was long gone and what looked like quarries were barely visible to her through the smoke. She was dressed in a worn out and itchy dress with sturdy old fashioned looking boots. Looking around Rose tried to see if she could find someone.

“Rose!” a voice called out behind her, hushed and low. “Come back inside, it’s not safe. The masters will find you!”

She spun around just in time to catch sight of someone ducking into a tiny cave opening. It was positioned in the shadows of several boulders and Rose doubted she’d have spotted it easily. But she hesitated and turned to look back through the smoke. In the distance, she thought she could see large metal ships moving through the pollution and a hint of the city skyline, but the mere sight of these sent a terrified shiver through her. Rose wasn’t sure where it had come from, but after another moment she turned and headed into the cave.

Up ahead it went down sharply and the low light from the smoky outside quickly faded away. Thankfully just as she was becoming nervous Rose stumbled around a corner and spotted the flickering glow of a line of small lamps. They were electric and flickered wildly, but they gave off a faint glow that when combined let her see the path worn into the rock. She sighed in relief and began to follow the pathway, keeping her eyes open for anyone else.

The cavern seemed to stretch ahead of her forever and the small lamps didn’t give off much light. Yet Rose had the odd sense that she was seeing better than normal. Rose put her hand on the cavern wall in an attempt to keep steady as she carefully navigated her way down a slope in the pathway. She nearly lost her balance twice and felt oddly faint.

Then the caves opened up and Rose stepped into a large open space filled with the sounds of people and the low flickering of lamps. She could see tents and long tables set up everywhere and a small river running through the cavern with multiple water wheels on it.

Curious, Rose slipped into one of the tents at the far end of the camp only to gasp in shock. Nude dead bodies were piled up in a large tent that Rose stepped into at the edge of the camp in the cavern. The stench of decay hit her hard and sent her stumbling back. The bodies were stacked neatly one on top of each other in an alternating pattern like a flesh Jenga puzzle. Just thinking of such a comparisons made Rose duck out of the tent and back into the main area. Somehow the smell was confined to the tent and Rose was grateful for it even as it confused her. She looked
around the camp and noticed that there were only a few people moving about and noticed several small dark areas where small niches were dug into the side of the cavern.

Deciding that those were probably safer than the tents, Rose walked forward and peered into one. Dark eyes stared back at her out of a frail and gaunt face. It was a girl about her age with twisted arms and legs sitting amongst several other deformed people. One of them reached towards her and Rose saw deep scars covering their limbs and small electronic plates fused to their skin and bones in places.

She just stood there staring, her mind trying to understand what it was that she was seeing. Someone stepped up behind her and Rose tensed as she heard a deep sigh.

“Poor things,” a gravely male voice said out loud. “But luckier than most.” She turned to see a tall thin man of Asian descent with several long scars over his face. He gave her a smile with dirty teeth. “We’re the really lucky ones uh Rose, never captured.”

“Right,” she answered weakly feeling sick to her stomach.

The man gave her a worried look but nodded hesitantly before he slipped away. She watched him go for a moment. There was a tingling sense of him being so familiar to her, but it slipped away like the memory of a dream. The irony of that comparison wasn’t lost on Rose. She turned back to the people who was shivering together and as bile rose in her throat she walked away.

All through camp, there were signs of a very terrible life. Children were working alongside adults in moving heavy stones, grinding flour of some kind and even a few helping to stack bodies in tents. She could hear whispers about the ‘masters’, ‘resistance’ and ‘death’ all around her. Fear was creeping up her spine at the constant onslaught of despair from all sides. A group of armed men and women stumbled into the cavern with ashen faces and several more of the weak and sickly looking humans who had wires connected to them.

She stayed at the side as the people were all but dumped into another little hole and the fighters went off in the other direction. No one spoke to her and there was a tense silence suddenly hanging over the place. Rose walked toward the hole full of new arrivals and looked in at them. They looked even worse than the others with red bloodshot eyes, visible veins and small pieces of technology hooked up to them that looked very painful. One of them was a child no older than seven who looked at her fearfully.

Rose’s knees began to buckle even as she closed her eyes and took slow deep breaths. She turned and stumbled away from the hole and to the edge of the camp. No one moved to speak with her or help her. “This isn’t real,” Rose whispered to herself. “This isn’t a part of your life or your world. It’s terrible and sad that there are worlds where this is history, but it isn’t your world.”

Laughter echoed around Rose in the cavern and she couldn’t help but shiver from the sound. In front of her, the sickly humans didn’t seem to notice anything and just huddled closer to together with laboured breathing. Around them, the gases billowed out of the vents and the low growling in the distance continued.

“This isn’t real, I’m not really here,” Rose told herself again even as the giggling became louder.

“Oh look at the frightened little Defender of Earth. It’s not so easy now is it, to be brave when you don’t have your Doctor or the Guardians watching over you. I suppose in the end you’re just a little girl who just lost Daddy again.”
“What do you want?” Rose demanded as the Nightmare Man slunk out of the shadows with a wide grin.

“Life,” the Nightmare man breathed happily. “Your nightmares, your fear, they're giving me such power. One more little nightmare from you, and I'll be in your world.”

“You can't,” Rose insisted trying to sound brave and confident and failing horribly.

“I'll send everyone into an eternal sleep. A whole world of nightmares for me to feed upon. And I'll grow stronger and stronger;” the Nightmare Man told her gleefully. “Oh, it's going to be so good. And it's all because of you, Rosie.”

“Where are you from?” Rose asked, her fingers clenching in the fabric of her dress.

“What?” the Nightmare Man asked, tilting his head at her.

“What planet are you from?”

“I'm from nowhere. I'm from everywhere.”

“You're just an alien, and I've stopped aliens before,” Rose said both to herself and the Nightmare Man.

“But wouldn't it be terrifying if I was so much more than that? Get ready for the end of the world, Rose,” the Nightmare giggled with widening eyes. “An eternal sleep of nightmares. Oh, and it's all your fault. You're a nice little crack between the worlds, a link between realities that I can force my way through. Goodbye Howling, hello planet Earth!”

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SarahJane sighed loudly and sat down in the armchair with her eyes on Rose. There was a nervous energy beneath her skin as she tried to figure out what to do. She couldn’t help but feel irritated with the girl even as a tiny smirk escaped her. Things always seemed to go sideways when Rose Tyler was around.

Two figures rushed into the attic and it took SarahJane a moment to identify them and calm down. She nodded in greeting to Sharon and Shareen but wasn’t offended when they barely acknowledged her. Sharon knelt down next to Rose, her face completely calm as she checked her friend’s pulse and examined her eye movement. SarahJane found her respect for the medical student growing at how professional she was even when confronted by something like this with a friend. Then again she reflected with a small smile, Sharon and Shareen had been exposed to plenty of strangeness over the years thanks to their friendship with Rose.

“Well she’s asleep,” Sharon announced with a loud sigh. “Not that I’m telling you anything you don’t already know.”

“Anything else?” Shareen asked as she hovered nearby and gently brushed a stray blonde hair out of Rose’s face.

“No signs of trauma,” Sharon replied with a frown. “But her face is showing signs of distress and her body is pretty tense for being asleep. I’d have to agree that she’s definitely having a
nightmare.” Sharon reached out and gently pinched Rose’s arm, but there was no response. “No reaction to outside stimuli. Under normal circumstances, I’d want to take her to the hospital as this appears to be some kind of comatose state.”

“We can’t risk that yet,” Sarah Jane insisted with a shake of her head. “I just Rose could have told me more of what is happening.”

Sharon and Shareen exchange knowing smiles that irritated Sarah Jane, but she said nothing. With a shake of her head, Shareen put her hand on Rose’s head and gave her an affectionate look.

“Don’t take it personally Sarah Jane,” Shareen told her. “She’s pretty paranoid about keeping timelines straight.”

“She has to be, her whole life is a tangled mess of events that overlap each other,” Sharon added with a chuckle. “And there are things that even she doesn’t know.”

“Careful,” Shareen told her friend sternly. “We’re the secret keepers of that one.”

Sarah Jane gave the young women curious looks, but shook her head and turned back to Spock who was finally getting close to finishing his scan of his system. She’d have a talk with Rose once things were back to normal about adjusting Spock’s settings so he could do other things at the same time. She’d learned long ago that timing was critical. A yawn escaped her despite the tension in the room and Sarah Jane blinked back a wave of exhaustion.

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Rose has moved off by herself to try and regain some semblance of balance. Climbing up the slope of the cavern opposite the way she came in, Rose found a quiet spot to think where she could clearly see everything. The Nightmare Man had hinted that fear fed him and she wondered why he was using these sorts of memories rather than drawing on more simple primal sorts of fears. Sitting down on a rock, Rose surveyed the camp and swallowed by a rush of bile. Maybe she was giving him too much credit… or maybe not enough. After all, she couldn’t wake up, stimuli wasn’t doing anything to help her and that was no simple task.

Maybe it wasn’t just about simple jump scare sort of fear. Maybe he was trying to immerse her in a hopeless long term kind of terror. Force her to confront a life where she was helpless. Rose nibbled on her lip, already feeling a little bit better from being able to work through that much. Thought was the enemy of fear, it kept fear from transforming into primal panic and helped you work your way out of being afraid. With a deep breath, Rose looked up towards the cavern roof and tried to think of some way to get away from the Nightmare Man’s power.

Then the cavern began to rumble like an earthquake and everyone below in the camp began to scream and run. From her place up the slope Rose flinched as she saw people climbing over and crushing each other as they tried to head down the cave. She frowned in confusion and looked around wondering what was upsetting them so much. Then she caught sight of metal figures marching down the entrance path, their footsteps adding to the rumbling sound. Each figure was vaguely humanoid but much bulkier and heavily armed like some kind of battle robot.

Rose’s breath caught in her throat as the things began to fire into the crowd with energy weapons. Red beams of light illuminated the cavern with a violent red glow. She couldn’t move, Rose wanted to, but for some reason, it felt like she was chained to the bolder and simply couldn’t move. The metal figures marched through the camp, not even going around tents, but walking straight
through them. Humans fell down in front of them and were crushed. The body of tents collapsed and corpses were sent flying.

The rumbling of the cavern grew worse and worse. A high pitched sound made Rose flinch and grit her teeth. As the roof began to shake even more violently Rose looked up towards it. She gasped softly as she watched the rocks above her head begin crumbling. Large boulders came falling and crushed humans, robots and what little remained of the camp. Bright lights appeared far above and Rose shut her eyes against the sudden onslaught. Then as her vision cleared and the sounds of the screams began to fall away with the dying Rose opened her eyes and looked up. A large ship was hovering just above the huge hole with bright searchlights shining down into the devastation.

She couldn’t help it. Her heart was racing, her body felt frozen and rage and terror were clawing at her chest. Rose screamed.

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Sarah Jane shook her head in an attempt to stay awake even as she yawned loudly. For some reason over the last few minutes, she’d begun to feel very sleepy.


“Radiation?” Sarah Jane asked with a slight drawl as she tried to wake herself up.

“Yes Mistress,” K-9 answered rolling towards her. “You must leave the house immediately, further delay will make escape impossible.”

She blinked several times and turned to look towards the girls only to gasp slightly. Shareen was sprawled out on the floor with her head slumped against the sofa by Rose’s feet and Sharon was snoring softly with her head near Rose’s. Forcing herself to stand up, Sarah Jane shook her head again and started walking towards the doorway.

“Johnny!” she called out loudly. “Luke!” Sarah Jane swayed in the doorway as her knees began to give out.

“Mistress!” K-9 said with a hint of worry. “Please resume seated position.”

“I’ll fall asleep K-9,” Sarah Jane argued. “Something is affected us.”

“Affirmative, but that is no longer avoidable Mistress, please resumed seated position to avoid injury.”

The robot dog was right, she realised with a jolt of worry. She was falling asleep and there was nothing she could do about it. If she tried to get down the stairs….

“K-9, you and Spock have to work together,” Sarah Jane told him as she stumbled back to the chair. “We’re counting on both of you.”

“Affirmative Mistress,”

Sarah Jane sunk down into the armchair as her eyes began to feel even heavier. “What is doing this?” she asked softly as her eyelids slid closed. “What does it what?” Her last words were slurred as Sarah Jane felt herself slip away. She fell asleep.
Sharon wrapped her arms around herself as she looked around the dark cell. It was made of dark stone and only faint artificial light was seeping in through a tiny high window several feet above her and beneath a heavy metal door. It felt very cold and a sense of helplessness was creeping over her. Sharon swallowed thickly and looked around the cell trying to remember why she was here. She looked down at herself and felt ill as she saw a simple grey dress and shoes.

But she couldn’t remember anything and the smell of dirt, urine and other things was quickly becoming overwhelming. She rubbed her upper arms nervously as she took a few steps towards the doorway. Sharon could help but tremble a little bit.

“Hello?” she called in a low voice. “Can anyone hear me?”

On the other side of the door, a fierce growling made her jump back. The door rattled and for a moment she couldn’t breathe as the growling echoed in the small stone room. Against her wishes, Sharon rubbed her leg near the small scar she still had from Mrs Peterson’s dog biting her when she was six. Another round of barking made her move even further away from the door.

“Please!” Sharon shouted. “Is there anyone out there! I shouldn’t be here! I haven’t done anything wrong!”

But no one answered and the dog kept barking. Then another dog began barking and another and another. Sharon crawled onto the small cot in the cell and pulled her legs up to her chin. Rocking herself slowly she tried to stay calm, but her breathing became more and more rapid. Something was wrong, something was so very wrong, but she couldn’t think with the sounds of the dog echoing around her.

The small shop was dark with low fluorescent lights giving it the only illumination. There were six grey tables in front of a dingy counter that had traces of red colour on the edges. Clyde frowned as he looked around and tried to remember what he’d been doing. He looked down at himself and felt his stomach turn when realised that he was dressed in an ugly red apron. There was a hat on his head and he nervously touched. A name badge on his chest had his name on it and Clyde felt his legs feeling weak.

“No,” he whispered to himself. “This isn’t right. This can’t be real.”

A door in the back opened and a large balding man dressed in a stained button down shirt with a loose tie hanging around his neck stepped out. He looked at Clyde he was something distasteful.
and tossed him something. Clyde caught it on reflex and looked down at a dirty of keys.

“Don’t mess this up boy, this is your last chance,” the man huffed at him before squeezing past him and exiting the door. A blast of cool air hit Clyde in the face just before the door closed leaving the young man alone in the filthy chip shop alone.

“This… this isn’t right,” Clyde said to himself as he shook his head and tried to clear his thoughts. A feeling of failure weighed down on his shoulders as Clyde took a hesitate step towards the counter. There were a dingy rag and some cleaning fluid. With a shake of his head, Clyde sprayed some on the counter and began to scrub even as the feeling that he was forgetting something nagged at the back of his mind.

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Rose felt the weapon in her hand first. It was bulky and heavy, positioned against her inner elbow with a strap around her neck. She paused for a moment and tried to look around, but she was in a dark place even though she could hear and see others. Reaching up, Rose felt her face only to realise that she had gloves of some kind on. Her normally long hair was short and cropped very close to her head. Then lights began to appear around her followed a moment later by sirens. On a strange reflex, Rose tightened her grip on the weapon and took a sharp breath.

There was movement around her and Rose turned slightly and saw other humans walking forwards slowly with weapons just like the one she was holding. There was another light in the distance and Rose suddenly realised that it was some kind of flare as orange light illuminated the dark sky in almost a pillar. Taking a careful step forward Rose felt her foot sink into mud.

Screams suddenly erupted in the distance. The person next to her swore and began firing their weapon at something moving at the edge of the light. It had strange long limbs and seemed to twist in the air with every step despite its vaguely humanoid shape. Others around her opened fire and small beams of red light blasted through the air. There were more screams and Rose stepped away from the gunfire, struggling to breathe and make sense of where she was.

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The church was small, but light was streaming in through the stained glass windows sending colours over the pews. Shareen frowned from her place in the second row and looked around trying to figure out why she was here. Then her eyes fell on the casket at the front of the church. Next to it were several large photos of Rose. Her heart stopped for a moment and Shareen shook her head.

“No,” she whispered.

A loud sob made her turn and look towards the front row on the other side of the church. Jackie was sitting there sobbing loudly into a pile of tissues with Gita trying to comfort her. She stared at Jackie, waiting for her to laugh and stand up to announce that the joke was over. She waited for some sign that this was some sort of show. Maybe Rose was in trouble and had to fake her death.

Turning in the pew Shareen looked behind her. The next rows were filled with the companions that she’d met through Rose. Ace was crying, Tegan’s bottom lip was trembling and Sarah Jane had her arm around a crying Luke. UNIT personnel were behind them, all in uniform with sombre expressions.
Then she saw the Doctor. The one with wild brown hair who was standing at the very back of the church in his long brown coat. His hands were in his pockets and he was staring at the casket with an expression, unlike anything that Shareen had ever seen before. Heartbreak and complete sorrow weren’t strong enough words. Slowly she stood up, but the Doctor didn’t look at her. Then he turned sharply and reached for the doors.


The Doctor didn’t answer her and none of the companions moved. They all just kept crying and staring at the coffin. But then the Doctor was gone. He vanished out of the church and a flash of sunlight blinded Shareen. Tears rolled down her face and Shareen turned back towards the coffin, struggling to breathe.

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Rani rubbed her hands down her sides nervously, feeling the soft fabric of the fancy skirt and formal jacket beneath her hands. The makeup artist ran the powder brush over her face one more time as a voice called: on the air in five! She sucked in a sharp breath even as she tried to smile and turned to look at the newscaster set. Her heart skipped a beat and Rani wondered why she felt so nervous.

This was old hat, she reminded herself with a small laugh. No need to be nervous. Then a tall blond woman in a smart suit strode over towards her with a wide smile. The older woman stepped up next to her and put a hand on her shoulder, giving it a small squeeze.

“Ready Rani?” she asked in a pleasant voice. “Let’s tell the whole world about those menaces.”

“Menaces?” Rani questioned with small frown as she looked around trying to figure out what felt so off.

“Rose Tyler and Sarah Jane Smith of course,” the woman answered with surprised look. “I mean all the times they’ve put you in danger.”

“How do you know about them?”

“I’m Louise Marlowe, the best journalist in Britain, it’s my job to know.” She tightened her grip on Rani’s shoulder and steered her over to the news desk.

Rani was pushed into one of the seats directly in front of the camera. The teleprompter in front of turned on and Rani felt her mouth go completely dry. Louise sat down next to her, tossing her hair slightly and smiling towards the camera crew.

“But I-” Rani began to protest.

“Rani, we are journalists. We have a responsibility to tell the people. You have to tell them everything: about Rose Tyler, Sarah Jane and her alien made son and about the Doctor.”

“But that’s dangerous,” Rani replied quickly around a thick swallow. “Sometimes things have to stay known only to a few until the right time. Everyone was happy to ignore that invasion last Christmas.”
“Rani, do you want to be a journalist or not?” Louise asked coldly with a sour expression.

“We’re on in three two one!” A voice called. The cameras came on and Rani forced herself to smile as they began to broadcast.

“Our top story tonight: Aliens and humans who help them,” Louise announced to the camera with a big smile on her face.

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Luke laughed as he looked around the school corridor. He was dreaming, he’d never had dreams before. Reaching out he touched the wall and grinned. It felt so real even though he knew he wasn’t really there.

“Aren’t you an interesting one,” an oily voice observed calmly from behind him.

Luke turned to see a pale man that most certainly did not belong at the school leering at him.

“Who are you?” Luke asked carefully. “Are you a part of this dream?”

“Part of the dream?” the being laughed and raised his hand which began to glow a dark sickly purple. “Time for you to learn boy why others fear nightmares.”

Luke didn’t have time to move out of the way before the blast hit him. It rippled over his skin and exploded outward. The whole scenery began to change around him, his school falling away as a new place formed. A tall blond woman that looked very familiar was standing near a huge window and looking out over London.

“You’ve done so well Archetype,” she observed in an amused voice. She turned and Luke gasped softly, recognising the woman who had created him and led the Bane invasion of Earth. “Humanity is now ours, Bane is inside every single human being.” She chuckled and looked towards the far side of the room and Luke followed her eyes.

There were two bodies lying on a conference table: his mother and Rose.

“My perfect little human,” the Bane woman cooed as she came up behind him and put a hand on his head. “Of course you’re no longer needed.”

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Johnny stared down the dark hall lined with doors. He wasn’t moving, in fact, he was determined not to. Taking a deep breath, he rolled his shoulders and looked behind him where the hallway seemed to stretch out for eternity with even more doors. His eyes fell on the nearest door which was bright TARDIS blue and his fingers itched to open it, but Johnny shoved them into his pockets.

“No,” he said out loud. “I know how this nightmare goes and I’m not playing.”

“Pity,” a strange voice called to him. It seemed to come from all around him and Johnny had to fight back the urge to spin. “Such a pity, but then you’re not a brave one you. Mum and Dad were the brave ones who travelled with the Doctor. You sweet Sarah Jane is a brave one, but not you.
Johnny is just… the ordinary one.”

“Still not playing,” Johnny growled.

Lighting flashed over his head as the roof of the corridor vanished and the hallway faded away. A thick forest full of twisted and dark trees rose up around him and the doors which remained firmly in place. The howl of a wolf in the distance and another flash of lightning made Johnny shiver, but he still did not move.

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Rose frowned, everything slowed down. The sound of explosions faded away and the screams suddenly stopped. Rose looked around quickly and saw the other soldiers moving at a snail’s pace before they froze in air as if they were suddenly a photograph. Gripping her weapon more tightly Rose looked around and backed up towards the barricade wall. All around her everything had stopped and yet she was still moving. This didn’t feel right in the context of the memory and Rose felt herself thinking more clearly.

Rose stepped back on reflex as the air in front of her shimmered with a soft purple colour. Her back hit the wall as the colour became more vibrant and began to swirl together into a vaguely humanoid shape. There was a brief flicker of violet light that left spots in Rose’s vision for a moment, but as she blinked them away she saw a strange woman hovering in the air before her.

The figure had what appeared to be a feminine face with a soft smile. Her skin was a soft violet colour with highlights of silver around her large dark purple eyes. Instead of hair, she had elegant black and silver frills rising out of her scalp. She was dressed in a simple long violet robe with bare violet feet peeping out beneath the hem as she adjusted her position in the air. As she folded her six-fingered hands in front of her and looked straight at Rose she sucked in a sharp breath. This was not a memory, this was something else.

“Greetings Rose Tyler,” the figure greeted in a pleasant and musical voice. Rose felt something ease inside of her ease as she told herself to stay on guard.

“You know me?” Rose questioned with a careful look at the figure, but she eased her grip on the weapon and lowered it. Her dislike of firearms was pushing itself to the front of her mind as the nightmare lost its grip on her.

“Indeed I do,” the figure replied with a widening smile. “We are future friends Rose Tyler. I am the Violet Guardian Keeper of Memory and Dreams.”

Rose couldn’t help but wonder if this was a trick by the Nightmare Man, but she’d heard the White Guardian mention the Violet Guardian in the past. Plus the Blue Guardian had helped her after her almost wedding to the Silver Lord so maybe…

“You are Rose Marion Tyler,” the Violet Guardian said interrupting Rose’s musing. “You recently were forced to live another life in an alternate reality created by a deal the Trickster made with your father Pete Tyler. As a result, the stored memories of other lifetimes in your head due to your exposure to them during a plot of the Silver Lord have become stronger. Now the Nightmare Man, a being from outside our reality is attempting to force his way into the world through the darker parts of those memories.

“Alright then you know what is going on,” Rose said quickly as her insides churned

“No, you did,” the Violet Guardian replied calmly. “In your personal future, you contacted me and asked for my assistance. After all dreams and memories are my domain.”

Rose stared at the strange figure torn between really really really wanting to trust that this was a friend of hers in the future and fear that this was just some kind of trick to terrify her more or worse break her down. The Violet Guardian or at least the thing claiming to be her just floated in the air and allowed Rose to consider her. If she was offended she didn’t show it at all. In fact, the being swayed her head side to side as if listening to music that only she could hear.

“Okay so let’s say that I did call you,” Rose said carefully. That wouldn’t be a first after all. Jack was a friend of hers, but they’d only met at this point because he’d come back to help her. Plus in South America, she’d met and talked with an older version of herself. “How can you help me? Can you wake me up?”

“That I cannot do,” the Violet Guardian apologised with a small shake of her head. “The creature has you tightly secured and waking you forcefully could have serious repercussions for yourself and your friends.”

“My friends?” Rose asked with a hint of alarm, taking a step towards the Violet Guardian impulsively.

“Yes, I’m afraid that your friends: Sarah Jane, Rani, Clyde, Johnny, Shareen and Sharon have all been pulled into nightmares by the Nightmare Man. You are the focal point of his efforts to break into our reality and thus the effect of causing others to fall asleep and experience nightmares will gradually begin to spread beyond you. Only the boy Luke has been able to shake off the effects and only because he doesn’t dream, but I do not know how long he can hold back the Nightmare Man.”

“Bloody hell!” Rose swore, bringing a hand up and running it through short cropped her hair in aggravation. “Okay I’m going to trust you to help me and my friends,” Rose announced as she dropped her hand and took a deep breath.
Rose had to fight her instincts to stay still as the Violet Guardian reached for her. A desperate hope that this wasn’t some kind of trick was thrumming in her chest alongside her racing heart. A cool smooth palm closed over her arm and Rose felt a strange dizzy feeling coming over her as the Violet Guardian’s eyes glowed.

The mud and darkness melted away and Rose found herself standing in the grand domed Hall of the Universe. It was darker than Rose remembered like a dull copy, but the shimmering streams of colour in the marble floor gave it some light. The thrones all stood around her in a great circle, all empty even with the golden throne elevated above the rest. In the corner of her eye, Rose thought she saw the thrones glisten, but they seemed normal when she looked at them straight on. Then the Violet Guardian appeared in a swirl of violet sparks in her own violet throne, a happy little smile on her face.

Then Rose realised that they weren’t really at the Hall of the Universe. It was darker and seemed duller because this was only a memory of having seen it. Rose let out a soft breath. This felt safer. It wasn’t home or any variations thereof like the TARDIS, her apartment or that mansion that she now remembered living in with Peter Tyler. But was known and safe. And empty, there was nothing that the Nightmare Man could turn against her here.

“Now what?” Rose asked the Violet Guardian, turning to look at her on the throne. “What do we do?”

The Violet Guardian raised her hands and purple energy began to gather in them. Rose could see thin strands of energy being pulled from all around them. They twisted in the air and began to weave another dome over Rose’s head. With each passing second, another and another appeared. Rose began to reach towards one.

“Do not,” the Violet Guardian commanded sternly. “We need more power Rose, I need you to focus on your memories.”

“My memories?” Rose repeated doubtfully. “But isn’t that what the Nightmare Man is using?”

“I draw power from dreams and memory,” the Violet Guardian reminded her. “The Nightmare Man is feeding on your fear from those memories.”

“What can I do?”

“Acceptance is the first step to overcoming fear,” the Violet Guardian told her gently. “These strands are the web of memories in your mind. Touch them only if you are prepared to face them
and accept them without letting the fear take you over.”

“And this will help save my friends?”

“The more memories you have control of the more powerful I am here. I came into your dreamscape, I have limited myself to the power contained here.”

“So if I don’t do this… you can never leave?”

“Not with the Nightmare Man also connected to you.”

“And I’ll never wake up and neither will my friends,” Rose said slowly feeling doubt welling up in here chest along with determination. Rose took a deep breath and pulled on her reserves of courage. “Okay,” she said firmly. “I can do this, I saw this stuff once at the lake right? That’s how I got connected to it? It wasn’t so bad.”

Reaching out, Rose brushed her finger against the nearest violet strand. There was a painful jolt up her arm that made Rose gasp for air. Around her, the world seemed to quiver and for a moment she couldn’t breathe. Then it all began to fall back into place. Something zinged in her head causing a small pain right between her eyes and forcing Rose to blink. When she opened her eyes and looked around she found herself standing in a strange and yet very familiar room.

Two little girls looked up at her with wide brown eyes and gently freckled skin. For a moment Rose could do nothing but look at them stunned only to receive tentative calls of Mummy as one of them tugged on her hand. Something clicked into Rose’s mind and she started moving in the small room. There were photos of her with a man she didn’t recognise alongside photos of her with her parents, both of them. Books filled one long set of shelves in the main room and a glance out of picture window revealed a green county landscape. In the kitchen, she found the beginnings of lunch and finished the preparation while one of the little girls tugged gently on the hem of her dress. She walked them over to the small table and presented them with their sandwiches. Taking a deep breath, Rose left them sitting there and headed for the kitchen window which she unlatched and opened.

Then everything changed. She was standing in front of a large round window looking out into the dark expanse of space. Stars twinkled all around her and she could see a planet far to the right with swirling storms of red and white. Rose took a deep breath as the feeling of this world settled over her and things in her mind began to shift gently. Behind her, something beeped and Rose turned to see an old-fashioned wind-up alarm clock sitting on the edge of a small desk next to a bed. The room was small, but cosy with a few holograms of her mother and father who both looked younger than she thought they should. Rose picked up a uniform jacket laid out across the bed and pulled it on in one smooth motion. She paused to smooth it down as she went towards the doorway of the room. There was a mirror hanging nearby and Rose smiled at her very smart looking reflection, surprised at just how good grey looked on her.

But as she stepped through the doorway and into a long conference room. There were people seated around the table in smart suits of widely varying ethnicities and to Rose’s surprise one alien of a species she didn’t recognise at the far end of the table. They all stood as she entered and Rose felt her lips begin to smirk in satisfaction. She heard herself say something, but the words seemed odd to her. It took her a moment as things settled, to realise that her mind was trying to absorb and translate the new language. With a charming smile, Rose lowered herself into the main seat.
Hall of the Universe. She could properly feel her limbs again and her thoughts were sharp and distinct. Breathing slowly, Rose looked over towards the Violet Guardian whose eyes were closed in concentration. There were more of the threads around her even as the ones she’d been holding vanished. Rose frowned and tried to consider herself.

She didn’t feel any different, but there was a strange sort of awareness in the back of her mind about the things she’d seen. She remembered them a little like the faded memories of her youth, but they lacked the vibrant colour of emotional connection. The two little girls were named Violet and Daisy, but she didn’t feel any more affection for them than she would for any random child. Rose began to reach for another bundle feeling a bit better about the situation even as nervousness continued to flutter in her stomach.

The cockpit was small but filled with screens, buttons and small lights. Rose smiled as she looked out at the dark sky in front of her and the twinkling lights of a city below. Her fingers danced over a few of the controls as the steering wheel in front of her was left untouched. A radio next to her buzzed and the man beside her reached over to hit a button. Rose glanced over her shoulder to the small chair tucked in the back corner of the cockpit where a young man in a uniform was sleeping. Taking off a seat belt, Rose strode over to him and gave him a small shake before pointing back at her seat. He nodded and walked across the cockpit to settle in her place. Rose pulled open the doorway and stepped through.

She stumbled forward into a cool metal life and turned around to see the Doctor. For a moment Rose wasn’t sure it was really him, but it was his leather coat and face. The smell of leather, engine grease and a hint of something that always seemed to surround him dismissed her doubts. Her mind was full of confusion and fear even as a stubborn human instinct pushed for her to make sense of what was happening. Something warm and plastic was gripped in her hand as she heard herself ask him if it was a student thing. The Doctor seemed both surprised and amused by the question and Rose tried to understand what was going on. How could there be another Doctor? Weren’t the Time Lords singular in the multiverse? The lift opened and the Doctor reached for her with a warning to mind her eyes. Rose frowned as they left the lift and the Doctor pushed her outside the building. Something was different with these memories, they didn’t seem to be settling like the others.

Then she blinked and found herself back in the Hall of the Universe. Violet sparks of light were swirling around the room like hyper fireflies glowing brighter and brighter. They began to swirl together forming round shimmering portals. Rose glanced towards the Violet Guardian but her eyes were solid violet and she had an almost pained look on her face. Then Rose heard soft crying through one of the portals. It was pained and laboured like someone who just couldn’t stop crying and worse, it sounded like Shareen.

“Shareen!” Rose called desperately. “Can you hear me?”

“Rose?” a timid voice called back. “But-”

“This is a dream honey,” Rose told her. “Whatever you think you’re seeing it isn’t real.”

“Oh thank god,” came a clearer response. “But what is happening?”

“Something called the Nightmare Man is using my memories from other realities to break into our reality,” Rose explained quickly. “And he’s spreading his influence to others, you need to take control of the dream.”
“Bring them here,” the Violet Guardian ordered loudly as her body shivered. “Bring them here.”

“Shareen can you see a portal?” Rose asked her.

“Yeah, you’re on the other side?”

“Yes come through.”

A moment later Shareen stepped through, dressed all in black with badly smudged eyes. She brightened the moment she caught sight of Rose and jumped forward to hug her tightly. Rose wondered what her nightmare had been, but didn’t ask as another portal opened. This time she could hear Rani’s voice, then another appeared and Rose could hear Sarah Jane. Both sounded distressed but answered when Rose called to them.

Portal by portal her friends arrived in the Hall of the Guardians. Some of them like Sarah Jane began instantly looking around and eyeing the Violet Guardian with interest while others like Johnny and Sharon were looking around with more cautiousness. Rose noted that Shareen was dressed all in black, Rani was in some kind of suit and Clyde was in some kind of burger bar uniform, but she didn’t ask about what nightmares they had been living.

“What do I do now?” Rose called to the Violet Guardian.

“I need more power,” the Violet Guardian replied in a pained voice as more of the violet strands twisted through the air to surround Rose.

“But-” Rose swallowed and eyed the strands with worry. Her mind was already humming and her head ached from the information dump that she was already dealing with. She could feel new things tickling at her and it was terrifying and exciting all at once. “I can’t,” Rose exclaimed in a pained voice, folding her hands in front of her. “I’m sorry, but it’s too much. I can’t.”

“Now you listen to me,” Sarah Jane said sternly. “You are Rose Marion Tyler. You are the Defender of Earth, called Thorn by UNIT and you are my friend. You’re Luke’s godmother and one of the people I trust most in this world so don’t you dare say that you can’t do this. You bloody well can.”

Luke gave his mother a sharp look in surprise at the curse, but he grinned widely as Clyde outright laughed. “She’s right Rose, can’t really argue with that.”

“But…” Rose trailed off as her hand shook as she reached towards the next set of woven strands. “If a person is the sum of their memories then what will be left of me?”

“A person is the sum of their choices too,” Shareen reminded her in a soft voice that somehow echoed around the room. “It may be tough honey or maybe it won’t be. Maybe the memories and knowledge will be too much or maybe they’ll fade to the background, but whatever happens, we’ll be there.” Shareen stepped forwards and squeezed her hand.

Nodding, Rose reached out and grabbed another thread and let herself be pulled into another memory and then another and another. They were washing over her, seeping into the cracks of her being in a way that was alarming and exhilarating at the same time. Rose’s fingers itched to try some of the new things or see some of the strange places she now knew. But with every thread that she touched and every new thing that clicked into place in her head, Rose felt more drained and exhausted.
“Hiding little rats,” the voice of the Nightmare Man echoed through the Hall of the Universe as Rose struggled to stay on her feet.

Clyde and Luke caught her, holding her up between them as Rose panted for breath. Everything hurt and she couldn’t even bring herself to look up towards the voice of the Nightmare Man. Finally, as the temperature began to drop and the Hall darkening forced Rose to lift her head up. The domed ceiling of the Hall had become a swirl of dark smoke with the face of the Nightmare Man forming in it. Her stomach turned as a great hand began to form and it reached towards them.

A blast of violet light cut through the darkness. Rose turned to see the Violet Guardian on her feet with her hands extended towards the Nightmare Man. Flashes of violet light spun off her hands and up towards the Nightmare Man. There was a rumbling sound as the light collided with the swirling dark clouds. Rose bit her lip and tried to focus on the memories she’d acquired, remembering the feeling of piloting a small plane or the sight of Jupiter from orbit, the feel of the wind in her hair at that beach and the soft clicking of knitting needles.

The Nightmare Man glared at them, hissing and snarling as the violet cords bound him tighter and tighter. He tried to shout something, but his words became mere gurgles. Rose risked a glance at the Violet Guardian. Her hand was extended towards the Nightmare Man and glowing a brilliant violet colour with small hints of gold. Her eyes were shining white and there was a look of intense concentration on her face.

In the corner of her eye, Shareen vanished and Rose gasped. She reached out towards where her friend had been only for Sharon followed by Ran it vanish. Johnny was gone, then Sarah Jane and Luke until Rose was alone with the Nightmare Man’s muffled shrieks and whimpers. The dome of the Hall exploded in a brilliant flash of light with a loud scream of rage echoing in Rose’s ears. Then everything went dark for a long moment.

Rose opened her eyes slowly as the fog rolled away and she could hear Shareen’s voice. Nervously, Rose looked up at her friend and met a pair of worried eyes. Shareen nibbled at her lip for a moment and brought a straw up to Rose’s lips. Rose took a grateful sip of the water and a small sigh of relief escaped her.

“Do you know who I am?” Shareen asked softly and Rose smiled.

“Yeah, I know who you are,” Rose replied, sitting up slowly and rolling her shoulders. “Everyone okay? No sleepiness or sign of the Nightmare Man.”

“Scans are registering normal,” Spock’s calm voice informed Rose. “I trust that the situation has been resolved.”

“I think so,” Rose answered with a look around the room. “Sorry about that everyone. I really don’t try to get you caught up in my drama.”

Sarah Jane laughed and stepped forward to hug her tightly. “You’re a silly girl you know that,” the older woman told her warmly.

There was a round of hugs all around the room and no one mentioned nightmares. Rose stayed near Sharon and Shareen. She felt a little different, older maybe. At the back of her mind, she could feel strange and new memories tucked away and waiting for her to address them. Maybe she would in the future and she had no doubt that she’d have dreams from time to time, but there was no sense of
urgency any longer.

There was no sign of the Violet Guardian and Rose vaguely wondered if she’d been real or just some part of her mind manifesting to help her. She doubted it; that was a little too normal for her life. But she was awake now and the Nightmare Man had been defeated and would hopefully never return.

“Shouldn’t you be heading back to Cambridge?” Luke asked with a nod towards the small clock on Sarah Jane’s desk.

“Nope,” Rose answered with growing smile. “I’m going to take a mental health day.”

“Oh you playing hooky,” Sharon said with a grin as she crossed her arms.

“Yeah,” Rose sighed with a smile of her own. “Anyone want to help me?”

Sarah Jane laughed and shook her head as Johnny wrapped an arm around her shoulders. Luke, Rani and Clyde exchanged knowing looks and Sharon and Shareen calmly shook their heads at her. Rose stood up and looked around at all of them.

“How about dinner then, my treat?”

“I think that will be a very good apology,” Sarah Jane told her with a nod. “Clyde Rani, call your parents.”

Rose sighed softly in relief as the teenagers pulled out their mobiles and called their parents. She gave Shareen another small smile and reached out to grab her hand. She gave it a reassuring squeeze that was returned without hesitation and felt something easing in her chest and in her mind.

“Yeah,” Rose said softly to herself. “I’m gonna be fine.”
A Good Family Goes To War: Athena

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Forty-One: A Good Family Goes To War: Athena

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

The apartment was neat and tidy everywhere except for the desk which had piles of papers weighed down with books. A laptop was sitting there closed with a light blinking and a small clock on the edge of the desk showed the date and time. Opposite the desk was a full tall bookshelf with several shelves of science books and well-worn copies of the *Time Machine* and *Lord of the Rings*.

A strong wind suddenly blew through the apartment’s main room as an odd wheezing sound reverberated against the walls. The papers of the desk were held in place by the heavy books and the curtains covering the window only shifted slightly. A moment later a tall blue police public call box appeared in the open space between the coffee table and the kitchen. Rose Tyler stumbled out of the TARDIS laughing loudly with the Doctor on her heels.

“That was fun,” Rose announced as she reached up to neaten her flyaway blonde hair. “You know how to show a girl a good time.”

“Well it is easier when the girl in question enjoys stopping alien egomaniacs trying to put a control field around planets so they can enslave the whole population,” the Doctor remarked as he leaned forward and kissed Rose quickly on the lips. “Which is one of the many things I adore about you.”

“I adore you too,” Rose replied with a silly smile, giving up on her hair and wrapping her arms around the Doctor’s neck.

“Course that alien egomaniac seemed impressed with you too,” the Doctor observed with a sly smile. “Sure you don’t want to be a queen? It was a pretty nice planet.”

Rose snorted and raised an eyebrow at the Doctor’s words even though he was giving her a teasing smile. “I’m sure Doctor. Besides, I already have an egomaniac of my own. I can’t fathom juggling another.”

The Doctor pouted a bit at her statement and Rose laughed cheerfully, almost feeling the need to mark score in the air. Instead, she stood up on her tiptoes and kissed the thin wrinkles between the Doctor’s eyes. “Don’t pout,” she told him. “You might start to look your age.”

“Would that bother you?” the Doctor asked as he settled his hands on her hips.

Rose gave him a soft look and shook her head. “No, you’re my Doctor. It might make a few things more difficult for us in terms of perceptions, but I’ll always love you.”

The Doctor’s expression softened and he brushed a finger down her cheek. For a moment they were both quiet and simply enjoying standing there. Then the alarm across the room went off.
Frowning Rose turned to look at it.

“I thought…,” she started to say pulling away from the Doctor so that she could see the date and time. “Oh, I've got to get to class!”

“What?” the Doctor asked as Rose began to rush around the room to collect various school books, papers and her messenger bag.

“You got the time a bit wrong,” Rose replied as she fished a brush out from her desk drawer and attempted to tame her hair once more. “Sorry to cut this short,” she added moving up in front of him for another quick kiss. “I love you and I’ll see you soon.”

“I haven’t gotten the time wrong in ages,” the Doctor huffed with a frown looking displeased.

“Only by twelve hours,” Rose told him as she filled a water bottle in the kitchen. “Don’t worry about it so much.”

She kissed him again and jumped towards the doorway. Locking it behind her, Rose headed for the stairs. As she stepped into the stairwell she could hear the very faint sound of the TARDIS dematerializing and smiled. Slipping her hand into her bag Rose retrieved her phone and began to scroll through the calls and messages that she’d received. Thankfully there weren’t any messages about where she was so she was going to take that as a good sign.

It was a sunny if chilly April morning and for a moment Rose considered going back inside to retrieve a jacket, but decided against it. She did have enough time that she could walk to campus and grab something for breakfast along the way. A yawn slipped out of her and Rose sighed softly knowing it was going to be a long day. Rose didn’t pay much attention as she ducked into a small café and grabbed a quiche to eat on her walk. She was almost to her first class when a strange metallic sound drew her attention towards the side of the building.

Glancing towards the door, Rose started walking towards the sound as she heard it once again. She took one last big bit of her breakfast and noted a few other students heading towards the building. There was another long scrapping sound and Rose sped up her pace. She heard a scream and then more shouting. Dashing forward, Rose pushed her away past a gathering crowd only to stop in surprise.

There were three unfamiliar aliens standing near the wall. Rose stared at the strange grey creatures, unable to help but think of all those bad alien films she’d seen over the years. They have rounded grey heads and large eyes, but their mouths were missing. Strangest of all it was wearing a neatly pressed suit. Around her the students scattered, but the sounds of them shouting and screaming quickly vanished. There was a noise nearby and Rose ripped her eyes away from the alien only to suddenly wonder what was happening.

Then a strange man was suddenly on top of her, swinging a metallic net over her. Lashing out Rose kicked his sharply in the knee and then as he twisted in pain and began to go down she kicked him again in the chest. The strange net seemed to be tightening around her. Rose grabbed at the net only to have a small electric charge jolt through her making her flinch. She held back a scream and glared up at the man only to catch sight of an odd grey alien.

Everything happened in a blur. A blonde woman rushed around the corner wearing a strange eyepatch. She lunged towards the man with the net and kicked his soundly in the chest. The aliens pulled away from her with strange sounds and she hissed at them. When the man stood back up and
rushed her again, Rose felt the electric shock fade and began to move. Weakly she tugged at the net and moved her feet in an effort to find the bottom.

She kept glancing towards the girl and the strange man fighting and saw the aliens slip away before she forgot about them completely. Finally, she had one of her legs free and raised it up to push the net away. Once it was in the right location, Rose grabbed the net and pushed it off of her bag. She felt tired and drained but forced herself to stand up in time to see the strange woman knock the man down. This time he stayed down.

The woman grabbed her hand and pulled Rose sharply away from the strange man. As they turned the corner Rose had a strange sense that she was forgetting something, but dared not stop in case the strange man attacked her again. Her eyes dropped to the small sonic screwdriver that the girl was holding, but she didn’t have a chance to ask her anything as they sped across campus. Then Rose was pushed sharply into an alley just off of campus behind one of the nearby shops.

The young woman panted softly, taking deliberate measured breaths as she looked around. She was a very pretty young woman and there was something familiar about her bone structure that Rose just couldn’t quite place. The girl was tiny; thin and a few inches shorter than herself. Long blond hair was swept back in a tight ponytail and she was dressed in jeans and a simple blue t-shirt with a small bag strapped to her waist and thigh. Without a word she reached up and took off the odd looking eyepatch and slipped it into her pocket with a soft sigh of relief. A flash of blue light at her wrist made Rose’s eyes widen as she studied the thick device on the girl’s left wrist only to realise that it was just like Jack’s time jumper device.

“Good I think we’re safe for the moment,” the girl said with a nod as she turned her attention back to Rose. “You’re not hurt are you?”

“No,” Rose managed to say calmly. “I’m fine, but who are you and what is happening?”

“My name is Athena,” the young woman told her with a small smile. “And I’m… well, I’m the Doctor’s daughter. Yours too thanks to some donated DNA to fill in the gaps of my Time Lord DNA.”

“What?” Rose asked with widening eyes. “Run that by me again.”

“I was created from a sample of the Doctor’s DNA and rapidly aged. I was literary born as an adult with preprogrammed knowledge of tactics, weapons and combat to serve as a soldier.” Athena explained patiently before her smile widened. “I chose to follow Dad instead rather than the orders and once the war was ended peacefully I left with you and Dad. Later on, when I started having some problems Dad used your DNA to patch up mine. I didn’t have the full complex DNA needed to regenerate properly.”

Rose stared at her. The words were English or at least she heard English, but the rapid-fire explanation about who this girl was left her feeling even more confused and stunned. Athena’s smile faltered for a moment and then she smiled softly.

“It’s a lot I know, but you’re my Mum. As much of one as I’ve got anyway. You even named me.”

“Athena?”

“Well yeah, sprang fully grown from my father as a warrior, but also with the ability to learn and be completely brilliant,” Athena said proudly with a maniac grin. “You told me that you hoped it
would inspire me to protect rather than seek wars and value my natural intelligence over my programmed martial skills.”

It was the smile that did it. Rose felt her jaw go slightly slack as she took in the maniac thrilled to be danger and drunk on her own cleverness expression. What the girl was saying had to be true. Thankfully Athena gave Rose a moment to process what she saying and she peeked out of the alley.

“I think we’re safe for the moment,” Athena told her as she looked down at her wrist device. “But we can’t stay here. Just give me a tic and we’ll-”

“Hold it,” Rose ordered sternly as she shook her head and attempted to clear her thoughts. “What is going on? Who was that guy?”

Athena hesitated, her face nervous and her fingers twitched. Her entire body was oddly tense like she wanted to jump between her feet or run. It almost made Rose smile, it reminded her so much of the Doctor. While Athena collected herself Rose studied the girl. There wasn’t a strong resemblance between Athena and her father, but there were hints of his different forms in her. The blonde hair Rose could easily attribute to his fifth body, the eyes were a pretty light blue almost like the Doctor’s ninth body’s and her height… well, he’d been short more than a few times.

“That man and the aliens that you’ve already forgotten are part of a religious movement called the Silence,” Athena began to explain after taking a deep breath. “They are a pretty fanatical group and have it out for Daddy and you. The thing is… you’re pregnant in the future with my little sister.”

“What?” Rose breathed with wide eyes already skipping over the mention of aliens she didn’t remember. “But that’s not- we’re not genetically compatible. I asked him that when our relationship started.”

“Well, things change,” Athena told her delicately.

“Genetic engineering?” Rose asked still tripping over the idea of her and the Doctor having kids. “Did he actually want kids?” Realising who she was talking to Rose quickly corrected herself. “I mean little helpless crying kids.”

“Yeah he did,” Athena informed her, raising an eyebrow. “Look Mum- Rose I get that this is a bit of a shock, but I need your help.”

“How can I help? What is going on?”

“The older you, the pregnant one was captured by the Silence and taken to their asteroid base Demon’s Run. We think that they are planning to use your child as a weapon against you and Dad either as a hostage or maybe even training them to be a threat.”

“Oh my god.”

“Yeah,” Athena looked nervous again. “Look I need your help. Dad and Jack are gathering some friends and allies to help on a frontal attack to draw their attention, but I’m supposed to slip in and grab my sister. You told me that they are going to smuggle her out with a trick so we have to get to Madame Kovarian and save my sister while Dad distracts them.” Athena looked around with a tight frown. “I just made the time jump, I was waiting for you and Dad to separate so I didn’t mess with the timelines. I guess they followed me.”
“They have time travel too?”

“Afraid so, they can’t do it quickly or easily, but they have some time travel technology.”

“Who is Madame Kovarian?”

“Honestly we’re not sure, she hates Dad and you for some reason. Like I said we don’t know much about the Silence, no one does. All we do know is that they are some kind of cultist offshoot of the Papal Mainframe, but we have no idea why they fear Dad so much.” Athena’s wrist device beeped and she looked back to Rose. “Look I know it’s a lot to process all at once, but will you help?”

“What’s your sister’s name?”

“Fortuna,” Athena told her with a small smile. “Apparently you two named her after a goddess of luck that you- never mind.”

Fortuna sounded familiar and it tickled at the back of Rose’s mind as she looked at Athena. The young woman was looking at her in earnest. Rose felt herself nod and held out a hand for Athena to take, hoping desperately that this wasn’t some kind of trap. Athena took her hand, tugged her closer and pressed a series of buttons on her wrist device. A moment later the world fell away.
Rose struggled to breathe as the world snapped back into place in a flash of blue. Inwardly she cursed those damn little vortex manipulators that Jack, the Doctor and now Athena used. It occurred to her that it was probably the same one, she couldn’t quite see the Doctor keeping one around. Not with much he adored the TARDIS.

“Easy Mu-Rose,” Athena said next to her as Rose took in a slow breath and straightened up.

They were in a small closet. There was no other word for it, they were in the cupboard. Rose supposed that was smart on Athena’s part, but couldn’t completely hold back a snort of amusement. It was a lot easier than trying to process the idea that she and the Doctor were going to have children one day and not just a full grown cloned Time Lord.

Rose frowned and wondered how Athena was taking the knowledge that she was about to have a sibling. A sibling who would be little and helpless and protected and brought up by her parents. She flinched at the thought and was tempted to reach out and touch the girl who was leaning against the door and listening with a frown.

“I can hear something in the distance,” Athena whispered in a no-nonsense voice.

In a few moments, she’d gone from being a bubbly blonde to a completely serious girl on a mission. Rose wasn’t sure if she got that from the Doctor or from her, probably the Doctor, but there was a little of her in Athena too. Rose shook her head and forced herself to focus on the child they were supposed to save. She didn’t need to think about it being her child or Athena’s sister. She just had to focus on the fact that a child was in danger and if they failed would face a life of being groomed into a weapon or something equally dark just for the sake of spiting and hurting the Doctor.
Athena eased the door open and Rose dropped her hand, ready to call her sword. She adjusted her messenger bag so it was more comfortable and would give her back a little protection. Then Athena stepped out into the corridor with Rose right behind her. It was a long and dim metal corridor with faint blue lights. It was strangely cold and echoed with shouting in the distance. Rose couldn’t hear anything that sounded like a weapon and that made her feel a little better.

“Rose,” Athena said as she started walking down the corridor with slow careful steps. “If you see a grey alien I need you to shout,” Athena informed her seriously as she reached into her pocket and retrieved the odd eyepatch.

“What’s with the eyepatch, what grey aliens are you talking about?” Rose asked as she summoned her sword in a brief flash of gold light.

“The Silence includes these aliens that called the Silents,” Athena began to explain as she glanced around a corner carefully. “They are greyish pink with these odd mouths and small black eyes that were genetically engineered by the Church to allow people to confess their sins without remembering it. Anyone who looks at them without an eye drive like mine completely forgets them. You saw some on Earth, but you forgot.”

“I… what’s the point of confessing if you don’t remember it?” Rose managed to ask gaining a laugh from Athena.

“I have no idea, it’s something I’ve always wondered too.” Athena sighed and shook her head, “The Church or the Silence seems to think that you and Dad will destroy the universe, which is really very ridiculous, but the time I actually went and tried to explain why they had it all wrong they tried to kill me.”

“Is Jack here?” Rose asked sensing they were into dangerous territory.

“He’s with Dad,” Athena assured her gently. “Working their way towards you right now.” Athena stopped and smiled, pointing down a turn in the corridor. “My sister is this way,” she said in a soft yet excited voice that made Rose smile. “I can already feel her.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, good thing Madame Kovarian didn’t know about that,” Athena observed as they headed
down the dark corridor.

“Why aren’t there any guards?”

“They’re fighting Dad and your friends, the plan was to make a granger… uh, a duplicate of Fortuna and let that be rescued while Kovarian escaped with the real Fortuna,” Athena explained as she began walking a little faster. “Thanks to this being a time loop, we know their movements and plans.”

Rose sped up to keep pace with the young woman and silently hoped that she wasn’t speeding up for a really bad reason. In the distance, the sound of weapons discharging made Rose flinch and she hoped that the Doctor would be alright. Athena frowned and glanced towards the right wall, but didn’t change their course. Rose supposed that she might be aware of her father like she was of her sister. The idea almost caused her to stutter to a stop.

She was going to have a kid! A kid with the Doctor! She’d never been one for thinking about white weddings or kids when she was young. The underlying fear of turning out just like her mum encouraging caution in such things. Even when she started her relationship with the Doctor Rose had checked with him and found out that they couldn’t have kids together. She hadn’t thought much about it, mostly grateful that she didn’t have to be concerned about getting pregnant, but… there were those memories tucked away in the back of her head. She knew how to hold an infant and not just from years of babysitting. Rose breathed out slowly to distract herself from the faces of the children she might have hand in another life. Her hands were shaking and Rose was beginning to feel ill.

“How much further?” Rose asked Athena in a low voice as they can to another junction.

Athena glanced around the corner with care just like soldiers in the movies did. It was disconcerting in contrast to the way the Doctor just flew around corners without a care. The sound of an explosion rang down the hallway and Rose could hear shouting and what sounded like running. Her stomach turned and she hoped once more that the Doctor was alright, this time for different reasons. She hated the idea of him having to do back into serious conflict again. She hated that she was being used or would be used to force the issue in the future.

“I don’t know exactly,” Athena replied as she dug into a pocket and pulled out a large electronic tablet of some kind. “I’ve set this to detect a granger cradle,” Athena informed her. “It’s how they duplicated my sister, but since she’s so young Kovarian should be keeping her inside of it.” Athena sounded less than confident. “Hopefully Daddy and his friends are keeping their attention.”
The idea that he had ‘friends’ with him was both a source of comfort and worry to Rose, but she said nothing. Jack was there; he knew how to use a weapon and as far as she knew couldn’t be killed. He was a small army all by himself so what were the rest? Rose shook her head. This was her family at stake, their child. She just hoped that saving Fortuna didn’t mean the Doctor losing himself.

“Which Doctor is your father?” Rose asked Athena in a low voice.

“Crazy brown hair and pinstripes,” Athena answered quickly as she checked down another corner with a frown.

Okay so the next incarnation was fine so maybe this wasn’t going to go too badly Rose assured herself. She couldn’t fathom how angry the Doctor was at this moment. Oncoming Storm was probably tame compared to how he was feeling now with both her and their daughter at risk. Rose forced herself to breathe, she had to focus. Her job here in this crazy mess was to help Athena make sure that Fortuna was safe.

Everything had gone quiet all through the base. There were only low blue lights guiding their way and Rose had the odd sense that more time had passed than they realised. They turned another corner and Athena started to run. Rose took off after her and up ahead she could see soldiers dressed in green camo. There were four of them, all shifting nervously in front of a set of white doors. Athena was advancing on them quickly, but one managed to swing his weapon around and opened fire. Darting to the right into a side corridor Rose grabbed Athena and pulled her in. Bolts of energy flew past the opening and Rose let out a curse of anger.

“Fortuna is through that door!” Athena insisted sounding frantic. “They’re going to leave soon! We have to get over there!”

“Athena,” Rose snapped as she grabbed her and held her in place. “We are pinned down!”

“No!” Athena shouted. “That’s my sister!”

“I know,” Rose replied as she heard the heavy footfalls of the strange soldiers moved towards them.

She glanced down the corridor with a frown, noting that it looked like a dead end intended for ships to dock into. They had nowhere to go, but out into space. Rose swallowed and tried to think.
She wouldn’t have sent Athena here to die, she wouldn’t have even been able to have Fortuna if she got killed here.


“Here… wait we can use them to stun them for a moment,” Athena remembered, scrambling to pull out a screwdriver that looked almost exactly like her father’s. Rose pulled out her sonic pen from her bag and just as the strange men stepped around the corner, Rose and Athena pointed their sonics at the other and turned them on.

A horrible whining noise echoed down the corridor making Rose’s teeth feel like they were vibrating out of her skull. The soldiers all covered their ears and dropped their guards. Athena jumped forward before Rose could do or say anything. In a flurry of punches and kicks, the four men were thrown against walls and knocked unconscious.

“Whoa,” Rose breathed unable to hide being impressed. Then she smiled at Athena, noting that none of them were actually seriously injured and just knocked out. “That’s my girl.”

Athena beamed at Rose, glowing at the praise before a sound from beyond the doorway spurred them both into action and they rushed for it. With sharp precise movements, Athena opened the door via the control console and jumped forward as it slid open. They were in another long corridor leading up to a ship docking port. Rose could see a tall woman dressed in black and carrying a strange baby carrier stalking through a door. Soldiers were on either side of her and began to open fire at Athena. Hugging the side of the wall, Rose squirmed up to a small hole in the corridor full of controls and hid inside of it. Athena followed her in and peeked out even as the soldiers kept firing.

“Damn clerics!” Athena shouted clearly enraged. “Bloody hell you’re kidnapping an infant! Doesn’t that bother you?”

Then out of seeming nowhere a strangely familiar female voice came on the intercom system reciting some kind of rhyme.

“Demons run when a good family goes to war. Night will fall and drown the sun when a good family goes to war. Friendship dies and true love lies, night will fall and the dark will rise when a good family goes to war. Demons run by Time Lord tricks but for the future no easy fix. The battle’s won by the family strong when a good family goes to war.”
Athena frowned at the voice, straightening up with a suspicious look on her face. Then she dug back into her pocket and pulled out a small round device. She looked up at Rose as she pressed a tiny button on it.

“Don’t tell Daddy about this please.”

Before Rose could say anything, Athena tossed the device down the hall. There wasn’t any kind of explosion, but an odd static sound followed by the sounds of several bodies hitting the ground.

“Why didn’t you use that before?” Rose demanded as they stepped back into the corridor and rushed for the door.

“I only have the one, I didn’t want to use it so soon but…”

“Who was that on the intercom?” Rose asked as Athena began pressing buttons by the door.

“I have no idea,” Athena informed her with a dark look. “It wasn’t Vastra or Jenny or you so I’m not sure.”

The doors opened and without hesitation, Rose entered the small ship. Two more clerics stepped forward with weapons pointed at her and Athena. The ship rumbled for a moment and Rose felt ill as she realised that they were taking off. A moment later a woman with dark curly hair piled up on her head and an eye drive like Athena’s stepped out from the front of the ship with a smile. She glanced at Rose with a dark frown and then looked at Athena.

“Time Lord tricks,” she spat. “I thought I had him.” But then her anger seemed to fade and she straightened up. “Well no matter, you young Rose Tyler will be returned to your own time with a wiped memory of this incident. After all, I need you to conceive and produce our great weapon.”

“My sister is not a weapon,” Athena snapped at her, eying the nearest cleric.

“Oh Athena,” Madame Kovarian almost cooed. “You know better than most what a fierce warrior your father is. He may claim to be a healer, but things always seem to catch up with him.” Kovarian gave her a searching look. “You would be a great asset in this fight, my dear. A few years with the Papal Mainframe to learn and fully accept our ways and then maybe you could be a part of raising little Fortuna.”
“I know you think that my father is dangerous, but doesn’t the fact that he hasn’t sought to destroy you as a threat to his family through time travel prove that he has limits. You’re the one trying to make this a mini Time War.”

“You’re the one who brought your young mother into this.”

“Your agents were there!”

“Merely as a precaution when we detected you time travelling to that point,” Kovarian snapped back with a nasty look. “Athena accept my offer, you worked with the Church before.”

“That was in the 51st Century, things have gone downhill since then,” Athena countered. “I know that you’re scared, but my parents are not a threat. They protect the universe.”

“Your family can’t always tell the difference between saving the world and destroying it! They cannot be trusted, not against the Darkness!”

“And the Silence was such a better answer! Maybe if we don’t speak of it and pretend it isn’t there nothing will happen?”

At the front of the ship an alarm beeped and Madame Kovarian smiled. “Looks like the Doctor has finally found his way into our system,” she said lightly. “If you ladies will excuse me I’d like to enjoy this. It isn’t every day that a person gets to gloat over the Doctor.”
At the front of the ship an alarm beeped and Madame Kovarian smiled. “Looks like the Doctor has finally found his way into our system,” she said lightly. “If you ladies will excuse me I’d like to enjoy this. It isn’t every day that a person gets to gloat over the Doctor.”

Rose couldn’t believe the raw rage that was churning in her gut as the smug woman turned and stalked towards the front of the ship. She forced herself to take stock of the current situation. The small odd looking cradle was strapped into place only a couple of feet from them by the door into the cockpit. Rose could hear muffled crying sounds from the inside and it tugged at her heart. One of the clerics beside them looked uncomfortable with the sound of the crying infant and risked a look towards the cockpit.

“I could calm her down,” Rose offered softly schooling her features to look as harmless and scared as possible. “She’s my daughter, it might help her stay calm until you send me back.”

“One of the clerics glared harshly at Athena and his finger hovered over the trigger of his weapon threateningly. Fear gripped Rose for a moment and she felt a surge of bile burning its way up her throat. She took a tentative step closer to the cradle and reached out a hand for it, mindful of the weapon still pointed at her.

“Please, I can’t stand to hear her cry. She’s my daughter,” Rose repeated. “You have the weapons and I won’t risk getting her shot. What harm could it do?”
The cleric watching her had a hesitant expression, but Rose was growing more certain that he wouldn’t stop her. They could vaguely hear Kovarian from the cockpit and she was chuckling and sounding much too pleased with herself. Rose took another step towards the cradle and neither cleric stopped her. With a slow movement so they could see what she was doing Rose opened the cradle and the loud cries of the newborn became clear. A tiny little baby was swaddled in white. Large brown eyes looked up at Rose giving her pause for a moment as she’d expected blue eyes. Her skin was a rosy pink and slightly wrinkled over chubby cheeks. Soft looking brown hair covered much of her head and Rose’s heart fluttered as it hit her that this was her child.

Before the clerics could change their minds, Rose picked up the newborn from the cradle and smiled as her crying instantly softened at the contact. The inside of the cradle had small flashing lights and Rose couldn’t blame the baby for not liking it in there. Rose found herself instantly shifting her arms to hold the infant secure and began rocking her with instincts either from her long ago babysitting days or borrowed from another life. One of the clerics sighed softly in relief as the infant stopped crying, but motioned Rose away from the cockpit doors.

“Thank you,” Rose said in a low voice as she kept rocking the baby. “It’s alright Fortuna,” she whispered to the infant. “It’s alright.”

“What is the meaning of this!?” Kovarian’s sharp voice demanded a moment later as the woman stormed back into the small room with them. “Why did you allow her to hold the infant?”

“It wouldn’t stop crying,” the cleric said quickly with a nervous look. “Might as well make sure of the girl until we send her back… make sure the baby doesn’t become ill.”

“Denying the child comforting contact is the first stage of the training plan,” Kovarian snapped as she began to approach Rose with outstretched arms.

Rose reacted on instinct before her mind could engage and pulled away for Kovarian. She tightened her grip on the baby and shifted her quickly to only one arm. The girl’s tiny weight made it possible for Rose to summon her sword and bring it up quickly. The tip of the blade was suddenly resting on Kovarian’s neck, two guns were trained on Rose and Fortuna had begun crying again. One of the clerics then quickly turned his weapon on Athena to keep her in place and Rose could barely breathe.

“What now Rose Tyler?” Kovarian asked with dark narrow eyes. “Kill me and they will kill you and your step-daughter.”
“She’s my daughter, not my step-daughter,” Rose snapped, angry on Athena’s behalf and hoping her response would keep the girl from doing anything too foolish. It was alarmingly tempting to slice off Kovarian’s head and see what they could do against the clerics. If she hadn’t been holding Fortuna she might have taken the risk.

“Charming,” Kovarian scoffed still holding out insistent hands. “Then maybe I’ll leave her alive to be a comfort to you and the Doctor. This doesn’t have to end bloody Rose Tyler, not today anyway.”

If Kovarian thought she was being charming or comforting she was wrong. The woman was about as comforting and believable as a riled cobra hissing at you. Rose swallowed and shook her head, holding Fortuna tightly. Something was moving in the corner of Rose’s eye and she held her breath. She wanted to turn and see what it was, but all that she could make out was a dark shape. Maybe it was one of those aliens… the confessors that didn’t let you remember confessing. The clerics showed no sign of being aware of the movement and Rose held her breath. Desperately she wished it was help of some kind.

The tip of her sword cut into the flesh of Kovarian’s neck and Rose saw a thin line of red blood appear as the woman moved. She glared and Rose and Rose glared right back wanting it to be clear what would happen if Kovarian tried to take Fortuna. The sound of the two weapons charging up made her stomach twist and she glanced towards Athena. Her older future daughter was standing up straight and frowning darkly at Kovarian, looking like she wasn’t even paying attention to the weapons at all. Rose felt both pride and fear at the girl’s seeming nonchalance. It was one thing to see it from the Doctor, but to see it from a girl that she’d call her daughter it was terrifying in a way that Rose was not prepared for.

“Do you really think you’ll ever get away with Fortuna?” Athena asked in a lazy voice. “I mean do you really think that there is anywhere you can go that we won’t find her? She’s a Time Lord, a born and bred child of Time. The TARDIS will always find her and Mum and Dad will never stop looking.”

“I don’t need much time,” Kovarian said with a smirk. “Our plans for her won’t require much time and you aren’t the only ones with time travel.”

Kovarian glanced at Rose and at her sword as if weighing if Rose would really do it. Then she took a small step back away from the tip of the blade and wiped at her neck with her gloved hand. She did not seem distressed at the blood and smiled.

“After all she has rather violent human instincts mixed in as well,” Kovarian observed with a chuckle. “And no matter how much the Doctor preaches peace he is one of the great military minds of the universe.”
Athena shifted uncomfortably at the statement but said nothing. Kovarian smirked and then ducked around Rose’s sword and lunged for Fortuna. As Kovarian moved forward to grab the baby the shape moved just at the edge of Rose’s vision in a blur of darkness striking one of the clerics from behind. A shot exploded from the cleric’s weapon and zinged through the ship. Around them, an alarm began to sound and Kovarian shouted something that was lost on Rose. Athena dropped down and swung a leg out to trip the second cleric. He stumbled and the weapon in his hand went off as Rose pressed herself into the door frame and tried to keep Fortuna away from the sudden chaos. The other cleric dropped to the floor in a sudden crash and Rose flinched at the realisation that he’d been killed by the accidental shot. The ship shook and Rose moved along the wall towards the cockpit. Kovarian pushed past her roughly and lunged for the controls.

The ship shuddered again sending Kovarian stumbling. The console exploded in a shower of sparks as Kovarian fell back into the controls. There was a rough scream that made Rose flinch and clutch Fortuna closer to her chest. Kovarian’s eye drive sparked against her skull and she shuddered and began to convulse. The remaining cleric rushed towards her only to convulse himself and Athena sharply pulled Rose back from the cockpit door just before the cleric collapsed to the ground.

For a moment Rose didn’t move. The lights in the ship were dark with only the emergency lighting on and bathing her and Athena in red light. Kovarian was lying slumped on the floor and the sight of the burns on her hands and face kept Rose from even moving closer to her. The clerics were both dead and Fortuna had begun crying softly. Sweeping her eyes around the dark space Rose tried to catch a glimpse of whatever had moved and set off that chain reaction, but she couldn’t see anyone or anything.

“Rose,” Athena started to say taking a step towards her. “Are you—”

“We’re not alone,” Rose whispered tightly as she kept here sword at the ready and held Fortuna tightly.

Athena nodded and moved even closer to them as she scanned the area thoughtfully with her eye drive in place. Rose glared at the side of the room, holding the infant tightly against her and trying not to feel irritated by the protective way that Athena was standing in front of her. Something shimmered at the side of the ship and what Rose thought had simply been an empty space suddenly contained a tall white cupboard.

The young woman that stepped out of the double doors a moment later was completely familiar from her braided brown hair, large brown eyes and wide if nervous smile. She was looking at Rose while Athena stared at her in a blend of surprise and respect. Rose stared at her in shock before everything clicked into place almost painfully. Too many little things suddenly all made sense and
a soft snort escaped her.

“Astra Fortuna,” Rose breathed out slowly with a small shake of her head. “No wonder the name didn’t seem quite right. I suppose I wouldn’t want to tell my enemies your full name.”

“I suppose not,” Astra agreed with small smile. “Hello, Mummy.”
“Hello, Mummy.”

The words shook around in Rose’s brain for a moment as she just stared at Astra feeling overwhelmed and foolish. Now that she was looking for it, she realised that Astra had her wide smile and her bone structure. She had her father’s hair, but longer and her eyes were a blend of them both. It was just…

“Oh my god,” Rose breathed with wide eyes.

Athena stepped forward and examined Astra for a moment while the other girl remained calm and in place. There was a few inches height difference between the girls with Astra standing a couple of inches taller than Rose herself. Yet despite the differences in their hair colour and features, there was some resemblance around the chin and the shape of their eyes. Both carried themselves gracefully and seeming at ease though Rose was certain that both girls were ready to jump into action in less than a heartbeat.

“Astra,” Rose said softly before a rough chuckle escaped her and she shook her head. “This is just…”

“Insane yeah,” Astra agreed with a small nod and a smile. “I know, but… well, it’s been nice being your friend in the past. Given me a chance to know you better than just as my mum.” She looked embarrassed and pleased all at once.
Rose couldn’t help but think back to Astra’s conversations about her mother. She admitted that she was a little intimidated by her mother and Rose could certainly understand how being friends with her as a teenager could help ease that. Astra had told her once that her mother could fence and played the violin. Even a few months ago she hadn’t had any knowledge at all of music, but thanks to her knowledge from other lives she did now. It was almost frightening to consider how the little parts of her life were fitting in perfectly with the grand picture of her future.

“I understand,” Rose assured Astra gently. “I’m a bit overwhelmed, but I’m pleased that you turn out so sweet, smart and kind.” She looked down at the baby in her arms, “Especially considering what was planned for you.”

“Thank you,” Astra replied with a pleased blush before she coughed and straightened herself up. “Come on,” Astra called gently. “This ship is dead and floating towards a star. We don’t want to be in it when that happens.”

Athena began reaching for her vortex manipulator, but Astra grinned and shook her head. She raised her hand and snapped her fingers loudly. The cupboard that she’d stepped out of quickly opened wide and Rose gasped at the sight of a white and glass console room beyond the doors. Athena stared at the TARDIS with wide eyes before turning towards Astra sharply.

“You have a TARDIS?!”

“Yeah, but don’t worry you get the first of the new batch. When I’m a couple of months old Mum and Dad set up some of the coral fragments up on a nice little-protected planet to grow and Daddy gives you the first one.” Astra was rocking on her feet with a ridiculously wide grin. “This is actually my first real trip with mine,” she announced proudly. “And it’s a safer way to time travel with an infant,” Astra added quickly with a nod towards her infant form in Rose’s arms. “Make sure I don’t touch her Rose, okay?”

“But you’re a Time Lord or Time Lady, aren’t you resistant to temporal effects?” Rose asked as she took a step towards the TARDIS, mindful of how she held the infant Fortuna or rather Astra in here arms.

“Resistant yes, but I’ve never regenerated so the baby and I are the same incarnation which limits the temporal immunity that I’d have in that situation.”

Rose stepped into this new TARDIS first with Athena and Astra at her heels. It seemed like the Doctor’s TARDIS with a heavy scent of something similar to dust mixed with a hint of citrus that Rose had decided long ago was the smell of time. The walls were a soft glowing white with a slight
blue tint. In front of the doorway was a small set of stairs that led up to a glass platform surrounded the main console with white metal accents. A staircase led up to a double doorway that led into the rest of the TARDIS. It was almost hard to look at and seemed a bit sterile, but as Astra moved past them to the console Rose could see the girl’s energy and excitement. A white standing hat rack stood by the doorway with a bright blue scarf flung across it and a dark blue long coat hanging up. A simple white chair with blue accents sat just beyond the coat rack.

Astra brushed the console softly with a smile and began adjusting some of the controls. She looked over at Athena who moved to join her without a word being exchanged between them. With a soft smile, Rose moved over to the chair and silently hoped that this young TARDIS was a bit smoother in its flight than the original for the sake of the infant. She adjusted her hold on the baby Astra and watched the two girls move around the console calmly. The console was made up of small glowing buttons, a few silvery levers and two screens hanging around the glowing blue main tube rising from the console. A moment later the TARDIS shook slightly as they took off and Astra rubbed her hands together eagerly.

“Alright then Mummy,” Astra said as she turned to look at Rose, “Where do you want to begin?”

“Careful,” Athena cautioned with a serious expression to which her little sister nodded, but both turned to look at Rose as the TARDIS lazily flew through the time-space vortex.

“The Darkness?” Rose asked as she moved over to Athena. “What is it?”

“We don’t know,” Athena answered with a sigh. “It’s just… something that appeared and has been causing problems. It is big and black but doesn’t seem to have any mass or energy. Mum and Dad have been investigating it off and on for years, with the blessing of the Guardians of the Universe. But sometimes it releases… I don’t know these messages, just sounds across the galaxies that terrify anyone who hears it. The Church investigated and tried to declare it all off limits, but obviously, Dad wouldn’t go for that. The Church has put up these stations which cancel out the noise of the Darkness and forbid speaking of it so they started calling themselves The Silence instead. It’s stupid, but they think Mum and Dad caused it.”

“Kovarian didn’t think just blaming them was enough,” Astra offered with a shake of her head. “This was a splinter group determined to destroy the Doctor before he could become a threat. So the plan was to get me and have me kill him in the past.”

“But… you’d become a paradox,” Rose pointed out with a frown.

“Kovarian apparently had some weird plan to keep me stable, at least for a little while,” Astra
remarked with a shrug. “But she’s dead now and her splinter cell will either be reabsorbed into the main Silence or keep operating on a slightly less dangerous level.”

“Okay, so what happens now?” Rose asked as she adjusted the now sleeping Astra in her arms.

“Well if you don’t mind I’ll take you back to your apartment,” Astra said with a glance towards Athena. “That will let me clear out before Dad comes to collect me. While we can cross over timelines it’s a better idea for us not to if possible.”

“That’s fine with me,” Rose agreed with a smile at both her future daughter. “Wait,” she said as something nagged at her. “What really happened at the Gateway of the Sun? I don’t remember anything and my future self was really evasive.”

Astra chuckled nervously and shrugged as she turned and adjusted a few of the controls. “Uh well after you disappeared my timeline and existence began to unravel. My hand actually started to disappear just like in Back to the Future. Really freaked poor Sharon and Shareen out.” She laughed again while Rose stared at her with wide and horrified eyes. “I’m okay, I promise,” Astra rushed to assure her. “But apparently in my own future, I’m the one who makes the gate to hold the Chronovore so I just created a paradox to force time to snap back to its last stable point. Sort of a reset switch for a small distorted area.”

“What remains of the Web of Time makes that possible,” Athena explained giving Astra a worried and curious expression.

“Wait do Sharon and Shareen know who you are?” Rose demanded with wide eyes. Astra gave her a sheepish smile and Rose felt like an idiot. Rather than dwelling on it, she focused on another thing Astra had said. “Made a paradox?” Rose repeated slowly. “How?”

“Uh… let’s not go into it, Dad asked me not to discuss it ever again.”

“That bad huh?” Athena muttered before her eyes went wide. “Oh… yeah, let’s not talk about it if you did that.”

“What?” Rose questioned with wide eyes. “What did you do?”

“Please don’t worry about it,” Astra begged in a slightly whiny voice. “It’s not important. I stopped
the bad guys, saved the day and was fine.”

Yeah, that told Rose what she needed to know and she felt a bit ill. In her arms, the sleepy infant cooed and opened her large brown eyes to look up at the TARDIS ceiling. To Rose’s surprise, the infant giggled and raised her arms towards the ceiling with bright eyes. It was like a switch had been thrown and she was suddenly happy and energetic. Athena smiled warmly and stepped back from the controls, kneeling down to look at her sister. There was a moment of hesitation, but she reached out and brushed a finger over the infant’s forehead. Wide brown eyes looked at her and the baby gurgled happily.

“Hello to you too baby sister,” Athena breathed as tears began to form in her eyes.

“Would you like to hold her?” Rose asked gently as she braced herself for handing the infant over.

“No, I shouldn’t yet. Once we drop you off I need to go and check on a few things just to be sure. If I pick her up I won’t want to go.”

“You’re going to be a wonderful big sister Athena,” Rose told her with a smile so wide it actually hurt a little.

“Thank you,” Athena replied with a red blush. “I wasn’t sure, to be honest when you told me you were pregnant,” she admitted.

“Well don’t worry; you’re going to be wonderful.”

“Yeah,” Astra said from the controls. “Just remember that if a younger sibling ever sets part of your TARDIS on fire to go easy on them. It’s just an accident and honestly keeping highly flammable liquids that close to the junk room is sort of inviting trouble.”

Athena raised an eyebrow and turned to look at Astra. “You’re going to be a handful aren’t you?”

“Course I’m the daughter of the Doctor and Rose Tyler, how could I be anything else.”

All three of them chuckled and then the TARDIS shook slightly at it landed. It was a much softer
landing and Rose was a little stunned at how stable everything was. Probably the result of it being a much newer or rather younger TARDIS. Standing up, Rose felt the infant Astra snuggled against her chest. Rose looked back towards Astra who was watching her with a soft smile so much like her father’s that Rose felt her chest ache. She was certain that she wouldn’t see Astra again for a long time. Now that she knew who she was…. Rose pushed the thoughts aside and smiled at Astra.

“We’re back at your place,” Astra informed her with a smile. “Dad is going to meet you here to pick me up.”

“Okay, sounds good,” Rose agreed nervously as she adjusted the baby in her arms.

“Oh yeah,” Astra said suddenly straightening up. “One second, I’ll be right back.”

Astra rushed up the stairs and vanished into the back area of the TARDIS. Rose exchanged a confused glance with Athena who shrugged. Astra returned only moments later with a large diaper bag that she set down near Rose before quickly backing away.

“Here you go, some supplies in case Dad is late.”

“Cause we all know that never happens,” Athena chimed in with a smile.

“Nothing too serious, just some formula for a newborn Time Lord since you can’t… well you know and some diapers.”

“Great. Thank you for your help,” Rose told Astra with a nod and Athena stepped forward and grabbed the bag for her. “And I’m proud of you, both of you.” She added with a glance towards Athena who beamed. She wanted to hug Astra, but the girl was watching her infant form cautiously. Rose gave her one more smile, trying to look calmer than she felt about the day’s revelation.

Stepping out of the TARDIS into her living room Rose looked at the clock and chuckled. Two hours. She’d only been gone two hours and yet so much had happened. It hadn’t been her most dangerous mission or even the longest, but she felt exhausted. The infant in her arms shifted and Rose moved away from the TARDIS. She looked back at it and laughed as the white cupboard shimmered for a moment and then turned into a replica of the police public call box that the Doctor used. Maybe that was how the TARDIS looked on Earth; if that was the case it made her feel
ridiculously happy. Athena stepped out after her, closed the doors and set the bag down by the sofa.

A moment later the TARDIS dematerialized in a rush of wind and a grinding noise. Athena looked over at her and smiled one more time before she turned her attention to her vortex manipulator. A moment later Athena vanished in a flash of blue leaving Rose standing alone in her apartment with her future newborn daughter still in her arms.

Baby Astra gurgled happily up at her with a wide toothless smile. Rose felt her heart flutter and something inside of her melt a little bit at the way the child was looking up at her. She bent over so she could kiss her daughter’s forehead and grinned.

“I’m going to be a Mum,” she whispered in awe. “Astra I want to know that you are very loved. Daddy loves you, Mummy loves you and your big sister Athena loves you.”

Astra smiled wider at the statement, but her face tightened up a bit as if she was going to cry. Rose frowned for a moment before her eyes fell on the bag Astra had given her and she smiled.

“Well little one how about something to eat and a diaper? Then we’re going to call Auntie Shareen and Auntie Sharon while we wait for Daddy.”
Rose had never been as grateful for her time as a babysitter as she was at that moment. She laid out a blanket on the floor and curled up the edges to form a small padded area for Astra while she rushed into the kitchen in an effort to remember how to prepare a bottle. The older Astra had been kind and she discovered a few bottles already warm in a strange heated compartment with softly glowing lining. Briefly, she chuckled at the idea of the older girl making bottles for her younger self, but was certainly grateful. She wondered if it was the sort of thing that a young Time Lord or rather Time Lady simply got used to or if it was weird to Astra.

In no time at all, she’d fed the newborn two of the four bottles and very gently burped her unsure of how fragile newborns were. The baby seemed normal but was more alert and curious than Rose thought she should probably be at that age. She was already giggling and smiling up at Rose reminding her far more of the older infants she’d looked after years ago. Thankfully her hands remembered what to do even as her mind stumbled over the strange reality of what was actually happening around her.

A diaper change later and Astra was cooing at her happily with wide brown eyes that made her heart do little flips. This might be a problem down the line. Rose couldn’t imagine the Doctor being the disciplining parent in the family. No that was probably going to fall to her to take care of. But right now Rose couldn’t help the stupid silly grin on her face even as the flickers of shock and near panic spun around in her chest.

“You’re going to have your Daddy wrapped around your little finger,” Rose told Astra softly as she played with her hands. “Please try not to abuse it too badly, the universe does need him able to focus.” She shook her head and tried to reign in the urge to baby talk. “I’m not proud of it Astra, but I’m really relieved that woman is dead. I only met her just the once, but what kind of person looks at a baby and thinks ‘I can make that a weapon’.” Rose shivered and forced herself to smile again. “Come on, time to call Auntie Shareen and Auntie Sharon.”

Her laptop turned on with a soft hum and Rose settled Astra on top of her legs and wrapped up in a blanket. The tiny girl was looking around with wide eyes and was very quiet. It was disconcerting in a lot of ways given what Rose remembered about infants. Then again this wasn’t just some ordinary human baby she mused as she told her video call software to call Shareen’s laptop. Astra seemed content to watch the laptop’s screen flash and the program connect. Rose wondered if her little Time Lady brain was already sorting out what was happening. She wondered just how smart Astra would be. She wondered how much of her intelligence her older self had hidden. The thought made her a little sad. A few moments later the video feed opened and Rose could see both of her friends sitting in front of the laptop with wide smiles.

“Sharon Shareen,” Rose greeted with what she hoped was a calm smile as her friends appeared on
her computer screen via webcam. “I saw Astra again today,” she informed them as she carefully brought the infant up in front of the camera.

Their expressions were comical and baby Astra giggled right along with her before her curious fingers tried to reach for the laptop. Rose was still laughing as she adjusted her future daughter in her arms and wiped a tear from her eyes. It felt good to laugh, but her lungs were beginning to ache and Astra felt unstable in her arms. She took a painful deep breath and held it for a moment to get herself under control. Once she felt a bit better Rose cleared her throat and turned her attention back to her friends.

“She’s adorable,” Shareen offered with a sheepish smile.

“How long have you two known about her?” Rose questioned with a small smile returning to her face.

“Since South America,” Sharon told her with a shrug. “There was a resemblance between the two of you and I checked her pulse. It all just seemed to fit.”

“Well thank you for looking out for her during that nasty business then.”

“There wasn’t much we could do,” Shareen told her. “But she’s your daughter, of course, we had to try and help her however we could.”

“Thanks for that,” Rose said quickly, almost on instinct.

She wasn’t sure what else to say. She’d thought that they’d laugh about it, but as Astra stirred and Rose turned her so she could look at the screen all three of them seemed content to watch the baby. The sheer oddity of the situation was weighing down on all of them as future emotions and the certainty that they would love this little girl in the future clashed with the present where Rose had never been pregnant. This wasn’t her daughter, not yet anyway, but the knowledge of her had changed something.

There was a hint of fear at the idea of facing her younger Doctors again. She wondered if she’d feel differently about them knowing that one day they’d have children together. Would she see Athena when she looked at the Ninth Doctor’s eyes? Would she think of Astra when she looked at the Tenth Doctor? Would she feel differently about the Eleventh Doctor knowing that he’d lived through raising their children with her? Would they have more children?

“She seems very… alert,” Sharon remarked with a curious tilt of her head breaking into Rose’s thoughts as Astra’s tiny fingers tried to press on her laptop keyboard.

“Yeah, she is,” Rose agreed as she adjusted the child who was reaching for her TARDIS key with interest. “I’m thinking that’s probably the Time Lord in her. I suspect that she’s already got Daddy’s big brain.”

“Well we know she’ll grow up okay anyway,” Shareen quipped with a laugh before grinning at little Astra. “She is going to be awesome Rose, you know that right?”

“Yeah… just tomorrow when I call you in a daze and ask if this was all real please be gentle with me,” Rose asked as a flicker of worry sparked in her chest along with a growing sense of hysteria. “This has been… a really weird day.”
“I understand sweetie,” Sharon said gently with a small smile. “That’s why we never told you. We thought it would be best.”

“You’re probably right,” Rose acknowledged. “Probably silly, but I really never considered running into my own child. I mean I suppose I should have known it was a possibility, but…”

“It isn’t a normal occurrence,” Shareen finished calmly with a worried smile. “Just breath Rose, keep breathing.”

“I’m trying,” Rose replied honestly before a small laugh escaped her. “My life is bloody insane isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is,” Shareen and Sharon agreed together.

“But you’ll be fine,” Sharon added with a reassuring smile.

Then Rose heard a very familiar grinding sound echoing in her apartment. She looked around and saw a faint blue outline appearing in the living room. Astra clapped her hand together as Shareen and Sharon’s eyes widened and they shared a look.

“We’ll be here if you need to talk later,” Shareen told her in a rushed voice. “Take care, Rose.”

“We love you,” Sharon added before they ended the call.

Rose stood up from her desk chair and tightened her arms around Astra. She wanted to grip the girl like a lifeline but reminded herself to be gentle. It was hard to breathe again as Astra giggled softly and reached towards the TARDIS as if reaching for something she wanted. Again Rose was left wondering just how complex this newborn’s brain really was and if she was reaching towards her father or the TARDIS itself.

Then the TARDIS finished materialising, feeling as if it had taken forever. A moment later the door flew open and the brown haired Doctor in pinstripes almost fell out. His brown eyes were wide and he looked out of breath. Astra giggled and the Doctor’s eyes locked onto her. His expression as unlike anything Rose had ever seen before: awestruck, terrified, relieved and love-struck all at once. She knew that she’d always remember that expression.

Then he took a few steps towards them and held out a hand. Astra’s tiny fingers brushed her father’s and a wide silly smile spread across the Doctor’s face. He swayed on his feet and Rose adjusted Astra so that she could grip his arm. Without a word, she steered them all over to the sofa and sank down on it with the Doctor collapsing next to her. Rose was silent as the Doctor and Astra stared at each other and her little fingers brushed over her father’s hand. She giggled and made some other soft noises that just made the Doctor smile even wider.

Rose didn’t know how to describe the Doctor in that moment. He looked happy beyond anything she’d ever seen and tension was draining away from his shoulder. The Doctor looked like he hadn’t slept well lately, but it was all washing away in the flood of happiness. Rose wondered what was going on in his head as he looked at the first naturally born Time Lady since the fall of Gallifrey.

“You should hold her,” Rose said after finding her voice again. She smiled and began to shift on the sofa so that she could give him the baby. The Doctor’s eyes widened, but he adjusted his arms and smoothly took Astra from her. Astra shifted against her father and snuggled her face against
his chest. “There you are.” She didn’t know what else to say.

“Wow,” the Doctor breathed after a moment.

“Yeah,” Rose agreed with a shaky smile as a knot in her chest eased seeing that he was as overwhelmed as she was. “We have a baby or will have a baby.”

“Absolutely brilliant, terrifying, but brilliant,” the Doctor agreed with a chuckle.

“I’m probably going to wake up tomorrow and think this was just some crazy dream,” Rose confessed as she reached over and Astra caught her finger in her tiny fist. “It’s a lot to take in.”

“Yeah,” the Doctor agreed without looking at her. His entire focus centred on the small child in his arms. Rose’s chest tightened and for a moment she couldn’t breathe. She hoped this wasn’t going to become a habit. “She’s so beautiful, she looks just like you.”

“No she doesn’t,” Rose laughed gently. “She looks like you.”

“Fine how about we admit that together we made a good looking kid,” the Doctor offered as he finally tore his eyes away from Astra to look at her. “Thank you, Rose. For everything.”

“You’re welcome,” Rose replied in a soft choked up voice. She licked her lips and managed to ask, “Will she be safe now?”

An oddly pained expression crossed the Doctor’s face, but he nodded. “We’ve got a place on Earth that has a little temporal field around it to keep out threats. You’ll be staying there with her for a bit… you’ve already made Athena promise to stay with me. We’re meeting her there.”

“Oh,” Rose said weakly feeling sad at the revelation that they really couldn’t just stay together in the TARDIS, but an infant child who couldn’t defend herself yet was a tempting target. She reached over and brushed her fingers across the Doctor’s hand and smiled at him. “It’s just for a bit. We’ll be alright.”

“Yes,” he agreed with a smile. “And I’ll be visiting as much as I can manage without leaving the universe in jeopardy.”

“Maybe the universe will be nice and stay out of trouble for a bit,” Rose suggested even knowing that would never happen. The Doctor nodded but said nothing as he looked down at Astra. “You should go and get her to her real mum. I’ve got to be going spare in there waiting.”

The Doctor chuckled, but he nodded his understanding. Rose smiled softly as he leaned over and kissed her cheek very gently. They lingered like that for a moment and Rose closed her eyes, trying to memorise the moment. There were so many questions that she wanted to ask: about the Darkness, when Astra would be born and what would happen now, but she couldn’t find the words. Then the Doctor stood up and shifted Astra gently to one arm, grinning when she opened her eyes and gurgled up at him.

Rose moved forward to open the TARDIS door for him. Resisting the urge to look around inside the console room, Rose shoved Astra’s baby bag inside to the right of the door and moved to let the Doctor pass. He paused in the doorway and leaned over to kiss her very softly on the lips.

“I love you, Rose Tyler,” he muttered meeting her eyes with his own warm brown ones.
“And I love you, Doctor,” she whispered in response before swallowing. “Until next time.”

“Until next time,” he agreed as he stepped into the TARDIS.

The door closed behind him and Rose forced herself to step away from the time machine. As the TARDIS vanished Rose let out a soft exhale. A moment later she collapsed back against the sofa as her mind tried to crash to a halt. A silly almost hysterical giggle escaped Rose and she grabbed one of the small pillows to smother the laugh. Across the room, her mobile began to ring, but Rose ignored it and kept laughing into the pillow. She turned and laid flat on the sofa as the hysterical terrified and overjoyed laughter bubbled out of her until exhaustion finally caught up with her and she fell silent. Rose breathed in and out slowly as the burning in her lungs faded away. Staring at the ceiling as if it had all the answers Rose smiled and gradually drifted off.
The room was getting hot as the warm June sunshine streamed through the window into her bedroom, but Rose Tyler stayed curled up under her purple duvet. She was already awake, but firmly in denial thanks to the sheer comfort of staying in bed. Everything was calm and still except for the soft flow of air coming from the fan across the room. She could breathe deeply and think about the last few months without hysterical laughter or a near panic attack. It was a nice change of pace.

Rose was considering letting herself fall back to sleep even though she knew that it would be a better idea to get up and look over her final papers one more time. Ian always seemed to grade her grammar much more harshly than necessary, a petty little revenge for her not telling him the truth about her and the Doctor no doubt.

“Okay,” Rose muttered herself lazily as she poked her head out from under the duvet. “Time to get up.”

Throwing back the duvet Rose climbed out of the bed and looked at the clock, grinning at the late hour. It was completely the Doctor’s fault after all for only returning her from a date in the early hours of the morning. She sighed as she glanced towards the empty side of the bed, wishing he could have stayed the night, but shook her head wistfully. Rose headed for the bathroom to get cleaned up and start her day.

Even the shower didn’t do much to wake her up and Rose rubbed her eyes sleepily as she wandered into the kitchen. On her feet with thick fluffy slippers that made her giggle as they’d been stolen from the TARDIS wardrobe though she had no idea of their original point of origin. Rose hummed softly to herself as she started a kettle. She walked lazily into the living room and picked up the remote.

The news flashed on and Rose listened to the highlights for a few moments before a soft sigh escaped her. She stood there and watched the news for a few moments and tried to ignore the odd little tidbits that sprang to her mind. Even after a month of living her normal, or as normal as it ever way life, it was still hard to turn off the background noise in her head from all those other lives. The advice of the Violet Guardian had helped a bit, but Rose was gradually resigning herself to the fact that she was now utter and complete rubbish at history or current events.

“Bugger,” Rose cursed as she watched a brief statement from the Prime Minister. “Forgot which one it was,” she muttered with a shake of her head. “Bloody other lives.”

The kettle hissed and Rose walked over to make herself some tea with the news still playing in the background. Picking up her phone she read over a couple of texts that a bored Shareen had sent her.
last night during a date and briefly felt irritated on her friend’s behalf. Her mate just had the tendency of going after the bad boys and then being angry when they turned out not to be so nice. Thus far, at least, Rose had never had to get involved herself.

“I live in the United Kingdom and Britain has a Prime Minister and Parliament,” Rose repeated back to herself as she made her tea. “American rebelled and is its own country: the United State of American and the monarchy still exists as a figurehead institution.” She chuckled to herself and took a sip of her tea, feeling like a bit of an idiot. “Oh well,” she sighed as she reached up to get a bowl and spoon from the cupboard. “Good thing science is consistent.”

A flash of light in the corner of her eye that wasn’t from the telly made Rose tense. She shifted defensively and swept her eyes across the room. Her laptop was on and something had just appeared on the screen. Putting aside the bowl and spoon Rose crossed quickly from the small kitchen of her apartment to the large desk stacked with books and papers near the window. She was expecting a message from Spock, but instead, there was a notepad document open on the screen that read:

Hello Rose Defender of Earth
It’s been some time since I felt mirth
I’ve got a new plan to destroy your planet
This time the Judoon won’t catch me in their net

“What the-” Rose muttered as she reread the terrible little poem and tried to banish the last of her sleepiness. “Great,” Rose grumbled as she sat down and glared at the words, trying to make sense of them. “I’ve got a clever little hacker.” She left the notepad document open and hit the small icon on her desktop that connected her to Spock. Her eyes jumped back and forth between the document as she tried to wake up and make sense of what she was reading. “Come on Spock.”

“Good morning Rose,” Spock greeted a moment later with a new window opening that showed his visual graphic representation. “To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“I got hacked this morning,” Rose yawned as her nose tickled. “Please run a systems check for me and see if you can trace back the source.”

“Of course Rose,” Spock said pleasantly.

Rose leaned back in her chair and reread the awful poem as she sipped from last night’s glass of water. Her eyes lingered on Judoon and she snapped to attention as a burst of realisation sent her brain stumbling over itself.

“Judoon! Oh, bloody hell it's Thane!” Rose snapped before slamming her fist down on the desk. She flinched at the pain, but it was dulled by the sheer rage swirling through her. Rose shivered and forced herself to take a few deep breaths. “Calm down Tyler,” she scolded herself in a low voice. “See what Spock gets.”

“Rose,” Spock called cutting into her thoughts. “Your system was indeed breached this morning, but I have been unable to locate the source. A small code attached the document caused it to open immediately upon arrival.” A map appeared on her screen with several glowing dots as it expanded revealing the whole of Europe. “Whoever sent the message bounced it off of more than one hundred servers.”

Rose jumped out of the chair and began to pace as she tried to shake off the instinctive shiver at the
idea that Thane might be back on Earth. Biting at her thumb nail Rose glanced back towards the message with worry. The fact that it had appeared so soon after she got up made her wonder if Thane was somehow watching her.

“Spock is the system secure now?” Rose asked carefully. “Are you keeping up protections while accessing the laptop?”

“The system seems to be secure,” Spock answered calmly. “And I am keeping up my firewalls while retaining this connection.”

“Break contact and call me back on my phone in twenty minutes,” Rose ordered. “Just in case Thane is using a virus again. Start scanning the news and military signals for anything unusual.”

“Anything unusual is a rather broad search on this planet,” Spock reminded Rose gently.

The Xylok’s quip made her laugh and Rose took a deep breath and let it out slowly. She felt a bit better and managed a small cocky smile. This was an alien thing, she could handle alien things even if she still felt like her brain was mush from the events of the last few months. Abandoning the search for breakfast Rose ran a finger over the golden bracelet on her wrist and took another deep breath as she picked up her mobile and called her direct number into UNIT HQ.

It didn’t take long for her call to be put through to Brigadier General Benton, but Rose had already resumed pacing nervously. Thane… why did it have to the absolutely insane alien with a history of destroying planets? His obsession of what Rose had seen in the temporal rip didn’t help matters either. A shiver that Rose couldn’t control went up and down her spine. For a moment she thought she could hear some kind of music, it was soft and smooth and very familiar. Shaking her head, Rose told herself to focus as Benton picked up the phone.

“Morning Thorn,” he greeted in a pleasant, but professional tone. “How can I help you this morning?”

“Benton I think Thane might be back on Earth,” Rose said in a rush. “I got a message this morning that referenced being captured by the Judoon and destroying the Earth,” she explained.

“Okay Thorn,” Benton replied in his calm and even voice. “Slow down and explain this message.”

Rose grimaced and glanced back towards her laptop. “This morning my laptop was hacked and a message was written to me. It’s just a stupid really bad four line poem.”

“And you think it is Thane?” Benton sought to confirm even as she heard steel creeping into his voice.

“I’m afraid so,” Rose answered as she forced herself to take a deep breath. She read off the poem keeping her voice as calm as she could manage. “Thane prides himself on destroying planets and remarked last time that I saw him that Earth was the first time he’d failed. Plus he was in the custody of the Judoon last time. I think it is very likely that the message is either from Thane or a copycat of some kind, at least that is probably the worst case scenario so we should try and be prepped—”

Another message appeared on Rose’s screen and Rose dashed to the laptop with a held breath. “Bloody hell,” she cursed. “I just go another one.”
“What does it say?” Benton demanded through the phone.

“Humans build and destroy, can you guess my latest ploy, lose control from the top and I will make the watches stop,” Rose read off as she held off a burst of anger at the idea of anyone playing a game like this with her. “Watches stop, maybe he has some kind of temporal device.”


“Brigadier Benton?” she called into the phone.

“Watches stop could refer to a nuclear blast,” Benton explained in a thin voice. “Watches in and around Hiroshima stopped when the bombs were detonated. If he makes the watches stop then it could mean that he either has a nuclear device or can get one.”

Rose breathed in sharply, thinking back on Thane’s quips and statements over their meetings. “He does prefer to turn a planet’s technology against it,” she agreed slowly as she sat down in her desk chair. “It is his mode of operation, he’s rather proud of it.”

“I remember the last time he was here,” Benton remarked with an audible sigh. “You almost got shot by the Judoon. If you boyfriend hadn’t called me and told me what to say…”

The words drifted off and they were both quiet for a moment. Rose couldn’t help but remember the body count from Thane’s last scheme. She toed out of her slippers and began carefully walking back to her room. In the background, she could hear Benton talking to someone else, probably through the intercom and stayed quiet. She pulled out some jeans and a t-shirt, preparing herself to get dressed as soon as Benton returned his attention to her.

“Rose I’d like you to come down to London,” Benton said in a tight voice. “Bring the computer and we’ll see about tracking back the source.”

“I tried that with no luck,” Rose informed him. “It was pinged around about a hundred servers.”

“Well, we can try to track it as the messages come because now that he’s sent two I imagine that more are on the way.”

“I can be on a train.”

“No, I don’t want you travelling alone,” Benton said sharply to cut her off. “Thane is very dangerous and very likely to come after you personally. A copter is on its way and the soldiers will contact you when they reach your area for a pickup point. I don’t want you to leave your flat unless you believe there is a clear and present danger. Do you understand?”

There was something in his voice, something much sharper and cold than the John Benton that Rose usually worked with. He was an excellent officer but liked to tease her about the Doctor or try to put her at ease. This time something was very different and Rose stayed silent, wondering what was going on for a moment before Benton sighed.

“Please Rose, I just got a report of a nuclear alert in the United States, something is already happening.”

With a cold feeling in her stomach, Rose agreed to Benton’s terms. They ended the call with a
heavy silence that was only broken by Benton adding, “And be ready to the call the Doctor if necessary.”

Slipping the superphone into her pocket Rose took a deep breath and gathered up her things. She slung her shoulder back across her chest and checked that her sonic pen was secure. The translator on the back of her ear seemed warmer than usual. And Rose waited for another call from UNIT or another message of her computer.
The helicopter landed with a very soft thud on the lawn outside of the Tower of London. Already Rose could see people lined up for the tours and wondered again at the wisdom of putting military bases under landmarks. Sure you’d never forget where you worked, but it made areas with a lot of people targets. If it was up to her they’d be at the old UNIT HQ in the countryside or in the Mount Snowden bunker away from the millions of people in London.

She forced herself to focus on the matter at hand as the door slid open. Two soldiers were waiting for her and Rose handed the bag with her laptop to one of them as the other helped her climb out of the copter. They moved across the grass quickly towards the front entrance to the base and Rose glanced in the direction of Jane’s execution point. She needed to remember to bring flowers down, it had been too long.

Staying quite, Rose ignored the curious looks that their little arrival was receiving and calmly followed the escort into the Tower. She’d never cared for this entrance as much. The other entrance which opened up a few streets away for vehicles was much more convenient. They passed the tourist areas and headed down a dim hallway that hid small alcoves where UNIT soldiers were at the ready. Around a sharp corner were two more guards and a large heavy door. A swipe of a card later and it opened to a flight of stairs and lift. Without a word, Rose followed the private into the lift and sighed softly as the doors closed.

The moment they reached the bottom of the several story descent the private carrying Rose’s laptop carried it over to a workstation where several techs began pouring over it and plugging it into other computers. Holding back a wince, Rose considered asking them to make a backup of her school documents. She could just see it: Thane’s cute little poems causing a total crash and killing her laptop and taking her final papers with it.
“Thorn,” Benton’s warm voice greeted as several people walked up behind her. “Good to see you,” he greeted with a hint of a smile when Rose turned to look at him.

“Thank you, Brigadier Benton, it’s good to see you too,” Rose replied with a nod.

“Hopefully we can find something on your laptop,” Benton observed as he looked past Rose with a slightly uncomfortable look. “I’m sorry about this, it’s got to be uncomfortable.”

“It’s fine,” Rose answered with a shrug. “I haven’t got anything embarrassing and I keep the Doctor away from it so the technology is normal. My biggest concern is my school papers, but I made a backup two days ago so even if Thane or your folks kill it I’ll live.”

“Always prepared aren’t you Tyler?” Benton remarked before turning to look towards the wall of monitors again.

“I try,” Rose agreed with a sigh before clapping her hands together. “So what’s happening?” Rose asked as she strode up to stand next to Benton. The older man was standing straight as a wall and tension was obvious in his shoulders and the tight frown on his face.

“Section 13 sent us a message about one of the missile silo control stations in Montana going dark. The U.S. air force has been unable to reestablish contact with their men in the bunker.”

“Are they concerned about missiles being launched?”

“No the silos only finish the launching of missiles, the codes still have to be used which are not kept in the bunkers,” Benton explained patiently. “But an odd energy spike they haven’t been able to identify was picked up at Maelstrom Air Force Base near the bunker which is why Section 13 alerted us. They believe it may have been alien.”

“Sir!” a voice called out from across the room. “We just received a report that another bunker has gone dark!

Rose stepped back against the wall to let Benton rush to the computers and the officers move about as they saw fit. On the screen, a large map of the United States was displayed with a black dot up in the north-west and another appearing hundreds of miles south of it. More maps appeared with small red dots from all across the globe and Rose’s eyes swept over the number of nuclear missile
facilities with a sense of worry and disgust churning in her gut.

“No,” she muttered softly to herself. “I don’t want to do this one solo.”

She pulled out her phone and walked over to the small break room off the command centre, closing the door behind her. It was small with a long counter covered in stuff for coffee and tea, but it was quiet at the moment. Hitting the speed dial on her phone, Rose raised her mobile to her ear and waited. Outside the door, she could hear muffled talking and the sounds of computers beeping. It was disquieting and she focused on the ringing of the phone.

“Hello?” a warm voice asked in a familiar northern accent that alerted Rose in a moment that she hadn’t gotten the Doctor she’d been planning on.

“Hello Doctor,” Rose said carefully at the sound of the rough northern accent. “It’s Rose. Thane is back on Earth and is sending us messages that hint he’s got plans that involve nuclear weapons. We could really use you here.”

“Thane huh,” the Doctor grumbled just before Rose heard a soft rumble on the other end of the line. “Yeah, I’m coming. Where are you?”

“UNIT HQ, uh the new one under the Tower of London,” Rose explained quickly as there was another loud shout out in the control room. “It’s already getting tense here Doctor,” Rose told him.

“Coordinates already set in,” the Doctor assured in gently. “Just don’t go finding any trouble.”

“I’ll try not to. At least Thane is more obsessed with you than with me.”

“I’m not sure about that, but really Rose stay safe,” the Doctor added in a stern tone, but Rose smiled hearing the underlying hint of worry.

“See you soon,” Rose promised before ending the call.

Taking a deep breath she opened the door and stepped back out into the control room. A quick glance at the map made Rose frown: two more of the previously red dots had gone dark. Several of
the video screens now had faces of people in uniform and fancy suits indicating that poor Benton was now stuck in worldwide conversations. She moved over to her laptop quietly and leaned down to talk with one of the techs.

“Anything?” she asked in a low voice.

“Nothing yet, it’s possible that Thane knows you’re here now,” the tech told her with a grimace. “But we were able to grab some information on the route he used to send you those… poems. Malcolm has it downstairs.”

“Thanks, I’ll go and see him,” Rose replied before nodding towards Benton. “When he’s done let him know that I’m downstairs and that the Doctor has been called.”

“The Doctor?” the tech asked eagerly straightening up in his chair. “He’s coming?”

Rose couldn’t help but smile at the raw awe in the man’s voice. She nodded and stood up glancing towards Benton. The tech was almost vibrating in his seat as Rose stepped away. She considered calling over her shoulder for him to lay off the coffee but instead focused on getting out of the control room without getting run over. There was one guard by the door down to the science labs who nodded to Rose as she went past.

She didn’t take the lift this time and instead hurried down the two flights of stairs. There was another guard posted on the landing who nodded to her as she passed. Rose nodded in return and pushed open the heavy door with a soft grunt. She heard a chuckle from the guard but ignored him as she stepped into Malcolm’s messy domain.

The large desk used by Malcolm was surrounded by computer screens. All of them had strange graphs and readings on them that Rose couldn’t recognise. Malcolm himself had his back to her and was typing away at one of the three keyboards on his desk. The rest of the office was in chaos with long tables covered with odds and ends. She glanced to the side and found Toshiko sipping at a large mug of coffee and staring blankly at a pair of computer screens.

“Rose!” Malcolm called jumping out of his chair as he spotted her reflection in one of his monitors. “They said you were coming, but I thought you’d be upstairs.”

“I’m not sure how to help right now,” Rose admitted sheepishly. “Thought I’d come and see if you had anything.”
“Well nothing yet I’m afraid,” Malcolm told her with his smile fading. “We have the data on that signal that was picked up, but so far we haven’t been able to make any sort of sense of it.”

Tosh spoke up from the other side of the room. “It disrupts electrical signals that’s for certain.” Rose turned to see Tosh staring at her screen with her glasses perched on her nose which she had crinkled up in frustration. “But it doesn’t match anything in the system.” She looked up at Rose. “You think it is Thane?”

“Well, the hints suggest that it is,” Rose admitted. “Thought maybe not. The last time I thought Thane was behind something it was actually the Silver Lord setting me up to marry him.”

“Yeah…” Tosh said awkwardly with an uncomfortable look at the reminder of that ugly event.

Rose threw Tosh a smile to reassure her before she turned her attention to the numerous screens surrounding Malcolm. Her eyes felt sore just from looking at the seemingly random bars of frequency and wave analysis. Rubbing her eyes, Rose listened for any sound of the TARDIS and wondered how long it would take him to get her. Despite having gotten a good night’s sleep Rose was starting to feel achy and tired.

“Malcolm,” Rose asked in a soft voice as her eyes traced over the various computer screens. “Why would a nuclear blast stop a watch? Does it break them or do something else?” she questioned in a soft voice that seemed extra loud in the room.

“I suppose that wouldn’t be a part of your education,” Malcolm replied with a slightly strained chuckle. “Short answer is when a thermonuclear weapon detonates, several things happen - there is the intense heat, blinding flash and extremely powerful blast wave consisting of two waves - one of positive pressure as the blast radiates outward, the second being of negative pressure.”

“Like a vacuum?” Rose asked, mildly surprised at the information. She was guilty of assuming that it was a huge explosion like most of the population.

“Exactly, it sucks the air and debris back in towards the epicentre or ground zero of the blast and fallout which is where the radioactive dust and other debris that have been blasted into the air starts to fall to the earth,” Malcolm explained gently as his hands moved through the air. “Now, the reason that clocks, electrical devices such as computers, radios, vehicles, and anything else with an electric circuit stops working is because the blast creates a massive electrical pulse which fries anything electrical in the area. That will knock out any electrical clocks in the area while the blast
itself would disrupt any mechanical clocks in the area.”

“Do you think it’s possible that Thane might be talking about something else?” Rose asked even though she was certain it was a foolish hope. Malcolm looked up at her over the top of his glasses with a sad smile and Rose sighed. “Yeah, I didn’t think so. I really hate him,” she muttered. “Him, Atep, the Silver Lord and the Trickster.”

“You have an alarmingly long list of nemeses,” Malcolm told her with a raised eyebrow and frown. Rose almost smiled at the appearance of ‘Uncle Malcolm.’

“You should hear the Doctor’s list, that include whole species,” Rose replied with a shake of her head. She reached up and rubbed the side of her head. “At least I had a good night’s sleep.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” Kate announced as she strode into the room.

Malcolm straightened up a bit and Rose almost laughed for real at his sudden attention. She could understand it though, even though Kate didn’t advertise her connection to the great Alastair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart it was undeniable that the woman had an aura of command. While Rose was grateful to have her in the science department, she was wasted here. That was probably the reason Malcolm treated her with respect and deference, probably figured she’d have Benton’s job down the road.

“Anything to report?” Kate asked as she came over to join them.

“Nothing yet,” Malcolm admitted with a shake of his head before he slumped back in his seat. “The readings make no sense to me.”

“The other branches are reporting the same thing,” Kate told them with a slight hint of frustration and defeat in her voice. Rose could see the anger flashing in her eyes and smiled at the sudden strong resemblance between father and daughter. “But military bunkers keep going dark. It’s not just in the United States now, Russia has even willingly reported that they’ve lost contact with two of theirs.”

“Really?” Malcolm asked with clear surprise. “They usually keep things to themselves.”

“Yes well the Russian government does, but the Agency on Unusual Events sent us a
communication a few minutes ago.”

“Agency of Unusual Events?” Rose repeated with a frown.

“It’s a rather bad translation of their name,” Kate agreed with a nod. “But they are Russia’s national alien organisation. While they allow UNIT some access in their national boundaries they have their own organisation, much like the United States.”

“And the United Kingdom,” Rose reminded Kate with a huff, thinking of Torchwood and Hartman.

“Yes… well, thankfully the Russians and Section 13 are talking to each other to make sure that no crazy leaders try to use this as a chance to blow up the world.”

“Really…” Rose questioned with a curious tilt of her head. “That’s good to hear… really really good to hear.” She frowned, “But then what is Thane trying to accomplish. If the agencies are talking to each other and know its alien then he isn’t going to have much luck in tricking us into starting World War III.”

Kate’s frown deepened at the mention of Thane’s probable plan, but before she could respond a strong breeze started blowing through the room. They all looked around in surprise and excitement while Rose jumped forward and started putting Malcolm’s papers under the odd bits of things that he had on his desk. Then she heard that familiar wheezing or grinding sound and turned to look around.

Rose couldn’t help but smile at the glorious sound of the TARDIS materialising. Her fingers itched oddly and she wanted to jump forward and pull open the door. Thankfully it opened a few moments later and the tall blue eyed Doctor stepped out with his leather coat. He caught sight of her at once and grinned, holding open his arms. Beaming in return Rose jumped forward and let the Doctor sweep her up in a hug.

“Thanks for coming,” Rose said as her feet left the ground.

“Course Rose Tyler,” he answered gruffly as he set her down. “Now, what trouble have you gone and gotten yourself into this time?”
“Doctor!” Malcolm cheered as a wide excited smile took over his face. He stumbled forward around his desk, nearly tripping on a set of cables running to his tower of the computers. “Wonderful to see you again, thank you so much for coming.”

“Doctor Taylor,” the Doctor greeted as he turned his attention away from Rose though his blue eyes lingered on her for a moment.

“Oh please just Malcolm if you would sir,” Malcolm told him as he grabbed the Doctor’s hand and shook it. “I’m so glad you’re here.”

“Indeed,” Kate said stepping forward and smiling at the Doctor. “Good to see you, sir. Malcolm is quite right, we’ve got quite a situation on our hands.”

“That’s what Rose said,” the Doctor told them, nodding in Rose’s direction. He paused a beamed at Kate. “How’s your father?”

“He’s quite well,” Kate admitted with a slight blush. “He’s actually in Peru at the moment on a diplomatic mission though I was informed when I arrived this morning that UNIT was considering sending him to the United States to work on this problem with Section 13.”

“Doesn’t that man understand retirement?”

“He tried it, but I personally worried that the boredom would be the end of him,” Kate told the Doctor with a soft smile. “I’m sure he’d want me to give you his regards.”

“Tell him I said hello,” the Doctor agree before he looked towards the monitors and nodded. “So what have we got?”

Malcolm instantly leapt into his explanation of what they’d recorded at the black site while Kate informed the Doctor of the temporary alliance between several of the alien organisations across the globe to hold off World War III. Rose glanced over at Tosh who was slowly creeping over to join the discussion and offered the shy woman a smile. She lingered for another moment as Tosh handed the Doctor a report on the signal that he flipped through quickly. After a moment debate Rose turned on her heel and headed out the door and upstairs.

As she reached the stairwell Rose took a long deep breath, supporting herself on the staircase rail. “Easy Rose,” she told herself as she felt a little light headed. “Easy girl, don’t worry about it.” She giggled softly to herself and shook her head as she wondered if she’d ever have a regular meeting with this Doctor. There always seemed to be something… a first kiss from his Eleventh self, a
sonic pen from his Tenth self or just a couple of weeks ago finding out they were going to have a kid together. Another laugh escaped Rose earning her an odd look from the guard. Shaking her head, she climbed up the stairs back to the control room and walked back into the madhouse with a small smile that she couldn’t quite shake. It took her only a moment to reach Benton.

“Okay Benton the Doctor is downstairs reviewing the information on that weird signal with Malcolm and Tosh,” Rose informed the Brigadier with a wide smile. “But please remember to keep the boyfriend and girlfriend comments to yourself.”

“I’ve seen him snog you, Rose,” Benton replied with a raised eyebrow as the tension began to drain out of his shoulders at the news of the Doctor’s arrival. “And I’m well aware that he’s been with you more than a few times when UNIT has called you in.”

“That’s in his future,” Rose informed him sternly, fixing her brown eyes on him with no small amount of steel in them. “So be careful.”

“So you’re dating him in your present, but not in his…” Benton said slowly before shaking his head. “Bloody hell Thorn can’t you do anything normally.”

“I’ve been trying to,” Rose replied with a shrug. “I tried going to uni, but one of my professors is a former companion of the Doctor and so is the journalist that my Mum and I moved in near.”

A deep laugh escaped Benton drawing the attention of everyone else in the control room to them. Rose shook her head and tried not to look embarrassed while Benton shook his head and chuckled. A soft sigh escaped him and he looked back at the screens with all his good humour vanishing.

“Some days I hate this job,” Benton muttered as another red dot in the United States went black. “Please tell me that the Doctor and Doctor Taylor have something.”

There was a burst of noise as the side doors swung open and the Doctor strode into the room with Malcolm on his heels and Kate following with a more subdued look. Rose could feel the atmosphere in the room change as everyone sat a little straighter and the chatter faded off. Fighting back a smile, Rose turned to watch the Doctor study the various screen of data with an increasingly intense expression. His eyes swept over all the video calls which had gone silent and Rose could see the wheels turning in his head. There was a high tension in the room until Benton coughed and took a few steps towards the Doctor.

“Hello Doctor,” Benton greeted with a fond smile that the Doctor returned as he looked at the man.

“Brigadier Benton,” the Doctor replied with a soft look in his blue eyes, reaching out to shake Benton’s hand. “Is it odd to hear that?” he asked with a teasing smile.

“Very much so,” Benton admitted with a chuckle. “I have to keep myself from turning to look for the man himself.”

“Well glad to have you here,” the Doctor assured him before looking back at the screens. “Doesn’t look so bad right now.”

“Well the potential of losing nuclear weapons is always terrible,” Benton lectured with a hint of reproach. “But for now we’ve been able to keep diplomatic channels open to make sure that no one panics. Not sure how long we can keep the Americans calm though.” Benton gestured to one of the screens. “And unfortunately Israel just lost contact with a few of their nuclear weapons. If that
leaks out they may decide to use what they have to strike one of their less friendly neighbours before someone attacks them. And officially they don’t even have nuclear weapons.”

“Humans,” the Doctor muttered just loud enough for Rose and Benton to hear him. “Bloody apes.”

“I’m going to choose not to take offence at that,” Benton informed the Doctor calmly with a slightly raised eyebrow. “But any ideas in how Thane is doing it?”

“Are you sure it’s Thane?”

“No,” Rose answered before Benton could. “It might not be, we’re operating on that assumption due to a message that was sent to me personally. It was sort of a personal challenge and referenced things that Thane would know, but it could also have been someone with that information.”

“Any way of checking with the Judoon to make sure that Thane is still locked up?” Benton asked with cold anger in his voice.

“Not really, the Judoon wouldn’t feel any need to answer to humans,” the Doctor said tightly without any reference to if they’d answer to a Time Lord. “And to frank Thane is an intelligent blighter who might be able to give them the slip without them even knowing depending on where they tried to put him.”

“So any ideas on what that energy signal is?” Benton asked, folding his hands behind his back and straightening up. “I’ve got world leaders around the globe panicking over their empty quivers.”

“It should worry you lot that you have a phrase for when you lose your nuclear weapons,” the Doctor chided as irritation seeped into his voice. He strode forward and looked at the various screens with a sweep of his blue eyes. Rose stepped up next to him and the Doctor asked in a low voice. “What do you think?”

She was a bit surprised by the question, but Rose nibbled at her lip for a moment. “I think there is something else here. Thane prefers when his victim planets destroy themselves so he shouldn’t be planning on turning the weapons against us that would be breaking the rules with him causing the final destruction.” She paused and grimaced, “Unless he’s changing his mode of operation in order to challenge you.”

“Or you,” the Doctor added with a look her way. “Don’t underestimate yourself, Rose Tyler. Thane is very interested in you as well.”

“Yeah I know,” Rose sighed as she looked at the screens. “Any thoughts on that energy signature?”

“It’s similar to something I’ve seen before,” the Doctor admitted as he crossed his arms over his chest. “A special signal burst that temporarily charged the environment in an area which interfered with electrical devices. If that’s true then all he’s really doing is blocking phone lines and computers from working. Poor blokes are probably sitting in the dark in their bunkers completely safe, but with nothing working.”

“So he might just be trying to start a panic,” Rose offered carefully. “If you’re right then he can’t launch the weapons himself and none of the countries can launch those ones then maybe he’s betting on a leader panicking and ordering a first strike.”
“Maybe, but UNIT and the other agencies have stepped in as peacekeepers.”

“Which he may not have considered,” Rose added with her hands on her hips as she looked between the Doctor and the screens. “Or he’s letting them talk now and will try to then block those peaceful communications or there is something else going on and this is all a distraction.”

The Doctor beamed at her, watching her fondly and Rose almost preened under the affectionate look. Benton cleared his throat next them drawing the Doctor’s attention away from Rose. Benton gave Rose an apologetic look and she prayed that she wasn’t blushing.

Then she heard an odd high pitched noise and saw the Doctor tense up in the corner of her eye. Everything went dark around them and Rose froze in place. She could hear other people talking and moving slightly, but everyone seemed to be staying place. There was the sound of a mug falling to the ground a shattering followed by a curse. Rose could hear the sounds of people breathing and talking in low voices which were quickly getting louder and louder.

“The emergency generator will kick on in a moment,” Benton called over the crowd. “Everyone stay calm and don’t move. We don’t need any accidents.”

“Sir,” someone called across the room. “My mobile isn’t working. It won’t turn on, but I charged it this morning.”

“Mine too,” Another voice cried out followed by several more similar comments.

“Calm down,” Benton ordered sternly, his voice cutting through the dim. “Give the backup system a moment.”

But it stayed dark in the room even as everyone quieted down. The lack of windows in the underground bunker made everything pitch black and Rose was afraid of moving even a little bit. Carefully she reached out a hand and smiled when her fingers brushed the soft leather of the Doctor’s coat. He was moving his arm even as she brushed against it.

“Just a tick,” the Doctor muttered in a low voice.

Then a few moments later a soft greenish glow appeared in the room, but it was almost blinding to Rose as she found herself looking right at a glow stick. It was glowing brighter in the Doctor’s hand casting a strange green glow across the Doctor’s face. Rose smiled and received a wide grin in return. He shifted the glow stick to his left hand and gently caught Rose’s hand with his right one. A gentle tug pulled Rose closer to him and she felt herself relax slightly.

Lifting the light up, the Doctor tried to illuminate as much of the room as possible. Even with its limited range, the light seemed to have an instant calming effect on the room. Benton stepped closer to the Doctor and in a low voice asked, “It’s that energy signal isn’t it?”

“Probably,” the Doctor agreed with a nod. “Phones not working is a pretty good sign of that. It knocks out electrical devices like an electric magnetic pulse,” the Doctor explained.

“For how long?”

“Well that is the question isn’t it,” the Doctor answered with a shrug. He tugged on Rose’s hand as he started to move towards the door. “The TARDIS is shielded from things like this. I’ll see if I can find anything about how he’s doing this, it shouldn’t be possible with Earth technology.”
“He’s changing his MO,” Rose said softly as she looked around in the darkness. “That’s not a good sign.”

“Probably not,” the Doctor agreed with a quick nod. “Always dangerous when they’re driven to change their pattern. Very dangerous.”

Then suddenly the wall of screens began to flicker. All the lights remained off and the computers were silent and still, but one by one each screen turned on in rapid succession. A face that Rose hadn’t seen in some time appeared on the screens. Thane grinned at them, his high cheekbones standing out starkly and his dark eyes gleaming with excitement. His image was spread across all the screens making his face fill the whole wall and despite herself, Rose felt her heart sink in a small rush of fear.

“Ah the Doctor and Rose Tyler,” Thane drawled dramatically as he tilted his head to study them. “How utterly delightful. The legendary Time Lord and the Defender of Earth.”

“Thane,” the Doctor greeted shortly, crossing his arms over his chest. “What are you up to this time?”

“The great Doctor doesn’t know?” Thane asked with wide almost innocent looking eyes, but then he cackled in glee. “Well, I should think it is rather obvious that I’m going to destroy Earth. It is rather embarrassing to leave something so undone like this. I do have a reputation as a great planet killer to uphold.” Thane’s expression turned much nastier as he smirked at the Doctor. “After all if I’m ever going to surpass you as a mass murderer then I need to be impressive. Might as well start with destroying your favourite little rock.”

Rose wished she could take the Doctor’s hand, but with his crossed arms it wasn’t possible. Instead, she inched closer to him, hoping he’d be aware of her silent support. A moment later the Doctor dropped his arms and his hand gently took Rose’s.

“You can’t honestly believe that you can manage that,” the Doctor challenged though his voice sounded a little tight.

“I’ve been destroying worlds for years, Doctor,” Thane snapped back with a hiss. “You didn’t save those worlds!” Rose squeezed the Doctor’s hand. “Why are you so certain that you can save this one?”

“You won’t get them this way,” the Doctor replied sternly with steely blue eyes. “They’re not going for it. Humans have feared nuclear war a long time and won’t start one easily. The leaders are holding off and no one is going to start World War III, not today.”

“Ah yes, the good old days when I lead my victims to the end and sat back and watched them destroy themselves,” Thane said with a sigh and a wistful look. “But just for you and Rose, I’m going to take a slightly more active part in the story today, Doctor.”

“Active?” the Doctor asked, anger creeping into his voice. “Changing the rules of the game Thane?”

“It’s two against one after all Doctor,” Thane answered in a sing-song voice. “Can you find me? Can you stop me? So begins the countdown!”
Thane’s face vanished from the screens and was replaced on each screen with a countdown in bright red letters. Rose gasped softly as the counter began running down at rapid speed. They had less than an hour.
Thane Returns: In the Dark

Chapter Forty-Nine: Thane Returns: In the Dark

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

AN: This chapter is dedicated to the lovely Umbrae Calamitas who made me fanart! Check out a picture of our darling Rose and Doctor’s first kiss from The Defender of Earth. You remember that scene ‘one more thing.’ J You can find it at umbraecalamitas (period) deviantart (period) com (slash) art (slash) The-First-Kiss- 550349561. It is beautiful and made me so happy!

Thane’s face vanished from the screens and was replaced on each screen with a countdown in bright red letters. Rose gasped softly as the counter began running down at rapid speed. They had less than an hour.

Rose had barely a moment to process that worrying fact before the Doctor’s hand gripped hers tighter and he pulled her towards the staircase. They had only the low green light of the Doctor’s glow stick to light their way as behind them the staff of UNIT became to shout and give into disorder. As the Doctor pushed open the doorway to the stairs Rose heard Benton shouting for order and silently wished him good luck. She caught the door as they slipped into the staircase.

“All right Rose?” the Doctor asked as they paused on the landing.

“I’m fine, a bit worried, but fine,” Rose answered as calmly as she could manage. “Maybe a bit angrier than I’d like to be at Thane,” she admitted a moment later.

The Doctor rewarded her with a wide smile that made her heart skip a beat. It was really tempting to lean up and kiss him quickly, but she didn’t have that right. He wasn’t actually hers yet so instead Rose nodded to him with a brave expression and let the Doctor lead her down the stairs.
“What are we going to do?” Rose asked as she carefully navigated the staircase in the low light. “Have you got a plan?”

“We need some power for UNIT first,” the Doctor admitted. “I need them to track what is happening with the nuclear situation and UNIT going dark is going to send a whole lot of government into a panic.”

“It’s only one branch,” Rose pointed out quickly.

“Yeah but it is THE branch,” the Doctor reminded her with a chuckle. “No one’s got the experience of this lot.”

“True,” Rose agreed as the Doctor found the doorway into the science division with the hand that was holding the light stick. Even though he had to shift his hand a bit to grip the door handle the Doctor didn’t release her hand. “What are you thinking?” Rose asked him, suddenly grateful for the darkness that was helping to hide her blush.

“Get to the TARDIS and get some power restored to UNIT,” He told her as the door opened and the green glow flooded into the science division.

“Oh thank goodness,” Tosh’s quiet voice called out from across the room.

“It’s me and the Doctor, Tosh,” Rose called, unsure of how well they were illuminated.

“Rose? It’s Thane isn’t it? The emergency power didn’t come on,” Tosh exclaimed as she stumbled towards them.

The Doctor didn’t wait and tugged Rose towards the TARDIS. Faint light was shining out of the small windows at the top of the blue box, but not enough to properly illuminate anything. Rose smiled and pulled the longest chain around her neck free so she could grip her TARDIS key. Stepping forward, she squeezed the Doctor’s hand and carefully fit the key into the lock. The lock clicked as she turned the key and Rose withdrew the key with a smile.

“Do you always keep it with you?” the Doctor in an entirely too pleased voice.
“Course,” Rose answered with a cheeky smile that the Doctor would just be able to see. “You don’t leave a key to a time machine just lying about. Never know who might pick it up.”

“Too true, just imagine me coming back and finding a clown in the TARDIS,” the Doctor teased, reaching for the door latch.

As the Doctor opened the doors the warm golden light of the TARDIS control room spilt out into the science division room. A small sound of relief escaped Tosh and Rose felt a moment of sympathy for the quiet woman. After being locked up in that small dark cell by UNIT suddenly being in total darkness must have been terrifying. The Doctor strode into the TARDIS and tapped several different controls. The screen changed from the spiral clockwork designs that Rose had long since learned were Gallifreyan letters and shifted.

“Alright,” the Doctor muttered thoughtfully. “We need to find Thane, but we haven’t got much time.”

Rose nodded and pulled out her mobile, smiling in relief when she saw that it was still working.

“My phone is working,” she observed with a small frown. “That’s a bit odd.”

“It should work inside the TARDIS,” the Doctor explained. “These walls aren’t exactly easy for that signal to penetrate.” He glanced towards the doors with a frown. “I need to extend the field so we can keep those open,” he observed before rushing around the console and hitting other controls.

Rose, on the other hand, hit the speed dial for Spock and turned on the speaker phone. After only a single ring the Xylok answered the call.

“Rose,” Spock greeted. “I trust you are aware of the situation with several nuclear bunkers around the world?”

“I am,” Rose assured Spock. “Thane is changing his usual game Spock, he said he is going to be more active this time around. We have only an hour to find him and stop himself before he does… something.”

“I’ll begin a search and see if I can locate the source the mysterious signal bursts,” Spock said in his usual calm voice. “Sarah Jane sends her regards.”
“Give her my love,” Rose replied automatically before looking back over at the Doctor. “Anything else we can look for that might help us?”

“Probably set off the nukes himself,” the Doctor said as he pulled several long coils of cabling out from beneath the console. “Depending on the information that he has he could just restore power to those bunkers and give the order to set the nukes off. Given the staff is in the dark, literally, they would probably follow the orders and launch.”

Rose set the phone down on the console and stepped back to watch as the Doctor adjusted the console screen. Before Rose could say or do anything the Doctor opened up a latch in the grate beneath the TARDIS and dropped down. For a moment she watched him stretch out below and mess with some wires. Next to her, the screen flickered drawing her attention.

“Anything I can do to help?” she called down.

“Stay up there for now,” the Doctor called up. “Keep an eye on the screen for me, I’m trying to connect to some old systems down here. I don’t use the TARDIS as a generator very often. Old girl doesn’t like it.”

“She probably doesn’t like being called Old Girl,” Rose shot back with a teasing smile before reaching out and gently brushing the TARDIS central console. “Do you gorgeous?”

“Are you talking to my ship?” the Doctor asked in an honestly surprised voice.

“You do it all the time,” Rose pointed out with a smile. “Besides, she is gorgeous, wouldn’t have thought you’d disagree with that.”

“I’m not disagreeing with that,” the Doctor argued before he laughed. “You’re an odd one aren’t you Rose Tyler?”

“That’s probably why you like me so much,” Rose pointed out with a cheeky smile. “That and my winning personality.”

“You have other good qualities too,” the Doctor said in what started off as a teasing voice and
became a bit… shyer as he finished the thought.

Rose was saved from having to think of a response to his subtle flirting and was distracted from the temptation to jump around with a happy grin by the screen flashing several different colours. Calling down to the Doctor she described what she saw just before the screen reverted back to its usual blue with the symbols moving slowly.

There was a pleased shout from below and the Doctor quickly popped back out from underneath the TARDIS, this time with a few thick long cables around his shoulders. Reaching down, Rose helped unwind some of the cables and offered the Doctor her hand. He grabbed it with a smile and hauled himself off the grating.

“Alright,” the Doctor announced as he tapped a few places on the console screen. “Extend the shield a bit more… and there we go.”

He grabbed some of the cabling out of Rose’s arms and took it towards the door, pausing only a moment as he caught sight of Tosh standing by the entrance. She blushed and gave the Doctor a little wave. Grinning the Doctor nodded to her and stepped outside where he began to run out the cables. Rose moved after him and stepped out of the TARDIS to find the Doctor using the glow stick to light up the far wall with the cabling at his feet and the sonic screwdriver in hand.

“Ah excellent,” he said with a grin. “Sheetrock walls, this won’t be too messy then.” Before Rose could ask what he meant the Doctor slipped the sonic screwdriver back into his pocket and picked up a heavy piece of metal from the experiment table and smashed it against the wall. Rose and Tosh both jumped as the Doctor struck the wall again.

“What are you doing?” Tosh asked sharply.

“I need access to the wiring,” the Doctor answered as he gripped a chunk of the wall he’d loosened and tugged it out of the wall. “Come on you two, if we want to give the lot upstairs some power we have to break a few eggs.”

“Or a wall,” Rose couldn’t help but add, but she smiled and strode over to join the Doctor. With a smirk, she summoned her sword and carefully sliced into the wall with a shallow cut.

“A civilised weapon,” the Doctor remarked with a laugh before he pulled the section Rose had sliced loose. “There we are, good girl Rose.”
Without another word, the Doctor picked up the cables and pulled the sonic screwdriver back out. He gestured for Rose and Tosh to step back after handing Rose the glow stick. She held it close to the opening while keeping her torso turned away. The sonic screwdriver whirled and a few sparks flew as the Doctor joined the cable to the wires. Around them, Rose could smell ozone and grimaced at the thought of just what Benton was going to say to her.

But then the lights began to flicker above their heads. Rose breathed out carefully and tried to keep her excitement in check. Beneath her and the Doctor, the cables released an odd grumbling noise and she could hear the TARDIS making a slight whining sound. Then the lights turned on and Tosh’s computers began to hum as they restarted.

“You did it,” Rose said softly just before the sound of movement in the staircase made them all turn.

Malcolm came rushing into the science division and his face lit up as he caught sight of the Doctor.

“Oh, brilliant Doctor!” Malcolm cheered earning him an affectionate amused look from Kate who was on his heels.

“The Bridger thanks you Doctor,” Kate announced calmly. “He’s stuck upstairs trying to get everyone back to work and assure Geneva that we aren’t in the dark any longer.” She glanced towards Rose with a small smile. “What do you need from us?”

“Keep working on keeping the peace and anything you find about Thane let me know at once. I’m going to borrow Rose,” the Doctor told her as he gently pushed Rose towards the TARDIS. “And it should go without saying, but just in case: no one comes into the TARDIS without permission.”

“Yes Doctor,” Kate replied with a nod. “Thank you and please keep us informed of anything you find.”

“Alright, UNIT is upstairs working on the problem and trying to keep things calm,” the Doctor announced as they strode back into the TARDIS. “We need to find out where Thane is.”

“Have you got a plan?” Rose asked following on his heels. “I’m afraid we don’t know much about him, but he is very familiar with Earth and can hide easily.”
“Phone,” the Doctor said shortly and Rose pulled out her mobile with a frown. “Never thought I’d be doing this,” the Doctor muttered as he took Rose’s phone and pulled out a few small wires from behind the console screen. “Just remind the Xylok not to poke the TARDIS, she won’t like it.”

“He knows to focus,” Rose assured him, hoping that Spock wouldn’t get too curious. “His primary function is to protect Earth and I’m his primary controller.”

The Doctor glanced towards her with a smile. “Not Sarah Jane, it is in her attic.”

“I don’t remember Sarah Jane running the cabling and building the cooling system into that attic or building the terminal to house Spock,” Rose replied with a raised eyebrow. “Her role in that was handing me bottles of water and backing off when I got irritated with the ‘are you done yet’ questions.”

The Doctor chuckled and nodded to himself, “Sounds like her alright.” He gently connected the superphone to the cables. “How is her family?”

“Good, I think Johnny’s in New York right now, but Luke is doing brilliantly in school. Top of his classes, no surprise there and he’s got pretty good relations with most of his class. Sarah Jane has been working on a big story about some company in Edinburg so she’s been in and out of touch lately. You know how she gets when she smells something.”

“Yeah I remember, and your mum?”

“She’s fine,” Rose answered with a shrug. “Still pretty determined to not acknowledge aliens.”

“When did she find out about aliens?” the Doctor asked with a hint of confusion.

“Oh…uh yeah that was a while ago.” Rose replied quickly with a shrug, mentally kicking herself for not paying attention to what this Doctor knew. “Aliens attacked her at home and she wasn’t happy with me.”

“Sounds like you’ve been busy,” the Doctor chuckled, giving Rose a warm affectionate look before the console screen flickered and Spock’s glowing representation appeared on screen.
“Ah hello Rose, hello Doctor,” Spock said sounding a bit surprised. “Am I connected through the TARDIS?”

“Yes you are so behave yourself,” the Doctor told him sternly.

“Oh course Doctor, but it is quite fascinating to be in contact, even such a limited contact with a machine such as this. It is not often that a living computer such as myself encounters another form of technological life.”

“Wow you really did name him well didn’t you,” the Doctor remarked with a glance towards Rose.

“I selected my own name Doctor,” Spock informed him sounding a bit put out.

“Well alright Spock,” the Doctor said with authority, crossing his arms and looking at the screen with a very intense expression. “What have you got?”

“I remain unable to trace the origin point of the messages sent to Rose this morning,” Spock informed the Doctor bringing up copies of the two poems on the screen. “However, I have been tracking some interesting power outage reports in London.” The screen changed again and brought up a map of the London Riverside area with several blinking dots. “Nothing terribly unusual until you do this,” Spock said before the map pulled back to reveal a world map with thin tiny red lines leading from the dots in London to each of the black bases. Then the map zoomed back in and connected each of the red dots in London together with one little spot in the centre of the odd pattern at the convergence. “Whatever Thane is using seems to have a small local effect as well,” Spock informed them. “There is a closed down factory in the area.”

“Spock you are brilliant,” Rose cheered and even the Doctor looked a little impressed.

“Thank you, Rose, I have been working on the problem since you left this morning, I should hope that I had found something… though I must admit the dog did help.”

The Doctor beamed at that one and Rose hit his arm lightly.

“Right we know where we’ve got to go,” the Doctor said as he began to reach for the controls.
“Doctor!” Rose snapped, “We can’t take the TARDIS, UNIT will be powered down and we need them to keep things under control with the United Nations.”

A sour look crossed the Doctor face, but he pulled his hand back from the controls. “Fine,” he muttered with one more look at the screen before he disconnected the phone and tossed it back to Rose. “Have you got your car?”

“No,” Rose replied with a shake of her head before a small smile spread over her face. “I came in by helicopter this morning.”

The Doctor barely contained his grin.
Rose shifted in the small helicopter seat as they suddenly turned and the entire thing was suddenly at an angle. Her stomach was beginning to feel queasy as the Doctor took her hand and gave it a small squeeze. Around them were four UNIT personnel in full combat gear who were watching the Doctor with interest. In the front of the helicopter, she could hear the pilot talking over the radio with HQ with the co-pilot.

"Are we there yet?" Rose asked as she tightened her grip on the Doctor’s hand.

"Never pegged you for getting air sick," the Doctor chuckled.

"I usually fly in airplanes," Rose replied tightly. "I can’t see anything, keep getting knocked around and I’m facing the back so my stomach is being sloshed backwards. This morning I was at least facing forward."

The Doctor chuckled warmly at her and looked out the window. He smiled and tilted his head outside. "We’re almost there, just need to land."

Sure enough a few minutes later the helicopter touched down with a thump. Rose closed her eyes and breathed deeply, willing her body to calm and settle. The Doctor gave her hand another squeeze before letting it go and pulling open the door. Two of the soldiers jumped out ahead of them and checked around the copter.

"Clear!" Someone shouted and Rose opened her eyes slowly.

They all climbed out of the copter and Rose’s knees shook as she stepped out and back to Earth. She took another deep breath and followed the Doctor away from the helicopter, already wondering if she could just get someone to pick her up after this was all over. Pushing the thought away, Rose forced herself to look around and see where they were.

Rose frowned as she looked up at the huge empty building. The old brick structure was at least six stories tall though some of that might just be open space. Tall windows were either boarded up, empty or had remnants of windows in the form of sharp shards of glass stuck in frames. Trash was blowing around the area and catching on the chain link fence that surrounded the place. Rose looked behind them at the busy street where cars and trucks were moving quickly. She could see people going into and coming out of nearby buildings and could hear the thrum of machines. Yet in the midst of all of that, there was this one large empty abandoned building.

"We should split up to search the area, sir," one of the privates suggested to the Doctor. Rose glanced at the name on his uniform: Davis. "We’ll cover more ground. I suggest that three of us go
with each of you.”

“I’d prefer Rose to stay with me,” the Doctor responded with a cautious look towards the dark building.

“If we do find Thane you and Thorn are the ones with the experience to stop him,” Davis pointed out carefully.

“Let’s see what we find inside first,” the Doctor replied before he straightened his leather coat, grabbed Rose’s hand and began to walk towards the main entrance.

Rose let herself be led by the Doctor as the UNIT soldiers moved around them, all of them with their weapons at the ready. The Doctor shot a distasteful look at the weapons and glared at the back of Private Davis. Squeezing his hand gently, Rose tried to silently comfort him. Thankfully he said nothing as they reached the doorway. One of the soldiers stepped forward and pushed the large metal door open. There was a terrible squeaking sound that made Rose shudder.

One by one they stepped into a large entry hall that must have once been gorgeous based on the dirty stone floor beneath her feet and the dingy stone walls. Now, however, it showed signs of water damage, exposure and having been used as someone’s squatting home. Piles of papers and rags were in the corners away from the wind and a lingering smell in the air made Rose feel a bit ill again. Everything was quiet and Rose frowned as they began to move forward slowly.

The place smelled of decay and took Rose back to those terrible dreams caused by the Nightmare Man. Through the doorways, she could see into almost empty old offices. Some had small cots set up and others had piles of trash. Rose was at a loss for why the building was empty in the middle of an industrial park. Nothing looked that old and the soft ticking of a clock made her look up at a large round face clock that was still ticking.

“This place is scheduled to be torn down in two months,” one of the men said in a low voice before he checked in another one of the offices. “Gives me the creeps.”

“We need to find Thane,” the Doctor said as he sniffed at the air. “Or at the very least we need to confirm that he isn’t here. We don’t have much time until whatever he’s going to do.”

“Are we sure he’s going to do anything?” one of the men asked.

“No,” Rose answered before the Doctor could. “But do you really want to risk it. Last time he was confirmed to be on Earth we lost people.”

“I remember,” Private Davis replied in a half growl.

They came to a split in the corridor with one corridor heading to the right and the other to the left. Rose glanced towards the Doctor and noticed him glancing between the two options with a frown. He looked back at her and gave Rose a small smile.

“Looks like splitting up is how this is going to work,” the Doctor said pleasantly though his jaw was a bit tight.

“I’ll be fine,” Rose assured him softly with a smile.

The Doctor looked at her for a moment before he nodded. Rose gestured for a few of the men to
follow her down the left corridor leaving the Doctor the right one. She’d barely taken two steps away from the Doctor when she heard a soft click. Frowning she turned back towards the Doctor. There was a soft beep as the Doctor and two of the soldiers stepped forward followed by another clicking sound. The Doctor looked up just before the sound of something heavy scrapping overhead was heard. Rose looked up and saw a large shape moving towards them. A soft cry of alarm escaped her and she started to move just as a hand gripped her arm.

Rose was flung down as the metal slab came crashing down. She hit the ground with a painful smack and felt the ground shake beneath her as the slab struck the floor. Dust filled the air and for a moment it was hard to breathe. Rose coughed and climbed up onto her knees to look around. She turned and saw the metal slab filling the corridor behind her and two of the UNIT men who were on the ground. They began to move and Rose stumbled to her feet.

“Doctor!” She called taking a small step towards the piece of metal that was blocking the corridor. “Doctor?”

“I’m fine,” the Doctor shouted back, his voice muffled. Someone knocked on the metal wall from the other side. “We’re not going to get through this. Can you get out of the building Rose?”

Rose looked behind them, but nothing had triggered. “Yeah we can,” Rose answered before she frowned. “No, I’m not leaving Doctor.”

“Fine,” the Doctor replied gruffly. “Keep an eye out for traps. We don’t know how long Thane has been here.”

“Yeah…” Rose agreed nervously as she looked at the two soldiers with her. They exchanged nervous looked and Rose swallowed. “Be careful Doctor!” She called before jumping away from the metal slab. She gestured down the corridor and forced a smile. “Onwards, we haven’t got much time.”

“Let me lead,” Private Davis said as he stepped out ahead of Rose and started walking down the long corridor.

Rose took a deep breath and followed with the other soldier, Private Adams staying close behind her. The corridor suddenly seemed much more dangerous and longer than it had been before. Private Davis kept them moving at a slow pace and Rose watched beside Private Adams as he sniped a trip line halfway down the corridor.

“Stay back a bit,” Davis told them though Rose didn’t need to be told that.

The door to the stairwell was only a few feet past another motion sensor trap that took both of them to remove while Rose looked back towards the metal divider. Then carefully they opened the door which squeaked loudly and made them all flinch. Davis took a deep breath and looked towards Rose before he stepped into the stairwell. After a moment he called them forward and they started their descent down towards the main factory floor.

It was a massive room several stories tall with high windows that were all covered with sheets of metal. High lights flickered and Rose could see an area of light far across the room. Everything was cold and dark and Rose thought she caught a glimpse of her own breath. Large machines that had a layer of dirt on them towered over Rose’s head and cast long shadows over the small aisle. A loud humming sound was audible as they moved forward slowly coming from the far side of the room.
“Generators,” Rose whispered to Davis who nodded his understanding.

Looking around Rose caught sight of a high door on the far side of the room that led out to a catwalk over their heads and a staircase down. She breathed out slowly as she searched it for any sign of the Doctor and the other soldiers, but it didn’t look like they’d gotten there yet. As they continued forward Rose frowned as she noticed piles of loose equipment, scrap metal and even some bricks from the building itself filling the gaps between the machines. It was forcing them on one path towards the humming sound and Rose couldn’t help but be nervous at that.

The barricades kept them turning corners and every so often Davis or Adams would pause to check a potential trap. Rose was losing track of the number as she looked up and tried to figure out if there was any way to safely navigate above the machines. Suddenly the room opened with the rows of machines coming to a stop as they came around the last corner. From behind the two soldiers, Rose caught a glimpse of a figure moving around in front of a long dark mess of controls. Before she could say anything the two soldiers raised their weapons and marched forward. There was a click and Rose jumped back as a flash of light nearly blinded her. Something struck her and her body tightened, her muscles cried out in pain and she couldn’t breathe.

Collapsing to the floor, Rose gasped for air and pressed her cheek against the cool cement. Rose grimaced at the pain radiating through her side and in a haze wondered if she’d cracked some ribs. Through her blurry vision, Rose could see Thane at the controls of the messy massive system he constructed. Three big screen TVs hung above his head showing large global maps with flashing dots that filled Rose with a sense of dread. A crackling laugh made her shiver and Thane begins to dance around, clapping his hands like a gleeful child. His eyes met hers for a moment and Rose fought back the urge to curl into herself.

Forcing herself to look away from Thane, Rose looked towards the two men who’d been in front of her. Smoke rose off of Davis’ chest and a lightning-like pattern covered half of his face. Rose doesn’t even need to reach for his pulse to know that he is dead. Her eyes jump up and a soft cry escaped her at the sight of the small rig that had dropped down over them. It is still sparking and Rose felt a rush of bile into her mouth followed by rage. Looking back to Thane, Rose found him grinning with a smug glint in his eyes. Behind him, the lights on the map flashed faster and faster and Rose caught sight of the timer counting down. They were almost out of time.

Thane chuckled at her expression and turned his attention back to the controls. Her hand moved before Rose is fully aware of it. She couldn't feel her legs and pushed down the sense of terror that threatened to overtake her. Then she felt her fingers tighten, almost painfully, around Private Davis’ holster. Her fingers were sore and sluggish from the electric shock, but she was able to pull open the clasp. Twisting her hand around the firearm, she tugged it out roughly.

It was heavy and too large for her hand. The muscles of her fingers stretched painfully around it. Rose's hand shook and her arm was barely able to support the weight of the weapon, but Rose forced her hand to steady as she brought the firearm forward. Thane laughed loudly, his giggles becoming more and more manic as he reached to press more buttons. The big red one under the plastic casing lights up brightly and flashes, drawing Thane’s attention.

Thane flipped open the cover and placed his hand over the button, his whole body vibrating with eagerness. Rose squeezed the trigger and flinched at the sharp loud noise that rang through her whole body. Pain jolted through her arm due to the bad shooting position. The bullet struck some of the controls to the right of Thane and he spun with wide shocked eyes. Rose squeezed the trigger again as Thane reached towards the red button. She didn’t wait to see where this one hit, she
squeezed again and there was another blast.

Thané crumpled to the ground with dark red blood splashing out on the cement floor around him. Thané twisted his body, tilting his head back so he could look at Rose. He smiled a bloody smile as his mouth filled with blood and chuckled painfully. A soft garbled word that Rose couldn’t hear escaped him. For a moment she was frozen as she stared at Thané. His hand twitched and he tried to pull himself towards the controls. Then he stopped and collapsed back against the floor.

Everything was still and Rose looked up at the screens, barely able to breathe. She set the gun down on the floor and pushed it away from her, letting it slide across the floor with a metallic scratching noise. A moment later she heard another door open to the right of Thané’s controls and twisted her head to look over there.

“Rose!” the Doctor called as he rushed into view with the two soldiers next to him.

“Doctor!” Rose grimaced in pain even as relief filled her. “Thané’s down, but-”

“Stay still,” the Doctor ordered. He turned to the controls.

The Doctor inspected them for a moment as the two UNIT soldiers moved towards Rose. They paused and examined the sparking rig for a moment. One of them looked at the two bodies next to Rose with a defeated expression but knelt down to check their pulses. Rose felt a rush of bile in her mouth, but swallowed it down and closed her eyes to hold back tears of frustration. Lowering her head, Rose told herself to keep breathing and focused and every breath.

Then, sometime later, Rose heard the soft whine of the sonic screwdriver and looked up to see the last of the sparks fade. The Doctor sighed and shook his head before he stepped across the threshold. He knelt down next to her and Rose could almost feel his eyes sweeping over her.

“Easy Rose,” the Doctor told her in a soft voice that is even gentler than the first time they met when she was only eleven years old. “I’ve got you,” he whispered as he shifted and reached for her.

Tears were still stinging her eyes as the Doctor gently lifted her off the ground. The smell of leather mixed with a hint of grease and that strange dusty smell that Rose always associated with the scent of time enveloped her as she laid her head against the Doctor’s shoulder.

“We walked into a trap,” Rose muttered in a low voice as one hand comes up to grab at the Doctor’s leather coat.

“Yeah,” the Doctor sighed as adjusts her carefully and began to walk towards the doorway, navigating his way through the machines. “We did, but it’s over now. He can’t threaten Earth again.”

“I don’t like guns,” Rose whispered against the Doctor’s coat. “I know I use a sword and Thané’s not the first alien I’ve killed so that’s a bit stupid…”

“It’s not stupid,” the Doctor assured her softly and she feels dry lips brush her forehead. “I don’t like them either.”

“I hurt all over,” Rose sniffed.
“You got electrocuted Rose,” he explained as they begin to climb the stairs, his breath tickling her ear. “You’ll be alright though.”

“They weren’t.”

“No, they got the worst of it, I’m sorry about that, but I’m glad you’re alive.”

“I’m glad you’re alive too,” Rose managed to say with a sigh, tightening her grip in the Doctor’s jacket. “Not ready for you to regenerate yet.”

“Are you saying you’ll be ready for it one day?”

“Well, your next body is pretty cute,” Rose teased as her body finally began to relax. “But I don’t want you getting hurt that bad. Only like regeneration cause it keeps you alive.”

“You are a strange girl,” the Doctor said fondly as he carried Rose up the stairs.

“Uh, Doctor?” Rose asked as they returned up to the office area. “Where are you going?”

“Let UNIT handle the mess, we’re going outside. The rest of the gang should be here soon with normal traffic.”

“It’s not easy getting a military convoy through London,” Rose agreed with a faint nod.

The Doctor looked down at her with a small frown. “Benton had better have brought medics,” he remarked.

“I’ll be fine,” Rose protested, snuggling against the Doctor’s leather jacket. She was feeling a bit light headed and it was difficult to keep things straight.

“You need medical attention,” the Doctor countered as they walked past the metal slab. “Glad he didn’t block off the exits.”

“Why would he? Thane knew we wouldn’t leave,” Rose chided. “Probably only trapped the place to slow us down or see if… you know he could kill you.”

Sure enough just as they stepped outside several UNIT jeeps rolled up. Several men were at the gates opening them up so the vans could roll past. The Doctor didn’t set Rose down as he waited for them to drive up to them. Rose watched for a moment before sighing and setting her head back against the Doctor’s shoulder. He was right, UNIT could clean up the mess.

“Yeah,” Rose breathed. “I’m done for the day.”

She closed her eyes and breathed out slowly, letting the last of the tension drain away. Her legs still felt numb and she was very sleeping with an aching side, but the smell of the Doctor and the sound of his voice as he spoke with one of the soldiers was so soothing. Rose felt him carrying her a little further, but then as he laid her down on a bed of some kind Rose grabbed his hand and held onto it as she gave into unconsciousness.
Rose gradually felt the nightmare slipping away as the sounds of thrumming machines, distant footfalls and paper being flipped began to make themselves known. Vague images of ruined buildings and the grinning Nightmare Man slipped away and she sighed gratefully. Her body felt heavy and sore, but Rose forced her eyes to open. Above her with a plain white ceiling with small round lights that were off. Breathing deeply, Rose experimentally moved her fingers. They felt a bit stiff but responded normally.

She was still in the bed for a few more moments, listening to the sound of the pages fluttering in the air. Then there was a thump, a sigh and then the sound started up again. Carefully Rose turned her head and looked towards the sound. The Doctor was sitting in a chair next to her bed with a pile of papers in his large hands that he was flipping through. A table next to him was stacked with a couple of books and more piled of clipped papers. Rose smiled as the Doctor finished flicking through the pages and set them down with a bored sigh. A soft giggle escaped her, drawing the Doctor’s attention to her.

“Welcome back,” the Doctor said warmly with a growing smile.

“Thanks,” Rose replied, noting that her throat was dry and sounded weak. She looked down at her arms and noticed the IVs leading into her arm. Grimacing she looked back at the Doctor and asked, “How long have I been out?”

“About twenty hours,” the Doctor said kindly, reaching over and laying his hand over her own. “You were electrocuted Rose, do you remember that?”

“Yeah,” Rose answered after a moment. “I remember… oh right… I killed Thane.”

“He was about to activate a nasty order across the globe to launch a series of nuclear missiles,” the Doctor explained gently. “UNIT is looking into how he managed to get the codes, but this time he was ready to trigger the destruction of a world himself.”

“Did he have a ship nearby?” Rose asked him with a frown, remembering the odd almost hysterical look in Thane’s eyes before she shot him.

“Nothing that UNIT’s found,” the Doctor informed her. “Thane seems to have been ready to die with Earth. You didn’t see it, but the walls near the controls were covered with ramblings. Thane had completely lost it.”
“Do we know how he escaped the Shadow Proclamation?”

“Not yet, I preferred to stay on Earth, but your Mister Spock has been scanning communications in the solar system to see if anyone knows.”

Rose sighed but nodded her understanding as she hoisted herself upright on the bed. The Doctor stood up and went across the room only to return with a small glass of water. Rose took it gratefully and took a few small sips to ease her dry mouth. Sighing in relief, she adjusted the pillows for a moment and then lounged back on them. Underneath the blanket, she wiggled her toes and bent her legs. Thankfully everything seemed to be working properly and there was only a dull pain in her muscles.

“No permanent damage,” the Doctor assured Rose with a smile. “You’ll be stiff for a few days, but you’ll be fine.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” Rose informed him with a small smile. “I always assumed that electrocution was worse than that.” She flinched slightly at the memory of the two dead men and the smoke rising off of their bodies.

“It can be, but your medical cocktail is very advanced,” the Doctor offered with a gesture towards the series of bags that were feeding into her IV and a sympathetic look.

“Advanced huh?” Rose repeated with a small smile. “Well, thanks for that.”

“I’ve travelled with a lot of people over the years, you know more than a handful of them, but you set records for jeopardy friendly.”

“Yeah well I loathe doing the damsel in distress thing,” Rose replied with a small shrug that only made the Doctor’s grin widen.

She took a sip of water once again and sat up a little straighter, gently rotating to her shoulders as a woman in a white lab coat walked in and smiled at her. The woman was a bit too cheerful and Rose shared a suffering look with the Doctor who just smiled. But he stayed with Rose even though the reflex tests, making her feel much better about the situation.

Two hours later she had her clothes back and released from the medical wing. Her steps were still a little sluggish from her sore muscles, but it was getting a little easier to move with each step. The Doctor’s hand was holding hers tightly and instead of his usual long strides, he seemed to be deliberately walking slowly. Instead of taking the stairs up to the science department from medical they took the lift. If the UNIT forces in the hallway were surprised to see them together then no one showed it. Still Rose was grateful when they reached the science division and found Tosh humming softly as she tapped at her computer.

Rose noted that the cabling from the TARDIS was gone and that the blue box was closed up. Vaguely she wondered just how long she’d been out in medical and if they’d kicked the Doctor out for a bit. Across from the TARDIS, the wall was still sliced open and Rose could see a stack of sheetrock and a few jars of patch waiting on the floor. The Doctor released Rose’s hand and walked over to the TARDIS with a smile.

“Thanks for looking after the TARDIS,” the Doctor told Tosh as she tentatively approached them.

The small Asian woman nodded and smiled meekly before saying, “Of course Doctor. It was easy,
everyone behaved themselves during the crisis.”

“Glad to hear,” the Doctor said with a nod, patting the TARDIS as Benton entered the room with Kate Stewart.

“Rose,” Kate said warmly. “Good to see you up and about. How are you feeling?”

“A bit tired,” Rose admitted with a shrug. “But that should pass soon according to the doctors.” Rose looked at Benton. “How many deaths?”

“Just the two men who got hit full blast,” Benton told her gently with a soft look in his eyes. “Otherwise, there were no casualties in our operations.”

“Doctor,” Kate greeted, turning their attention away from the depressing subject. “The General sends his regards.”

“Tell Alistair hi for me,” the Doctor replied with a little smirk. “And warn him that I might stop by for a visit.”

“I’m sure he’d enjoy that,” Kate told him with a smile.

“And keep an eye on Rose,” the Doctor ordered with a nod her direction. “Jeopardy friendly here seems to be trying for some kind of record.”

While the words were teasing, Rose could pick up the underlying fondness and worry. So she settled on just punching him lightly in the arm. The Doctor frowned at her and rubbed at his arm earning a smile from Rose. She could feel a blush beginning to work its way up to her face and quickly looked back at Kate who looked like she was struggling not to say something.

“We’ll make sure that she gets back to Cambridge safely for you Doctor,” Benton assured him with a small fond smile and a little glint in his eye. Rose shot him a warning look. “Thank you for the help today, would have been ugly without you.”

“Glad to help Benton,” the Doctor replied fondly as he shook the Brigadier’s hand. “Just… keep an eye out. Thane might have been crazy, but something was off about this whole thing.”

“We’ll stay vigilant,” Benton promised and he nodded towards Rose. “And we know how to get into contact with you.”

“This is worse than when I gave you lot that signal system,” the Doctor huffed only for Benton to smile.

“Well you never did resign as our Scientific Advisor Doctor,” Benton pointed out with a chuckle. “And we’d hate for you to get bored.”

“If boredom becomes an issue I’ll pick up Rose,” the Doctor countered with a glance towards Rose. “She’s always finding trouble.”

“You’ve noticed that too huh?” Benton asked looking towards Rose with a grin. “Well, thankfully she’s pretty good at getting out of it.” Benton paused and before the Doctor could say anything snapped to attention and saluted him. “Thank you again, sir, and take care.”

Benton chuckled and gave Rose one last glance before he left the room with Kate. Rose caught a few low words of their conversation but turned her attention to the Doctor. He was pulling out his key and unlocked the door to the TARDIS.

“So,” Rose asked with a widening smile. “Will you actually head to when I graduate this time?” she teased, tilting her head and grinning.

“Can’t say for sure,” the Doctor replied patting the side of the TARDIS fondly. “You know this old girl, she goes where she likes.”

“You calling her old girl probably doesn’t help with that,” Rose countered as she stepped forward and tenderly ran a hand down the corner of the TARDIS while the Doctor smiled.

“What would you recommend Rose Tyler?”

“Gorgeous, dazzling maybe.”

“You’ll give her a complex,” the Doctor countered shaking his head.

“That would just help her match her pilot.”

He laughed and Rose grinned in response. The Doctor stepped forward and wrapped his arms around gently and Rose laid her head on his shoulder, grateful for both the hug and his care not to hurt her.

“I’ll be alright,” Rose promised softly, patting his arm. “Thanks for coming though.”

“Course,” the Doctor breathed, holding her a little tighter. Then he seemed to realise what he was doing and let her go, almost jumping back. “Until next time Rose Tyler, do try to stay out of trouble.”

“Until next time Doctor,” Rose replied with a nod. “Take care of yourself.”

The Doctor gave her one last look before vanishing into the TARDIS. Rose reminded herself not to take offence at his sudden desire to escape. Instead, she stepped back from the TARDIS and watched as it dematerialized.

“Is he always like that with you?” Tosh suddenly asked from behind her and Rose spun to face Tosh while blushing, having forgotten that she was there.

“Uh yeah, sort of…” Rose replied trying to keep her blush under control. “Good to see you Tosh, but I should see about getting home.”

“Bye Rose,” Tosh called behind her as Rose hobbled over to the lift and slipped back inside.

Blushing, Rose gently stretched her arms and smiled as she noted that moving them was less tight. She was breathing a little easier and leaned against the side of the lift to stretch out of her legs for a moment. The lift opened with a soft ding and Rose walked out around the corner to find someone who could help her get out of the base.
Benton was in the corridor, looking at a report in his hand. Stepping towards him, Rose paused when she heard someone coming. Rose smiled as Colonel Frost walked around the far corner, her shoes clicking against the tiled floor with a ring of authority. Her blond hair was piled up in her usually military style bun, but her expression was tense and worried as she glanced down at the report in her hands. Rose stilled and stayed where she was as Frost stopped next to Benton.

“I’m sorry sir, but you need to see this,” Colonel Frost informed him tensely as she handed the report to Benton. “This is everything we know about a break-in that just occurred in the Black Vault. They accessed it at 16:19.”

“What do you mean someone accessed the Black Vault?” Benton asked in a low voice all but glaring at the colonel. “How could something like that happen? The place is a fortress within a vault. We haven’t even finished it yet?”

Rose frowned, wondering what the pair were talking about as she peeked out a little more from around the corner.

“I’m sorry sir, but when the power flashed out someone gained access to the archive. We’re not sure how they knew that the power would go off, but thanks to Thane’s energy scrambler none of the backup systems were working.”

“Did we lose anything?” Benton demanded sounding very stressed and worried.

“No sir, thankfully the Doctor restored power to the grid before they got far in. Our cameras caught only a brief sight of the intruders. They were dressed all in black without any identifying marks. Well trained and well-armed, but they vanished before we could move in.” Frost shrugged slightly. “Thankfully we haven’t moved much into the vault.”

“Maybe Geneva will take this as one more reason not to move the Archives,” Benton grumbled. “It’s too tied into our own defences.”

“You and General Lethbridge-Stewart have been quite vocal about the transfer,” Frost observed calmly. “Despite the vault downstairs having better security systems.”

“The most dangerous things that shouldn’t be on Earth do not belong below one of the most populous cities in the world,” Benton grumbled as he flipped through his report. “After all they wouldn’t have been able to get into the present Archive, it had power.” Benton paused and handed the report back to Frost. “It seems that they knew about Thane’s black out technology,” Benton observed in a quiet voice. “Perhaps they are even the answer to how Thane stayed hidden from us on Earth and where his tech came from. Stewart reported that the computer systems Thane was using were quite advanced, a prototype stolen from Munich two months ago.”

“You think humans helped him?” Colonel Frost asked incredulously with a look of anger taking over her normally collected face. “But he almost destroyed-”

“Either they didn’t know what he was going to do or they figured we’d stop him or they had a plan in place to stop him,” Benton said firmly before he sighed deeply. “Anything on how the hell Thane got access to the nuclear codes for all of NATO?”

“Nothing yet sir, but it looks like it may have been a leftover bit of coding from his blackout virus. He could have used that as a back door or… well, again he could have had help from our mysterious attackers.”
“Any idea what they were after?”

“There aren’t many items in the vault yet sir, only a handful of newer acquisitions, but we don’t know what any of that stuff does so it’s hard to say what they were moving in for.”

“But they were able to navigate in the Vault without any light,” Benton said thoughtfully. “That implies that they had special tech shielded from Thane’s energy scrambler.”

“Maybe sir, obviously the cameras caught them with some lights, but we don’t know if those were on before the cameras were restored or not.”

“Bloody hell,” Benton muttered. “I remember when things were a bit more peaceful and we didn’t have an alien problem each month.”

“Yes sir,” Frost said awkwardly.

“Alright if we are dealing with more alien black-market soldiers when I want an eye kept on Tyler,” Benton ordered before he rubbed his eyes. “That girl has access to some major alien technology.”

“Not to mention the TARDIS and the Doctor,” Frost added with a sigh and a slight smile.

“If these people know about the Black Archives we should assume that they know about Thorn and the Doctor. Brief Smith on the situation, just the basics and put him on protection detail for Tyler. The Doctor doesn’t stay on Earth enough to be a real target, but Rose does.”

“Thorn won’t like that, especially if you don’t tell her,” Frost reminded him carefully. “She’s rather independent.”

“She’s as stubborn as a mule,” Benton muttered before he sighed. “I’ll try to get clearance for her to be informed of the Black Archives. In the meantime make sure that memories get wiped where needed and I’ll see what kind of cover story I can come up with for Rose.”

Taking that as her cue, Rose slipped away from her place by the wall and headed back towards the infirmary. She wished that the Doctor hadn’t already left. He probably knew what this vault and archive they were talking about was or could guess more than she could. It was obviously some kind of protected collection of alien items with some potentially very dangerous pieces of technology.

“Rose!” Mickey’s voice called from down the hall. She looked up to see Mickey still dressed in civilian clothes heading down the hall towards her. “Thank god,” he breathed stepping forward and hugging her gently. “Are you alright? I was at the Welsh base when they alerted me that you’d been hurt.”

“They alert you now too?” Rose asked, trying to sound natural despite knowing why they had called him.

“Strangely they don’t seem to want to call your Mum,” Mickey said with a chuckle as he pulled out a set of keys. “Come on then how about I drive you back to Cambridge.”

“You could just take me to the station,” Rose suggested as Mickey began to steer her out.
“I’d rather drive you,” Mickey replied with a soft smile. “Haven’t gotten to spend much time with my best girl lately.”

Rose could feel her resolve slipping at the honest and affectionate answer. She nodded and sighed to herself as Mickey grinned and escorted her out. However, Rose knew that she wouldn’t be able to stop wondering about just who the new mysterious would-be thieves were. Thane was dead, but apparently, something new was already preparing to take his place as a threat. Maybe Benton had a point about her life.
Mystery of Orginx: The Signal

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Fifty-Two: Mystery of Orginx: The Signal

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

…………………..

Rose Tyler smiled as she stepped into Sarah Jane’s warm sunlit attic, breathing in the fresh summer air drifting in through the open windows. Mister Spock was open with his screen showing its usual screensaver looking design. Collapsed on the couch like an awkward little puppy pile were Luke, Clyde and Rani all of them looking down at their phones with interest.

“Hello,” Rose called as she walked into the room only to not get an answer from the humans on the sofa. “Hi,” she tried again.

“Hello Mistress Rose,” K-9 greeted as he rolled over to her. “How are you today?”

“I’m fine K-9 and thank you for the greeting,” Rose replied before looking towards Spock. “Hello to you Spock.”

“Hello Rose, I apologise, but I’ve been attempting to determine what has the children so fascinated.”

Chuckling, Rose walked forward and looked over the back of the sofa to look at the phones. All of them had the recent commercial for the new Originx computer.

“Oh is that getting launched soon?” Rose asked, knocking Clyde lightly on the head.

“Hey!” the boy cried, rubbing his head and frowning as he looked up at her. “Oh, hi Rose when did you get here?”

“Glad to see you lot mind your surroundings,” Rose teased before tapping Rani and Luke on their shoulders.

“Rose!” Luke called with a wide grin. He jumped up and abandoned his phone on the table before walking around the sofa to hug her.

“Nice to see you too,” Rose chuckled as she hugged the boy. “I missed you,” she informed him gently.

Stepping back, Rose looked Luke over with a smile. The boy was already inching towards being taller than her though Rani was still taller than both boys. Luke looked much more settled in a pair of jeans and a t-shirt for some band that Rose was unfamiliar with. He was standing relaxed and naturally with a smile on his face, a big change from the nervous newly created boy that Rose had
“You look good Luke,” Rose said fondly which made the boy’s smile widen.

“How were your finals?” Rani asked as she also got up and came over to hug her.

Rose returned the hug warmly before releasing the girl and glancing her over as well. Rani had grown at least another inch and Rose had the sneaking suspicion that neither Luke nor Clyde were ever going to catch up with her. There was a pencil tucked into Rani’s ponytail and Rose wondered just what bits of journalism wisdom Sarah Jane had been sharing with her ‘apprentice’ lately. Before she answered Rani’s question, Rose stepped around her to give Clyde a quick hug. He looked like he was doing well too and Rose surveyed the three friends with a smile.

“They went fine, nothing very impressive or surprising,” Rose replied before she turned her attention back to Luke. “Though your grandfather did try to pull a fast one on me.”

“And that is why I’m looking at Oxford for uni,” Luke responded with a totally straight face. “I’m going to visit them next week though, it’ll be neat staying at their house for a bit.”

“Trust me, they’re looking forward to it, in fact, it was all Barbara talked about at our last dinner,” Rose teased as she turned to Rani. “What about you lot? School go alright?”

“Luke was top of the class as usual,” Clyde replied with a roll of his eyes. “Rani did really well too.”

“Clyde’s being modest,” Rani said with a smile. “He did really well in maths this year. My dad was in shock for two days,” Rani teased with a look towards Clyde. “Even admitted over dinner that he was proud of you.”

“I can be the class clown, draw comic books and still manage school thanks,” Clyde huffed. “But at least you dad didn’t accuse me of cheating or something.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Rani chided gently. “You two might not always get on, but he knows you’re a good honest sort.”

“Still doing your comic books then?” Rose asked curiously with a smile. “What’s the latest one about?”

Clyde exchanged a look with Rani and Luke who looked ready to laugh as his discomfort. Rose glanced between them, wondering if she’d stumbled onto some odd teenage thing that she’d forgotten.

“Uh… is it something I should worry about?”

“No!” Clyde insisted before he scuffed his foot against the floorboard. “It’s about this college student who battles aliens.”

Rose laughed and beamed at Clyde. “I’m flattered,” she told him before winking at Rani.

“Alright, Luke come on!” Sarah Jane’s voice called up the stairs just before the woman herself strode into the room with Johnny right behind her. “Oh, Rose I didn’t know you were here.”
“Just arrived,” Rose assured her stepping forward with open arms.

The two women hugged warmly and Sarah Jane stepped back to give Rose an assessing look. Ian had somehow found out about Rose being electrocuted and gossip that he was had informed the whole bloody companion’s club. Rose personally figured that Benton had told Ian, the two seemed to have an odd little friendship developing. It worried Rose and would probably horrify the Doctor.

“How are you feeling?” Sarah Jane asked her seriously.

“I’m fine,” Rose assured Sarah Jane. “Really you lot can stop worrying so much. The Doctor gave me a boost when I was receiving medical care.”

“We just worry, you are jeopardy friendly after all,” Sarah Jane said with a smile.

“Fine, so what’s going on over here?”

“I recently completed a total backup of K-9’s database,” Spock informed Rose seriously. “Should you ever decide to get rid of the dog.”

“Because a nonmobile unit is clearly superior,” K-9 retorted with a hint of computer sarcasm.

“Ah,” Rose sighed looking at Sarah Jane. “They’re still at it I see.”

“They have better moments, but yes they are,” Sarah Jane agreed before looking over at Spock. “Don’t start fights, Spock.”

“Yes Mister Spock, don’t be nasty,” Rani said as she flopped back onto the sofa and looked at the Originx ad still playing on her phone. “We could always swap you for another computer, like the Originx,” she added playfully.

“I hardly think that would be a good exchange,” Spock intoned.

“Well, it’s the launch this afternoon, at five,” Clyde pointed out as he smirked at Rani and held up his phone for the others to see.

The ad played out in front of Rose with beams of light swarming together to form the shape of a small laptop that turned slowly in the air. Rose tilted her head in consideration as the music volume lowered and a voice said, “The Originx, a revolution in your hand. The evolution of the computer.”

“Yeah some of my neighbours at school are going crazy about that thing,” Rose said with a shrug as the ad finished. “But nothing about it looks that special. I can’t see the big hype.”

“Come on Rose,” Rani whined as she turned on the couch to look up at her. “Aren’t you curious? It’s all been such a mystery. Nobody knows what it does when you switch it on.”

“The rumours say everything,” Clyde breathed with wide eyes. “I’m hoping to get one.”

“Everyone is hoping to get one,” Luke added with a look towards both of his parents.

“It is a bit weird,” Johnny said thoughtfully. “Even working in computers I’ve heard almost nothing about it. You can’t even get information about who is working on it.”
“So they’re trying to protect their product secrets,” Rani said with a shrug. “That’s pretty normal. I mean they’re actually making the computers here in the UK! All of them, it’s incredible.”

“Yeah, but you can’t even get information about software compatibility or how fast the processing power is,” Johnny informed them with a frown. “There’s secrecy and then there’s being a bloody itch that no one can scratch.”

“Sounds like Dad’s got the curiosity bug too,” Luke laughed before he father pulled him into a one-armed hug while Sarah Jane smiled.

“There’s a rehearsal of the launch this morning. Just three of the country’s very top journalists have been invited to watch,” Sarah Jane informed them with a pleased smile.

Raising an eyebrow, Rose gave Sarah Jane a knowing look while Johnny lit up and looked at his wife who gave him a proud smirk.

“Do you know any of them?” Rani asked eagerly with wide eyes. “Could you, like, sneak us in?”

“Ahem,” Sarah Jane huffed with a frown. “I said just the top journalists have been invited.”

“Yeah, so what if we swap a ticket?” Clyde suggested while Luke grinned at his mother and looked like he was going to burst out laughing.

“I mean me,” Sarah Jane announced sharply while Rose, Johnny and Luke chuckled. “Me. What do you think pays for all this, taking in washing?”

“Sorry, I just didn't think it was your kind of a story,” Rani said quickly with a blush.

“Yeah, almost good enough, Rani,” Sarah Jane retorted before looking at Johnny and Luke. “And I was able to get permission for the two you to join me.”

“Really?” Johnny asked with widening eyes. “They’re going to let a computer programmer near their great baby?”

“Honestly Luke is probably more dangerous in that sense than you are,” Sarah Jane laughed, “But they don’t know that do they.”

“Family outing then,” Luke agreed with a grin as his father slung an arm over his shoulder. “Should be fun.”

“Oh, can’t you get us in?” Rani whined with a small pout.

“Sorry no,” Sarah Jane told them sounding genuinely sorry. “It’s frankly unusual that I was able to get Johnny and Luke permission. I probably only got Johnny cause they’re hoping he’ll get me to write about how wonderful it is and Luke because he’s the right demographic.”

Clyde pouted a little and rolled his eyes at Luke’s pleased smile. Rose shook her head at all of them but looked back at the ad.

“Well have fun,” Rose told them with a shrug. “I’ll hang here a bit to check out Spock and K-9 if that’s alright?”
“That would be wonderful Rose,” Sarah Jane replied with a grateful smile. “Thank you.”

“I would prefer to accompany you, Mistress,” K-9 informed Sarah Jane rolling forward.

“No bad idea K-9,” Sarah Jane said quickly. “We wouldn’t want anyone at a computer developer computer seeing what you can do.”

“I’ll use the whistle if I need you,” Luke assured K-9 as he leaned down and patted the dog on the head.

“Whistle?” Rose asked, crossing her arms and looking between the Smith-Chestertons.


“A dog whistle?” Rose repeated with a laugh as she reached up to ruffle Luke’s hair.

“The Doctor had one for K-9,” Sarah Jane countered with a smile.

“Yes well, are you really trying to encourage your son to be as… eccentric as the Doctor,” Rose remarked with a raised eyebrow.

“That’s rich coming from you,” Sarah Jane laughed. “I would think you of all people would appreciate the charm of his eccentric nature.”

“I love him, but there’s nothing in that which means I can’t mock him or recognise when he’s being daft.” Rose paused and smiled before adding, “In fact, it's almost required.”

“You see sweetheart,” Johnny said to Sarah Jane. “They’re already married, Rose has got that part down.”

“No that just comes from juggling different incarnations and personalities,” Rose replied with a lazy shrug.

“No, I think the married bit makes more sense,” Johnny teased with a wink before he pushed his wife gently towards the door. “We’d better get moving then if we want to attend this launch.”

Luke grinned at his parents and knelt down to pat K-9 on the head. “Don’t worry boy, I’ll tell you all about it when I get back,” Luke promised. “And you and Spock will be fine, just don’t let him start a fight.”

“How do you people deal with them on a regular basis?” Rose asked with a shake of her head.

“K-9 tends to stay in my room,” Luke offered with a shrug before waving at Rani and Clyde. “Sorry guys, but you heard Mum.”

“Rub it in,” Rani sighed, crossing her arms. “Don’t worry I’ll have forgiven you by the time you get back.”

“Course,” Rose agreed with a nod.

The Chesterton-Smiths departed the house leaving the two sulking teenagers and Rose who stripped off her hoodie and pulled out the small toolbox she kept stashed in the attic for these occasions.

“Spock, start your diagnostics,” Rose ordered as she tied her long blonde hair up with a tie. “As a test run research on Originx just to see if you find anything interesting for Sarah Jane.”

“Understood,” Spock agreed before his screen changed to a darker colour.

“Alright K-9,” Rose said as she cleared off Sarah Jane’s work table. “Up you get,” she called, patting the table in invitation.

“Yes Mistress Rose,” K-9 said as his hover pad kicked in and he began to lift into the air.

Rose waited calmly as the robot dog levitated into the air. Clyde and Rani were still on the sofa watching the proceedings.

“How come K-9 calls you Mistress Rose and not Mistress?” Rani asked suddenly. “I mean the Doctor is his master still right? He calls Johnny Master Johnny and Luke Master Luke, but Sarah Jane just Mistress. You’re the one who is in a relationship with the Doctor, shouldn’t you be mistress?”

“Of course not,” Rose laughed as she pulled out the sonic pen and began carefully opening K-9’s main access hatch. “The Doctor gave K-9 to Sarah Jane with the programming for her to be his primary controller. They’ve been together for a long time, that’s not something that my relationship with the Doctor changes. It’s sort of like how I’m Spock’s primary controller, other than himself of course, despite the fact that he lives in Sarah Jane’s attic.”

“So what’s it like dating an alien?” Clyde asked with a grin.

“I wish you two had never found out about that,” Rose said with a sigh. “Luke and his big mouth.”

“Oh come on,” Rani teased. “What’s it like dating an alien?”

“What’s it like dating a human?” Rose countered with a shrug. “We talk, we spend time together and do … other things,” she said with a look at the teenagers who both blushed slightly. “It’s a relationship between two sentient beings, not really any different from anything on Earth.”

“But it’s not though,” Rani argued. “Humans live in the same timeline.”

“Some, not all. There are humans who travel in time too, Rani, it’s possible that you’ve met people from the future and not known it,” Rose informed them both calmly. “But yeah okay the timelines thing is a little weird, but thanks to his different bodies it’s not hard to keep track of.”

“The fact that you used the phrase ‘little weird’ in the same sentence where you talked about your boyfriend’s different bodies is a whole lot weird,” Clyde informed her around a laugh.

“I’m not to respond to that,” Rose huffed, trying not to laugh as she used a duster can to clean out some of the dirt inside K-9.
“Rose,” Spock suddenly said drawing their attention. “I believe that I just detected a distress call at Originx’s main factory.”

“Distress call?” Rani repeated as she spun back towards Spock. “Like calling the police?”

“No a distress call intended for passing ships, but it was faint. I doubt anyone could have heard it.”

“I detected no such signal,” K-9 reported. “Potentially a malfunction.”

“I do not malfunction!”

“Enough,” Rose snapped, “Don’t start that today. Spock, honestly could this have been a glitch due to you scanning while doing your diagnostics?”

“Possible,” Spock admitted, “But I do not think so. The message was short, but specific and did not come from my databanks.”

“So what was the message?” Clyde demanded, leaning forward eagerly.

“Translated it gave the coordinates of the Originx factory and said ‘survivors of Cording crash being held as labour please help’.”

“Cording crash? Does that mean anything to you?” Rose questioned Spock.

“Unfortunately no, it could have occurred before I was active or happened in a blind spot.”

“You have blind spots?” Rani asked in surprise.

“Rani my systems piggyback on human systems for the most part, as satellites move blind spots are occasionally created as a result,” Spock explained patiently.

“So it might be real,” Clyde told Rose with an eager spark in his eyes.

“And it might explain a few mysteries about Originx,” Rose said thoughtfully.

“What do you mean?” Clyde asked while Rani just smirked.

“I knew it wasn’t her kind of story,” Rani said triumphantly. “Sarah Jane’s interested in something there.”

“Originx is a pretty new company,” Rose explained with a shrug. “I don’t know much about it, but unlike Microsoft and Apple that have been around a long time, they just sort of showed up and started hyping really advanced tech.” Rose nibbled thoughtfully at her lip. “Which would be explained by them having aliens working for them.”

Rose rubbed her hands together and walked over to the window, looking over at her house.

“What is it?” Clyde asked. “Are we going to wait for Sarah Jane or head over now?”

“We’re going now,” Rose replied before striding back to K-9 and gently reattaching his access panel. “Spock stop diagnostics, we’ll do it another time and monitor anything else weird from
“Understood,” Spock replied before he paused. “Are you going to get Mickey?”

“Mickey’s here?” Clyde asked with a hint of interest.

“Yeah…” Rose sighed and nodded to Spock as K-9 levitated himself off the table. “He’s been… shadowing me for the last couple of weeks. Benton’s being paranoid, but since it’s one of my best friends I figured I’d put up with it.” Then Rose smiled and said, “Actually you know what, it’s been a long time since Mickey and I faced an alien problem together without the rest of UNIT, this could be fun,” she announced as she pulled her hoodie back on, grabbing her sonic pen and headed for the stairs. “Come on!”

“This could be bad,” Rani told Clyde as they followed. He nodded in agreement.

Chapter End Notes

If you like my stuff please consider buying my first ebook The Iron Realm by J.M. Briggs available on amazon and the nook.
“So is this how you usually do things?” Mickey asked in far too calm a voice as he drove them through the London traffic in his new blue sedan. “Pick up some little random thing and start following it?”

“Yeah, that is usually how these things start,” Rose agreed with a shrug in the passenger seat before she looked into the back seat where Rani and Clyde were riding with K-9 between them. “Anything else K-9?”

“No signals detected,” K-9 replied calmly.

“And Spock hasn’t picked up anything either,” Clyde added as he looked away from his mobile. “Do you really think there was a signal?”

“Clyde if there are aliens being kept there as slaves then they probably only had the once chance to call for help before someone found them,” Rani told him firmly before shaking her head. “It’s just horrible to think about. Slavery.” She shuddered with a distressed look. “How could anyone do that to any other sentient thing?”

“Well I’m afraid that it still happens between humans too,” Mickey said sadly. “All over the world in fact, sometimes they even find hidden domestic slaves in first world countries. It’s illegal but there are those who just don’t care.”

“And if humans will do it to each other then there are definitely those that will do it to aliens,” Rose finished with a sad look before nibbling on her lip. She turned to look at Rani again, “Okay the usual rules apply: if I tell you to do something you do it. The alien black market lot that I’ve encountered thus far have been brutal and not afraid to hurt other humans. I’m not expecting any to be here, but Orginx will probably fight to protect their secrets.”

“If you’re so worried why did you bring us along?” Clyde asked.

“Cause I know you well enough to know that if I told you to stay at Bannerman Road you wouldn’t,” Rose informed him with a sharp look. “And the sad thing is that a pair of teenagers trying to sneak into the factory of the new must have computer probably won’t trigger any alarms. Mickey and I… well if they can look him up then they’ll find that he’s military of sorts.”

“I still think I should alert Benton,” Mickey said uneasily.

“Look he told you to keep an eye on me didn’t he?” Rose demanded, arching an eyebrow at Mickey. He flinched slightly and looked uncomfortable. “Yeah, that’s what I thought. Well, I’m
going to check this out and if you want to keep watching over me then I guess you’re coming with me,” Rose informed him with a smirk.

“So you’ve known that I was on assignment,” Mickey muttered. “Why didn’t you say anything?”

“You’re my friend and if Benton thinks he’s clever having you be the UNIT member keeping an eye on me then I consider myself to be doing well.” Rose shrugged and added, “I mean he could assign someone I’m not friendly with or someone really annoying.”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence,” Mickey grumbled with a look towards Rose. “He just worries, you’ve got a thicker file than most career members of UNIT and your boyfriend….” Mickey shook his head and muttered, “I still can’t believe that I’ve never actually met him.”

“Wrong place, wrong time Mickey. That’s all.”

“Shareen and Sharon have met him.”

“You make it sound like the Doctor pops around for tea regularly,” Rose remarked. “He doesn’t and I’ll remind you not to let my Mum overhear you talking like that.”

Mickey chuckled almost evily and got a dark look in return. He coughed slightly and fixed his eyes ahead on the road.

“So what is the plan?” Clyde asked from the back seat a few moments later. “We can’t get in like Sarah Jane and the others did and there’s got to be guards.”

“We’re going to start with getting close and seeing what K-9 can pick up,” Rose told them. “They will hopefully give us a better idea of what we’re dealing with.”

“I still say we should call Benton,” Mickey argued.

“Look, Mickey, I get that, but right now we don’t know what is going on and if it is some kind of slavery then Orginx has hostages that they can use against us in a standoff.” Rose shook her head stubbornly. “I’d like to have some idea of what is going on before we call in the armed soldiers.”

“You’ve been a bit off ever since you shot Thane,” Mickey told her in a low voice. “You know you didn’t do anything wrong right, Rose?”

“You shot someone?” Rani asked from the back seat. “Really?”

“What was that like?” Clyde demanded with wide eyes that made both Rose and Mickey flinch.

“I didn’t like it, but yes I shot Thane to keep him from launching a bunch of nuclear weapons,” Rose admitted with a grimace. “And no Clyde, it wasn’t cool or anything like that.”

“Sorry,” Clyde said gently. “But you’ve killed aliens before right, you cut off Apep’s head and everything.”

“A gun… it was just different,” Rose explained with a sigh. “My sword, well I have to get close and fight. A gun just, it’s too easy I suppose and I mean that in a bad way. I’m not even sure why it bothers me so much, it just does. It might be the Doctor’s influence wearing off on me.”
“Sarah Jane doesn’t like guns either,” Rani offered and Rose chuckled.

“I know she doesn’t, good thing too since she’s never had training to use one. The only thing worse than a loaded gun is it being in the hands of someone with no training of how to use it as safely as possible.”

“You do know that I’m armed right now,” Mickey told Rose softly. “Full disclosure.”

“Yeah, I figured you were,” Rose sighed before giving Mickey a small smile. “Don’t worry Mickey, I’m not going to start shouting at UNIT for carrying guns. I’ve been saved by your lot enough to appreciate that sometimes, well they’re a necessary evil. I’m just not completely comfortable with them.”

“Fair enough and hopefully I won’t need my sidearm today.”

Rose didn’t say anything to that, she knew that she didn’t need to. Glancing back she saw Clyde and Rani exchange a look over K-9’s head and wondered if she had Mickey let them out now if they’d stay put. Probably not, she wouldn’t have, Rose conceded mentally before turning her attention to the robot dog and was still scanning with a soft hum.

“Anything new K-9?” Rose asked as the Orginx building came into view.

It was a huge metal and glass building with an artistic sloping roofline that straightened out near the back of the building where the large glass windows began to vanish and the building began a metallic fortress. Pleasant and welcoming on the front business end, but closed off back in the manufacturing area. Rose smirked, yeah that didn’t make her think they were on to something at all.

“Detecting alien technology,” K-9 said suddenly with shifting ears.

“What sort?” Clyde asked first, shifting excitedly in the back of the car.

Mickey pulled them over and parked on the edge of the side street. They looked over at the building through the tall fence. At the front was a small car park and what looked like an entrance to an underground car park. Rose thought she could see Sarah’s Jane car near the main doors. There were only a few cars and Rose found herself wondering once again who all worked at this company.

“Cannot determine the type of alien technology,” K-9 replied after a few more moments of whirling ears. “Electric impulses detected are beyond current human technology.”

“Couldn’t that just be their new advanced system?” Rani asked with a curious frown.

“Invalid technology for the current date,” K-9 retorted. “Should not yet exist on Earth.”

“Don’t forget Rani that this K-9 was built by and programmed by a Time Lord,” Rose remarked with a pleased smile. “He knows his history.” Rose nodded towards the building, “Well there is something in there that shouldn’t be.”

“So what are we going to do?” Clyde asked eagerly. “Break in somehow?”

“No, not yet. First, we’re going to wait and have K-9 keep scanning through this so-called practice
launch to see if we get more information then we’ll see if Sarah Jane, Luke or Johnny noticed anything.”

“You mean we’re just gonna wait here?” Clyde asked with a whine in his voice.

“Think of it as a stake out,” Mickey told the younger boy with a chuckle.

“Rose’s stories have never included this,” Rani said with a soft huff.

“Usually things aren’t this calm,” Rose agreed with a small nod. “But we’re going to just wait for now.”

“With the reporters and families in there won’t security be focused on them,” Clyde pointed out helpfully.

Rose paused to consider the thought and pulled out her phone. Behind her K-9’s ears whirled and he beeped loudly.

“Signal detected: help us, held as slaves,” K-9 announced before he stopped. “Signal lost, but alien technology detection spiked during transmission.”

“Oh come on Rose!” Rani cheered leaning forward eagerly. “That’s confirmation right there.”

“Hold on, hold on,” Rose sighed as she looked back at her phone. “First things first. We’ve got people on the inside, let’s see what we can find out from them.”

Sarah Jane glanced over at Johnny and Luke who were much more interested than she was. The large auditorium was comfortable and had good lighting in both the audience and up on the stage so she couldn’t complain about that. The problem was that frankly, Rani had been right, this wasn’t her sort of story. She was an investigative journalist for goodness sake. Last month she’d been on a trip to do interviews on modern slavery in fishing fleets, something she hadn’t shared much about with the kids. And now here she was with some corporate suits trying to tell her how wonderful their new computer was.

She’d only taken the offer due to thinking that her boys might enjoy it and judging from their faces she’d been right. However, she noted as she looked again the enthusiasm seemed to wane at the lack of technical details. The other journalists around her all beaming widely and frantically taking notes while oohing and awing over the small devices in front of them.

Sarah Jane had to admit that the tablet design was interesting. Imagine doing all your work from what was basically a screen, but she already missed the keyboard. And it was strange that there hadn’t at least been rumours about the Orginx tablet. Something was just… not quite right here and she couldn’t put her finger on. In her pocket, her phone vibrated just the tiniest bit. She’d meant to turn it off to be professional but had forgotten. As smoothly and carefully as she could, Sarah Jane pulled out her mobile as the floor opened to questions.

Luke had a list ready to go and Sarah Jane smiled as a stream of technobabble spilt out of her son’s mouth. Shifting the phone around she hid it half under the armrest so she could look at the message. It was from Rose and simply read: Alien distress signal and alien technology inside Orginx. We’re outside.
If a smile took over Sarah Jane’s face and she had a burst of giddy energy that made it hard for her to sit still then she’d never tell. Instead, she carefully slipped the phone over to Luke. Her son read it and she was certain that his eyes brightened a bit. Then he slipped it over to Johnny. Her husband glanced her way, raising an eyebrow at her smile before handing the phone back to Luke and focusing on the presentation. Unlike Sarah Jane and Luke, he actually managed a weak laugh at one of the prepared jokes.

Thankfully things were wrapped up quickly and Mister Worthington beamed out at the small group of journalists and guests. Sarah Jane narrowed her eyes at him thoughtfully, wondering just what was going through his head. He looked smug and assured as another of the journalists named Howard Bates became to rave about the tablet in his hands. Sarah Jane motioned for her family to hold back as the others streamed out of the room, stopping and shaking their host's hand as they went. Sarah Jane made a show of capping her pen and slipping her notebook into her pocket all while smiling broadly at her family.

“Thank you for coming, Ms Smith,” Worthington said with a smile as they stepped up to say goodbye. “Although I understand you got married not long ago.”

“I did, but I kept Smith as my professional name,” Sarah Jane said politely as Luke caught her eye. “This is my son Luke, thank you for approving him as a visitor.”

“But of course,” Worthington replied with a widening smile as he turned to Luke. “To be honest it is your generation that I’m counting on to make this product a real success. So glad you could make it, my boy.”

“Thank you for allowing me to come,” Luke said pleasantly with a wide smile. “It was all very informative.”

“Well you’re welcome young man,” Worthington chuckled. “I hope the technical information wasn’t too boring.”

“It wasn’t, except,” Luke said calmly as he looked at Mister Worthington with an even gaze. “Your techs got it all wrong, there is no way that the circuitry could work like that. Not without an internal heating system and there isn’t one.” Luke held up the device with a small smirk. “And there isn’t any external cooling sources so how does this work then?”

“Young man surely you can understand that we just can’t-”

“Any repairs have to be done by you lot,” Luke continued calmly as if the man hadn’t spoken at all. In fact, Luke carefully began to tug open the cover of the tablet in order to expose the internal motherboard system. “If anyone opens the tablet then the warranty is void. What’s inside that you know another tech can’t fix?”

“Our technology is a major advancement.”

“Too much of an advancement,” Johnny observed as he took the tablet from Luke and turned it over in his hands. “Don’t get me wrong, there are elements of state of the art tech that is being worked on in Silicon Valley in here, but this here,” Johnny said as he pointed to a small glowing blue box in the centre of the system. “This is... something else and this,” he added pointing at a strange looking set of tiny cables that were glowing slightly. “This isn’t like anything that anyone is developing.”
“It’s alien isn’t it,” Sarah Jane added watching Worthington’s face.

Worthington’s smile fell away and his face began very tight. His eyes shifted between the three of them and he grit his teeth. Behind them, Sarah Jane heard the doors slam shut. A moment later a pair of the large security guards stepped up behind them.

“Hey!” Luke protested as one of them grabbed his phone and smashed it on the floor.

“What are you doing?” Sarah Jane demanded as her phone was grabbed and then Johnny’s.

“This is worrying,” Worthington remarked with a frown. “We clearly need to figure out a better way of protecting our secrets.” He gestured at them and sighed, “Lock them up downstairs. I need to meet with the board and we’ll decide what to do with them.”

“Maybe we should have left first,” Luke grumbled to his mother as they were drug out another door and hustled down a flight of steps.

“Probably,” Sarah Jane agreed. “But I’ve never really been the sort to delay confronting a problem.”

“Isn’t that the truth,” Johnny muttered as they were shoved into a small room and the door was locked behind them. “But I love you anyway,” Johnny added quickly when Sarah Jane gave him a stern look.
Sarah Jane’s family spread out in the room and checked all the corners for anything of use. The room was really more of a cupboard with a few metal shelves and some cleaning supplies. Johnny turned a couple of large buckets upside down so they could sit and Sarah Jane vaguely regretted not having more chemistry knowledge. Then again trying to mix together an explosive while her family was in the room was a bit too far for her.

“How long until Rose comes to find us do you think?” Johnny asked with an easy going smile.

It never failed to amaze her how calm her husband was in the face of all of this. Then again, she considered with a smile, it was somewhat in his DNA. She sat down next to him on her own bucket and snuggled into his side, letting him wrap an arm around her.

“Do you really think he’s got aliens here somewhere?” Luke asked as he studied the lock on the door. It was a heavy bolt mechanism and Sarah Jane wondered what was going through her son’s head as he looked at it.

“Probably,” Johnny replied with a sigh. “It makes sense in a horrible sort of way, use aliens with more advanced technical knowledge to design and build top of the line computers. You can easily defeat the competition and probably have lower production costs. Course Rose picking up a signal means that they want out.”

“Slavery,” Luke half growled with a shake of his head. “I hate slavery. Humans used other humans as slaves for centuries. Every culture, the world over. Nobody ever challenged them until a few hundred years ago. And in some places, it still goes on. Why? How?”

“Luke,” Sarah Jane called gently as she watched the tension build in her son’s shoulders. “Humans are imperfect, it’s a fact of what we are.” She stood up and walked over to hug her son, gently stroking his dark blonde hair. “But remember that there are also humans who don’t agree with it, there always have been and there always will be. History just… well, it rarely recorded the ones who tried to stand up against it.” Sarah Jane stepped back and gave Luke a warm smile. “After all, history won’t record us when we find these aliens and help them get home.”

“Yeah Mum,” Luke agreed with small nod before his hand came up to rub at his neck. Then he stopped and dropped his hand down to the dog whistle. “Mum I can call K-9, no wait,” Luke cheered with a grin. “Better, I can get a message to Rose outside.”

“How?” Johnny asked he stood up and walked over to join the others. “The guards probably saw the text from them and are checking the perimeter by now. K-9 will just try to come if you use the whistle.”
“Morse code Dad,” Luke explained with a grin before he lifted the whistle to his lips and began to blow it in short silent toots.

“Spock,” Rose greeted as she brought her phone up to her ear. “Have you been able to get into Orginx’s security system yet?”

“I am in Rose, but there is nothing in any of the company files about any alien technology,” Spock informed her.

“They probably keep that off the record,” Mickey told Rose from the driver’s seat. “Tech can be hacked. If I was then I wouldn’t keep records or only keep paper files locked up somewhere deep in that building.”

“Yes most likely,” Spock agreed, “Additionally their protective measures surrounding control of the security system is very advanced. But I do have control over the perimeter and some internal cameras in the lobby now. You managed to park mostly in a blind spot, but I have you on a loop now to hide any further movement.”

“Any sign of the Chesterton-Smiths?”

“Nothing yet, they have not left the building through the lobby and I am still working on the other internal cameras areas,” Spock paused and added, “There is some chatter from building security, but nothing that mentions Sarah Jane, Luke or Johnny.”

“Alright Spock,” Rose said with a soft sigh. “Thanks and stay alert, if we move then you need to adjust the cameras quickly.”

“Very well, I will monitor the situation. Once I have access to the internal security systems I will let you know.”

Rose ended the call and checked her text messages and calls with a small frown.

“Anything from Sarah Jane?” Clyde asked as he leaned forward to look at Rose’s phone.

“No,” Rose sighed as she studied the phone with a frown. “I’m worried, the other journalists have left, but no sign of Sarah Jane.” Rose nibbled at her bottom lip and slipped the phone into her pocket.

“Is she like you?” Mickey asked as he looked over at the building only to get an odd look from Rose. “I mean does she just go straight for the trouble like you without worrying about having a plan?”

“Yes,” Rani said quickly from the back seat. “She really is.”

“Then maybe they captured her,” Mickey suggested carefully as a group of guards came out of the building. “Spock is having some trouble with their security and if tipped her hand too quickly then she might be locked up inside somewhere. If they’ve got alien slaves then they’ve probably got someplace they can lock up humans.”

“And if they did then they’ve got her phone complete with a text message from me,” Rose sighed
with a shake of her head. “We’d better move away a couple of blocks. Mostly in a blind spot or no
they’re going to come and check on this car eventually.”

“Master Luke informs me that he, the Mistress and Master Johnny have been locked inside the
building,” K-9 suddenly said as he wears whirled.

“He informed you?” Mickey asked with a quizzical look. “What do you have an internal telepathic
sensor or mobile calling system?”

Rose laughed at Mickey’s dubious statement and looked at K-9, watching his ears turn for a
moment before she grinned. “The whistle, he’s using the whistle somehow isn’t he? Oh, he’s a
clever one,” Rose laughed.

“Morse code, Mistress Rose. They are on the lower level, two stories down from the main floor.”
His ears whirled again. “By stairwell C, colour red.”


“And Luke’s perfect memory strikes again,” Clyde announced with a grin. “So are we doing this?”

“Okay those guards are looking for someone,” Rose muttered to the others. “I’ll take K-9 and
we’ll try to sneak in. Mickey you, Clyde and Rani drive around and see if you can get some of the
guards to keep paying attention to you.”

“I’m supposed to be protecting you,” Mickey protested with a sharp look.

“Look if we leave an empty car here then they’ll raise security inside and make it harder to get in.
Clyde and Rani can’t drive so that isn’t an option. They are looking for a car or something so we
give it to them. And Rani can pretend to be the Rose that the text came from.”

“If they catch us…” Mickey said with a cautious look back at Rani and Clyde.

“If you can drop them off,” Rose offered with an understanding nod. “Now, come on K-9. We need
to get inside. Spock can hide us getting up to the building and with any luck, he’ll have control over
the internal cameras soon.”

“I downloaded the floorplans from Spock before we departed Mistress Rose. I suggest we use the
south service entrance.”

“Oh, bloody hell Rose,” Mickey cursed with a shake of his head. “Fine then, be careful.”

Nodding, Rose opened the door and jumped out of the car. She crept to the back door and Clyde
handed K-9 out to her with a small grumble. The moment the back door was closed Mickey began
to drive the car slowly around the corner and Rose turned to look at the chain link fence with
barbed wire over the top of it. Not exactly friendly and there were camera towers not too far from
her on either side. Moving her arm she summoned her sword and cut a small gash in the fence that
she slipped through. Rose held it open for K-9 and then pulled out her sonic pen.

Setting 6B did a nice trick of letting Rose reconnect the bits of the metal fence quickly so it
wouldn’t be as noticeable. She kept herself low and crept forwards with K-9. Surrounding the
building was a small well-trimmed lawn. There were large cement pots of flowers scattered about
to add a bit of colour to the place. They also provided convenient cover to duck behind. Rose knew
that Spock had control of the cameras, but she wasn’t sure about patrolling guards.

Her phone pinged and Rose pulled it out quickly, smiling when she saw a message from Spock informing her that he had control of the internal cameras.

“Okay K-9,” Rose breathed as she looked down at the robot dog. “We’re good on internal security. Let’s get to Sarah Jane and the others as quickly as we can.”

“Affirmative Mistress Rose,” K-9 agreed as they moved quickly to the next flower pot. In the distance, Rose caught sight of a man in a suit moving along the pavement by the car park.

“Entrance ahead Mistress Rose,” K-9 informed her as they left the cover of one of the planters.

Up ahead Rose could see a small side entrance with a heavy metal door and a card reader on the side. She pulled the sonic pen out of her hair and quickly changed the settings. One whirling sound later and the door clicked open. Slipping inside with K-9 on her heels Rose looked around carefully. They were in a small tasteful grey entryway with an empty reception desk a few feet away. A large guard terminal filled one side of the room and Rose could see card readers in the doorway up ahead with a turnstile. Luckily there was no one in sight and Rose stepped forward slowly, mindful of the soft click of her boot heels against the tile floor. Next to her K-9 rolled forward with a soft mechanical hum.

Rose jumped over the turnstile and looked around for any alarms. Behind her, K-9 fired up his hover pad and flew over the turnstile only to land at her feet with a soft thump. Rose pulled the sonic pen out of her pocket and quickly reached up to put her hair in a messy bun with the sonic pen firmly tucked within reach. The stillness of the building felt so weird and Rose wondered if there was some kind of staff celebration of the upcoming launch. Or maybe they really didn’t have much in the way of staff. It was a creepy idea.

Moving slowly, Rose allowed her foot to settle with each step so she was as quiet as possible. K-9’s rolling naturally made a little noise, but Rose was hoping the mechanical sound would be dismissed. Along the corridor were empty officers that lacked any sign that they’d ever been used. Rose stepped into one of them and ran a hand over the heavy expensive looking wooden desk. There was a thin layer of dust and the blinds were down.

“I don’t think humans work here much,” Rose remarked softly to K-9. “I suppose that’s one way to keep using alien slaves a secret.”

“We must cross the building to reach the stairwell,” K-9 reminded Rose with a hint of urgency.

Nodding, Rose stepped back into the corridor and they resumed walking. It was creepy being alone in such a big place. She was a Londoner, she was used to the noise of the city and the knowledge that there were hundreds of people near you all the time. This reminded her a little too much of the Empty Earth incident when she’d found herself all alone in London.

Then she heard sounds of people moving about at the far end of the corridor. Rose caught sight of someone walking past. She ducked into one of the offices and waited, but no one raised an alarm. She hadn’t been noticed and slowly Rose crept back out into the corridor. There were more plants in the hall now and even a water cooler. She passed an office that looked like someone actually worked in it as she ducked behind the water cooler. Then she moved on towards the side corridor that would let her get across to the right stairwell.
“What is going on?” A voice boomed up ahead.

Rose moved forward past the turn and gestured K-9 down the right corridor. The robot dog turned the corner, but then stopped and waited as Rose moved forward. She was just past the main atrium which was at least four stories high with lots of windows and an open area. There were two large receptionist desks on either side of the room and more of the guard posts.

“First accusations from reporters and now this!” the male voice shouted again.

Gasping softly, Rose ducked down beneath the large leaves of the plant as the main doors opened. A group of guards marched in with Mickey, Clyde and Rani all between them. Mickey had a thunderous expression on his face, a torn jacket and a split on his lip. One of the guards was nursing a black eye and another a badly split lip.

“What are you going to do with us?” Clyde asked bravely. “People are gonna wonder where we are.”

“Yeah,” Rani spoke up with her chin held high. “We weren’t trespassing on your property. You can’t do things like this!”

“Take them downstairs,” a male voice called down from above Rose’s head on one of the upper balconies overlooking the main entry. “Lock them up and find out who they are. This is getting ridiculous.” The person sighed and added, “Honestly you try to revolutionise the world with the greatest computer of human history and people can’t stop poking their noses into it.”

Okay, things were a bit more complicated now. If they traced Mickey to UNIT… Rose shook her head and shifted backwards away from the plant. She needed to stay out of sight, get the others out if possible and find the aliens. Not to mention make a plan of how to get them out of here. Rose sighed and moved into the long corridor before ducking into the loo with K-9 to stay out of sight, yeah definitely more complicated now.
“How the bloody hell did Mickey let them get caught?” Rose muttered angrily to K-9 as she ducked into the nearest toilet. She needed a few moments to think and so far everyone she’d seen in the building was male.

It was a very nice two room toilet with a small sitting area that led into the usual stalls and sink area. Certainly nicer than the toilets at the university, but she supposed that slavery allowed for a profit. Rose sank down on one of the sofas and nibbled at her lip in thought. The slavery thing was probably recent judging from the rest of the building. This place certainly looked like it had been built for the usual corporate army. Rose groaned and rubbed her head, she was getting a headache and this whole bloody situation was frustrating.

“Mistress Rose,” K-9 called to gain her attention. “Master Luke has used the whistle to inform me that Master Mickey, Master Clyde and Mistress Rani were all locked up with them.” K-9 paused and his ears twitched before he continued, “Master Mickey is being taken for questioning.”

“That’s not good,” Rose said as she stood up and clenched and unclenched her fingers. “They’re getting paranoid over how many people are poking around.” Rose pulled out her phone and looked at the screen. She pulled up the number for the TARDIS before thinking better of it. “No, don’t do it,” she told herself sternly. “These people enslave aliens for their technology; don’t bring your alien into the mix.”

Standing up, Rose shook herself like a dog trying to shake off water and took a deep breath. “Okay, call Spock first,” she pulled out her phone and hit the speed-dial for Spock.

“Yes, Rose?”

“Hi Spock, have you had any luck identifying the crash species.”

“Indeed, I was able to retrieve some information on the crash, but Rose you need to be careful.”

“Why exactly?”

“The Skullions were captured and brought to market by Black Sun,” Spock replied in a worried voice. “They will not take well to you poking around in their business.”

“How far into their systems did you get?” Rose asked carefully after swallowing thickly.

“Basic acquisition records and some sale records, but this was considered a medium grade transaction. I’m afraid that their holding centres and the market itself moves around. I have only been able to get the date of the next one.”
Rose nibbled at her lip, it was tempting to have Spock keep digging, but then again they might track him. Black Sun… she shivered. She hadn’t had any good run-ins with the black market folk.

“Spock, don’t let them find you,” Rose finally said. “I won’t put the Chesterton-Smiths or you at risk. Pull back, cover your tracks and contact the Skullion government. If you can’t get ahold of them then contact the Durminos. I need a way to get the prisoners out as quickly as possible,” Rose ordered before she sighed. “Just as soon as I find them. Thanks, Spock.”

“Be careful Rose, Orginx has limited employment records, but the people I am finding still within their payroll are security guards. Many of them have military experience.”

“Any information on if they are armed?” Rose asked in a tighter voice.

“Nothing I can confirm from here.”

“I’ll be fine, now get out of their system and call the Skullions,” Rose ordered with a sigh. “And then call UNIT… just let Benton know what I’ve gotten myself into and suggest he be ready to seize illegal alien tech.”

“Very well Rose,” Spock replied, “I will alert Brigadier Benton to the situation. I suspect he will not be happy with you.”

“Hey I'm trying to do what’s best for these aliens, they were captured by a paramilitary black market group and are being held as slaves, I don’t think throwing soldiers at the situation will calm them down.” Rose shook head and added, “Talk to you later.” She hung up the phone and looked down at K-9. “Which way K-9?”

“This way Mistress Rose,” K-9 informed her as he turned and began to roll down the corridor.

Sighing again, Rose began to follow him, but they didn’t get too far before Rose thought she heard someone. The guard moved fast enough to surprise Rose as he stepped out from a small side corridor with a look of surprise on his face, but he recovered faster than she did. His arms wrapped around her waist and he shoved her up against the wall before spinning her around. The air was pushed out of Rose’s lungs as her chest was pushed up against the cool sheetrock wall and she huffed in pain. Then the guard eased his grip on her, just enough that she slammed her head back into his face as he begun bending over to restrain her. His hands fell away and Rose jumped back from the wall. He recovered quickly and tried to grab her again, this time tightening his arms around her chest.

Jumping up, Rose brought her feet up against the wall and pushed back hard. They stumbled across the corridor into the far wall. The guard huffed and dropped her. Bringing her elbow back into his ribs, Rose didn’t let up the attack. She brought one foot up to kick him in the groin sending him falling to the ground with a groan. Panting softly, Rose turned and gripped him tightly around the neck. He flailed against her weakly as the pain and lack of oxygen made him sluggish. Then he went limp in her arms as he blacked out. Carefully, Rose laid him out across the floor and took a deep breath.

“Thanks for the help K-9,” Rose said with a look at the robot dog.

“I did not wish to fire in such close quarters Mistress Rose,” K-9 replied and Rose could hear the ‘so there’ in the computerised tone.
“Fine, fine,” Rose muttered as she looked around. “I think we’ve gotten a bit turned around K-9, we aren’t that close to the others now.”

Rose’s phone chirped and Rose pulled it out swiftly as she looked around to make sure they were safe. It was a message from Spock: “Skullions contacted nearby ship is on its way, ETA twenty minutes. They will pick up via transport beam from the roof.”

“Damn,” Rose breathed. “Not a lot of time K-9,” she told the robot dog before she knelt down. “We need to split up. I’ll find the aliens; think you can find Sarah Jane and the others?”


“If the others are willing I need distractions,” Rose told him trying to ignore the churning in her gut at the idea. “I need to get the prisoners, however many there are to the roof.”

“Understood Mistress Rose,” K-9 responded with a nod before he turned and began to roll away in the other direction.

Rose watched him go for a moment before she turned and began to jog down the corridor towards the loud humming sound. She paused at every intersection to check for guards and noted a couple sitting in a booth by another exterior door. Rose found herself vaguely hoping that finding Mickey and the others had them all checking the surrounding area. If they didn’t think anyone was inside then maybe she didn’t have too much to worry about.

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Sarah Jane resisted the urge to nibble at her bottom lip as Luke and Clyde tried to unscrew the heavy hinges of the door with a piece of shaped wire. It kept slipping in their hands with little progress being made and she was starting to be certain that they were going to hurt themselves. She wished that Rose had given Rani or Mickey the sonic pen before running off with K-9. Taking a deep breath, Sarah Jane told herself to calm down as Johnny put an arm around her.

“Out of practice with being captured?” he teased gently.

“A bit I suppose,” Sarah Jane agreed. “This is a little bit heavier duty than your usual cleaning closet,” she observed as she looked around at the heavy brickwork walls and the heavy metal door that was keeping them locked inside.

“It may just have cleaning supplies in it for appearances,” Johnny reminded her gently. “Could be… well, maybe this used to be a holding cell for whoever they have as slaves here before something more permanent was set up.”

“That would explain a few things,” Sarah Jane agreed. “Where is she?”

“Hopefully she’s called Benton,” Mickey offered as he jumped down off of a stack of crates. “The air vents are tiny, barely a foot wide.”

“We need to find some way out of here,” Sarah Jane said stubbornly only to get a look from Mickey. “Not that I don’t trust Rose, of course, it’s just-”

Mickey just laughed. He laughed so hard that he had to catch himself against the wall as he
struggled to catch his breath.

“Oh my god you two are a lot alike,” Mickey gasped around his laughter. “That’s something that she would say.”

Then the door began to open forcing Luke and Clyde to jump back. Luke tossed their makeshift tool in a box of rags in the corner as his mother grabbed his shoulder. Mickey stopped laughing and jumped forward, pushing Rani behind him and looking ready to fight his way out until two armed guards with drawn firearms stepped into the room. Reaching out, Mickey grabbed Clyde’s shoulder and pulled him away from the door before he could do something stupid.

“So you work for UNIT Mister Smith?” Worthington asked as he calmly stepped into the storage room with a nasty little smile. “Do they send their agents in with children frequently now?”

“Mate I told you,” Mickey insisted, “I just babysitting, their parents don’t exactly trust these two and my gran knows their mums. They wanted to see where the new Orginx was being made, that’s all. You’re the one jumping to conclusions.”

“But you do work for UNIT, you’re not denying that.”

“I’m a soldier,” Mickey huffed. “I go where I’m told and do what I’m told. We don’t investigate,” he gave Worthington a sharp look. “Though it looks like maybe we should investigate here a bit more.”

“I have trouble believing your story Mister Smith, simply on the basis that all of you come from the same street,” Worthington announced with a smug look. “You may not live there Private, but your grandmother shares a residence with the….” He glanced down at the Orginx tablet in his hand with a smile. “Tyler family,” he said before looking back at Mickey. “Private Smith my Orginx system is the best in the world and while UNIT’s system is excellent I was able to find the name, Rose Tyler. I couldn’t access much information about her, apparently she’s someone very important, but I know that this girl isn’t Rose Tyler,” Worthington announced as he pointed to Rani. “And she also lives on Bannerman Road, so I have to wonder with all of you here is she lurking around my factory somewhere?”

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Rose had to take down two more guards before she reached her destination. Thankfully for her, the security guards here carried handcuffs and there were so many abandoned offices to choose from. It was something she would never tell Jack about, he’d have way too much fun with that idea. The humming was becoming louder and louder which made it easy for Rose to find her way to the manufacturing area and get the drop on the guards, but when she came to the heavy metal door with a strange series of electronic locks on it Rose felt nervous. Pulling out the sonic pen she became to open the door one lock at a time, just waiting for a guard to attack, but none did. Rose debated with herself but left the door ajar so she could get out of the room again.

The room was massive easily filling the four-story backside section of the building. There were barred windows up several stories and large manufacturing machines were whirling and humming in a massive long conveyer belt system. For a moment Rose was stunned as she watched the conveyer belt move bits of metal and plastic between obviously human technology and a couple of suspicious looking machines. The computers were slowly rolling out and Rose had a moment of appreciation for the incredibly small manufacturing system. That was before her mind reminded her that it was probably using black market alien technology and slaves.
Walking further into the room, Rose caught sight of the first of the workers as one of them hurried past her between the machines and vanished around another machine. She almost called out, but stopped and looked around for more guards, but didn’t see any. Looking back over her shoulder, Rose eyed the open door and the corridor beyond it nervously. Where were the guards?

The sounds of someone moving made Rose turn her attention forward and she took a few steps deeper into the room. It was a maze of loud machines and there was an intense feeling of electricity in the air. Everything smelled odd and Rose wondered just what sort of technology had been mashed together in here.

“Hello?” she called out gently, her voice barely carrying over the vibrations of the machines. “I’m looking for the Skullion, I’m here to help.”

There was a small sound behind one of the machines behind her and Rose spun on her heel to look. She crept forward and looked around the corner as several humanoid forms came up towards her. The aliens took her by surprise, the first thing that popped into Rose’s head was tiny cyclops followed by cute. They were just under five feet with a few of them being even smaller than that and humanoid in shape. Their skin was a shade darker than her own and all of them had one large eye in the centre of their foreheads with ears, nose and mouths like her own. All of them were wearing simple looking orange and red robes that reminded her a bit of Buddhist monks and she wondered if they’d been aided by monks before they’d been captured.

“It’s okay,” Rose said gently as she noted the aliens were drawing away from her fearfully. “My name is Rose Tyler; I’m here to help you. I picked up your distress signal. You’re the survivors of the Cording crash?”

That seemed to calm them down and they glanced at each other with their single large blue eyes. One of them then stepped forward, still looking a bit scared, but he raised his head to look up at Rose. The others moved back from them both and Rose was certain he was their leader or at least someone they respected.

“You’re here to help us?” he questioned and Rose nodded.

“Yes, like I said I’m Rose Tyler, I’m a Star Knight. You might have heard of me,” she offered, remembering how many species talked with the Durmino Empire. “I’ve sent a message to the Skullion government to send help.”

“I am Plank,” the Skullion who had stepped forward told her. “You were able to make contact?”

“Yes, but we don’t have much time,” Rose informed them urgently. “Your ship will be here soon and we have to get to the roof.”

The small aliens all perked up at once, but as they moved in their robes Rose noticed the odd metal collars around their necks. They weren’t chained to anything and a terrible sense of dread settled in her stomach. Carefully she reached out slowly towards the collar, but Plank drew back nervously.

“I just… what is that thing?” she asked gently, kneeling down so she wasn’t standing over them.

“Punishment collar,” one of the other Skullions answered with a shiver. “Bad man Worthington uses them to hurt us.”
“Oh bloody hell,” Rose cursed as she knelt forward to get a better look at them.
For a moment Rose saw red as she inspecting the collar. There was a large receiver on the front that hooked into a series of wires that ran along the underside of the metal collar. It was like a high charged version of the anti-barking collars that some people used and Rose swallowed at the realisation that somewhere Worthington had something that triggered a serious electrical shock. She wondered how often he used it with a sick turn of her stomach. Then she noticed the long leg chains tying the aliens to different machines.

“We only have twenty minutes,” Rose said thoughtfully to the Skullions. “I have a sonic device,” she informed them as she held up the sonic pen, “So I could try to get all of your collars off, but we might not make it to the ship. This is a level five planet, they can’t linger here long without legal ramifications.”

“We try to escape,” Plank announced as the others around him nodded. “Collars have range, once on ship we be safe.”

The syntax of how they talked threw Rose for a moment, but she nodded and glanced at the group. “Is this everyone?”
“Yes, those alive,” Plank answered in a soft sadder tone.

How many of them had died in the crash, Rose wondered. How many had died for want of proper care in the aftermath when they were held as prisoners awaiting auction. How many had Worthington killed when they struggled to produce his perfect little computer.

“Come on then,” Rose said with a nod as she motioned for them to follow her back towards the door. “Let’s get you home then.”

Rose moved quickly amongst the group, using the sonic pen to open the thankfully simple electrical locks on the leg chains. Each one clicked open with a soft beep and hiss leaving the Skullions jumping around in excitement. Plank hushed them quickly and as the last chain came off they were huddled together and watching Rose eagerly. She glanced around to make sure they had everyone before gesturing towards the door.

They made it out of the manufacturing room with the hum of the machines helping to mask their footfalls. Rose closed the door up behind them and crept past the closet where she’d left the two guards carefully. There were no signs of security which worried Rose even more. Either Worthington was so confident about the leg chains and the control collars that he wasn’t worried or there was a large group just waiting for her somewhere.

The thirteen aliens plodded along behind Rose as she headed for the stairwell with every nerve on edge. She was just waiting for a group of guards to come running and open fire or at the very least ambush them and grab her, but so far so good. Then she could make out the sounds of voices from the main entry area and gestured for the Skullions to slow down. The voices were muffled but sounded pleasant after a moment of consideration and Rose sighed in relief.

She opened the nearest stairwell and gestured for the Skullions to hurry up the stairs. A sharp alarmed cry from the front of the group made Rose gasp and the Skullions began to rush back down towards her. At the top of the stairs was a surprised looking guard reaching for his radio. Rose leapt to the side, swinging up on the stairwell railing and used the cross railings to climb up alongside the Skullions. Her knees were shaking as she jumped off the railing and kicked at the guard just as he began to draw his firearm. Slamming his hand against the wall, Rose flinched at the scraping sound of the gun against the wall and hoped awkwardly for a moment on her one leg as she lashed out and punched him in the gut.

He released the gun letting it fall to the ground and Rose lowered her leg. The guard began to recover and Rose brought her knee up to his groin. With a cry of pain, he collapsed to the ground. Wrapping an arm around his neck, Rose squeezed and held him still as he struggled against her. But slowly his movements turned sluggish and he fell limp against the ground.

“Okay,” Rose whispered. “Okay, another one down.”

With a frown, she reached over and picked up the firearm. Rose carefully removed the clip and opened the slide to retrieve the chambered bullet. She slipped them into her pockets and quickly checked that he wasn’t carrying any other weapons or ammunition. Grabbing his radio, Rose stood up and smiled at the Skullions who were cowering down by the stairwell door.

“Time to go,” Rose called to them, motioning for them to follow her up the stairwell.

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Sarah Jane, Mickey and Johnny were discussions how to escape the room while Luke, Rani and Clyde continued to try and open the door. There was a sense of urgency in the air and Mickey was struggling to stay still. Worthington’s measures for security weren’t more than Rose could handle under ordinary circumstances and with luck, Spock had control of the internal security, but that wasn’t going to stop him from worrying.

Then a high pitched hum filled the room along with a strange ozone smell that made Sarah Jane sniff at the air. She looked over towards the door and gasped softly as she noticed a thin barely there hint of smoke curling up through the air.

“Boys get away from the door,” Sarah Jane order sharply.

Mickey grabbed Clyde and hauled him back from the doorway as Luke jumped back. The smoke thickened and a black mark began to appear around the heavy lock. Sarah Jane clapped her hands gleefully.

“It’s K-9,” she crowed. “Here we go.”

Then the smoke stopped and the door creaked. Mickey reached over into one of the abandoned buckets to get a cleaning cloth. He wrapped it around his hand to test the doorknob, but it wasn’t hot. Grinning, he tugged on the door and pulled the heavy metal door open. The locking mechanism fell to the ground with a clink as the door shifted to reveal K-9 in the corridor.

“Good boy K-9,” Sarah Jane announced as she slipped past Mickey and poked her head out into the corridor. “Where is Rose?”

“Mistress Rose is attempting to free the Skullion prisoners Mistress,” K-9 informed her calmly. “She requests that you provide a distraction.”

“A distraction?” Rani cried out with a small pout. “Why are we always the distraction?”

“Not the time,” Johnny remarked sharply before he hummed in thought. “Any ideas of what to do to draw attention without getting ourselves shot at.”

“Mess with the electrical systems is usually a good one,” Mickey suggested quickly as he gestured to the door. “And setting off fire alarms, but first I suggest that we get out of the prison room.”

The others followed him out and K-9 began to roll towards the nearest utility room with a command from Sarah Jane. In the distance, Mickey could hear the voices of guards down the hall and motioned for the others to get into the utility room. They ducked inside just at the guards came around the corner. One of them drew a gun as Mickey shoved Clyde into the utility room just as K-9 opened fire.

The first guard dropped to the ground as the beam hit him and Mickey rushed forward as the second guard floundered in shock. He began to recover just as Mickey reached him and pulled out his firearm. Moving quickly, Mickey grabbed his arm and twisted it, forcing him to drop the firearm before being shoved up against the wall. The man shouted just before Mickey slammed his head against the wall and dropped him to the floor. Taking a deep breath, Mickey checked them both for weapons and pocketed their firearms. With a grunt, he picked up one of the guards and began hauling him back towards the prison room. He dumped him in the room and was heading back for the other one when the fire alarm began to sound. Mickey chuckled and looked down at K-9.
“Any chance you could melt the door lock so they can’t leave?”

“Affirmative,” K-9 answered with a happy wag of his mechanical tail.

The roof door was locked and Rose could hear the Skullions behind her making small frightened noises. Rose ignored her sonic pen and summoned her sword. With one sharp long slice, she cut down the length of the lock and half the door. It half fell open, swing out on its hinges and Rose rushed out onto the large flat surface. Below them, she could hear alarms beginning to sound and hoped that it was her distraction.

All the Skullions spilt out behind her and spread out on the roof. Rose took a deep breath and looked around at the view with a tiny flicker of worry. She glanced up at the sky and licked her lips nervously. She hoped that Sarah Jane and the others were alright, hoped that UNIT would get here soon and that nothing else would go wrong. Pulling out her phone, Rose checked the time as the Skullions huddled together and whispered to each other. Their ship was supposed to be here any second.

“And you must be Rose Tyler,” a male voice called behind her sounding very smug.

Rose spun to see a well-dressed man that she recognised from the new as Mister Worthington standing with some kind of alien weapon pointed at her. Rose glanced over it with a frown, noting that it had a type four power pack. It was sad that she knew that, but she summoned her sword and held it at the ready. Worthington’s eyes widen, but he kept the weapon trained on.

“Step away from them,” Worthington ordered. “Your cohorts won’t be able to keep my guards busy for long.” Worthington chuckled and said, “I asked myself if she can’t leave though the main doors how else could they leave. And here you are, what was the plan Tyler climb down the building? Call for a helicopter rescue,” he nodded towards her phone. “Then what? UNIT takes possession of the aliens? UNIT uses them to advance military might? At least I was using them to benefit humanity.”

“Is that what you call it?” Rose asked, her lips twisting into a frown as she slipped her phone into her pocket.

“My computer will be the greatest piece of technology on the planet,” Worthington shouted at her.

“Hardly,” Rose scoffed. “Most impressive to the public, but sooner or later people will want to really know how their new toy works.”

“We live in the age of the digital copyright,” Worthington countered as he took a step towards her and eyed the Skullions who were frozen in fear. “The law even protects me from people poking at my business.”

The sound of vehicles pulling up around the building made Worthington pause and Rose risked a glance towards the parking lot where she could see several large UNIT vehicles pulling up. They vanished from view just as quickly, but Worthington’s face was priceless. Raising an eyebrow she smirked.

“You were saying? Do you really think your guards will do anything but surrender to UNIT.”
“Blast it,” Worthington hissed and his finger twitched on the trigger as he eyed the aliens. “You haven’t won anything, nothing at all.”

He eased one hand off the weapon and began reaching into his coat pocket. Rose gasped softly and jumped forward as he pressed the button. Blue bolts of electricity lashed out over the bodies of the Skullions who began to scream in pain and fear. The man had a cruel smile on his face and looked towards them to indulge himself giving Rose the opening she needed. Ripping the weapon from his hand, Rose tossed it across the roof and brought her knee up sharply into his stomach. Worthington groaned and crumbled against Rose. She pulled his thumb off the top of the pen, releasing the small button she could now see and the screaming stopped. Worthington struggled against her, but Rose hit him in the face with her elbow before finally ripping the pen from his hand.

Dropping Worthington, Rose kept the pen tight in her hand and turned to check on the Skullions. They were all shaking and clutching at each other with expressions that made Rose’s heart ached. She moved over to Plank and gently laid a hand on his shoulder. As he looked at her, Rose carefully handed him the pen. With a soft disbelieving noise, he took the pen with his large singular eye tearing up slightly.

She heard a groan and a muffled curse behind her that made Rose jump up and turn. Worthington was moving for the discarded weapon and was closer than she was, but Mickey rushed out onto the roof. His eyes locked with Rose for only a moment before he kicked Worthington hard in the side. The man collapsed on the roof and Mickey bent down to scoop up the weapons.

“Sarah Jane?” Rose called over as the Skullions backed away from Mickey.

“Saying hello to the Brigadier,” Mickey answered with a grin. “But I’m supposed to be protecting you remember.”

“Ah yes,” Rose laughed. “Lest the Doctor think UNIT doesn’t take care of me.”

Then Rose felt a change in the air pressure and could smell something a bit like ozone. She looked up as a massive round ship appeared in the air right above them. The Skullions cheered and Rose laughed as Worthington stumbled to his feet with a horrified cry. A blue beam shot down out of the ship and shimmered in the air in front of the Skullions.

“We go now,” Plank shouted as he gestured the others forward. “Thank you,” he called to Rose. “Thank you!” He grabbed Rose’s hand and squeezed it.

“You’re welcome,” Rose answered with a smile. “Go on, go home and take care.”

“No,” Worthington screamed as he hauled himself off the ground. “No, I paid millions! You’re destroying everything!” He grabbed Plank and shouted, “You belong to me. You’re mine, mine.”

Mickey made an aborted move to grab Worthington, but then Plank dragged him into the beam and both of them vanished. With a soft hum, the ship rose away from the building and vanished in a shimmer of blue from sight. Rose felt the air pressure ease a moment later and let out a soft sigh.

“I hope they put him to work,” Mickey chuckled as he looked over at Rose. “Would serve him right. Ten years labour for each one he imprisoned.”
“Oh, you’re got a vengeful side Mickey,” Rose observed as she stepped over to him and locked their arms. “So on a scale of one to ten how irritated with me was Benton.”

“I didn’t stick around long enough to find out,” Mickey admitted with a chuckle. “But I doubt you are,” he tugged her towards the doorway. “Strangely everyone seems to have this odd fear of making your boyfriend mad.”

“Can’t imagine why ” Rose sighed with a shake of her head as Mickey put an arm around her shoulder. “He’s a sweetheart.”

“Yeah yeah, so how about chips?”

“Chips sounds marvellous,” Rose agreed with a happy sigh.

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It was a small and unfamiliar chip shop to Rose, just off the nearby tube station. Despite the rush of people heading into the station and in and out of the shop, it was clean and the chairs were fairly comfortable. A big platter of chips complete with a newspaper

“I know that look,” Mickey observed uneasily as Rose dipped another chip in vinegar. “You’re thinking about going after that black market operation aren’t you?”

Shrugging, Rose tried to look innocent even as she pushed her hair behind her shoulder. She chewed the chip thoughtfully, it was pretty good, not wonderful, but good. Mickey kept giving her a suspicious look.

“Rose, don’t do it,” he insisted. “Don’t go looking for trouble.”

“Oh come on,” Rose finally countered. “It bothers you; it’s got to bother you! The idea that there are sentient beings on Earth being used as slave labour.”

“Slavery is still a real issue,” Mickey agreed with a nod. “But Rose we haven’t even gotten humans to stop doing it to each other, what chance have we really got ending the enslavement of aliens.”

“I get what you’re saying,” Rose interjected. “I really do, but come on Mickey even as horrible as human slavery is it is still human. We aren’t going to accidentally cause a war with an alien race because we’re horrible to each other. I don’t like anyone being enslaved, but this issue is actually dangerous.”

She could see that she had gotten through a little bit as Mickey nodded in slight agreement. He still looked uncomfortable at what she was saying but wasn’t arguing. Feeling a bit more confident thanks to that Rose actually smiled and straightened up, taking a couple more chips.

“Today we did a good thing and those aliens are going back into space with stories of both human enslavers and liberators,” Rose offered quickly as she leaned forward. “They have families who are going to get to see them again. It’s that important.”

“What are you getting at?” Mickey pressed with a sigh, slumping back in his chair. “Where are you really going with this Rose? What’s the plan?”

“I’m not crazy enough to think that I’d be safe just running around after these guys,” Rose assured
Mickey quickly with small smile at his sigh of relief. “But as an agent with UNIT, maybe working with a partner with the ability to call in some support maybe we could break these guys. Spock got information on the market contacts from Orginx system.”

“You’re not a secret agent Rose,” Mickey reminded her despite looking a little interested himself.

Pulling the sonic pen out of her hair Rose held it up in her right hand so both in and her bracelet caught in the light.

“Bond’s gadgets have nothing on me.”

“It would be very dangerous, these people enslave aliens and are violent. “And with UNIT seizing everything from one of their customers they’ve got to be on high alert. Benton gave the order for every Orginx computer to be kept under lock and key and is stripping out all of the technology. They haven’t avoided UNIT this long by being idiots.”

“They’re not violent to clients I’ll bet,” Rose countered eagerly. “Come on Mickey, you could come along with me to help me and keep me safe for Benton. UNIT forces could be on standby as we find out just how much dangerous stuff these guys have and who they might be selling it to.” Rose leaned forward and whispered. “I mean who knows who comes to those auctions and bids, there could be terrible off-world weapons in the hands of insane madmen.”

“You’re trying to turn this into a Bond film again.”

“Don’t be silly, there are no aliens in Bond films,” Rose scoffed. “Come on Mickey, you know I’ll give it a try with or without you and UNIT.”

“Let me guess you want me to help you sell the idea to Benton?”

“Well since you offered that would be great,” Rose replied with a cheerful smile. She grabbed another chip and beamed at him. “Cheers.”
Rise of the Black Sun: Welcome to Seoul

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Fifty-Seven: Rise of the Black Sun: Welcome to Seoul

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

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Rose Marion Tyler smiled as she stepped out of the black car and into the setting August sun. Keeping her smile firmly in place, Rose pulled off her sunglasses and smoothed down the front of the tailored black waistcoat she wore. Nearby a pair of armed guards dressed in neat suits that bulged slightly under their arms stood watching her. Rose remained in place and looked up at the tall metal and glass building. All around her the lights of Seoul were coming on with a vengeance and she could already tell that the city would be blinding. A sign above her head proclaimed the tall building to be a hotel she’d never heard of and Rose inwardly growled at the notion of the black market being so well hidden.

A valet rushed forward with a cart and began unloading their bags. Rose eyed him as he picked up a large silver carrying case, but he moved quickly and efficiently. Mickey stepped up next to her, dressed in a dark suit that showed off his shoulders and also hinted to the fact that he was armed. He nodded at the two guards waiting by the car and offered Rose his hand.

“They’re ready inside Mrs Beckett,” Mickey informed her respectfully.

Nodding, Rose didn’t react to the alias that Benton had given her for the operation. It had been hard enough to convince him to go along with this as it was without arguing over details. Mickey waited for Rose to start walking and when they came to the door put a protective hand on her lower back. He glared at the doorman who looked a little too long at Rose and she struggled not to laugh. If he wasn’t careful Mickey was going to get a little too much into this whole bodyguard thing.

“Mrs Beckett,” an older Korean man greeted as he came forward with a smile. “You are most welcome. I hope that your flight was pleasant.”

“It was, thank you,” Rose agreed pleasantly, but careful not to be too friendly. “But I would appreciate having a chance to rest before my business meetings start.”

“Of course, of course,” the man rushed to say. “Most of the other members of your organisation are already here. Your conference should be a great success.”

He snapped his fingers and a young pretty girl rushed forward with a tray contained their keys. Rose allowed Mickey to pick them up and examine them before she took one from him. The attendant shrank back from the expression on his face and Rose wondered if she should tell him to tone it down. The manager gave them their room number and floor, offering to escort them up, but Mickey quickly shot him down. Their valet followed them into the elevator silently and Mickey tightened his grip on Rose’s waist. Rose allowed a small smile but nodded towards the valet who had lowered his head. Mickey winked at her and Rose gave him a stern look.

Their suite was on the twenty-seventh floor with a large living room, dining area, office space and
two bedrooms each with its own bathroom. Rose directed the valet to unload the luggage into the
two bedrooms, claiming the slightly larger one for herself, with a few items being put into the
office. Mickey stayed by the door, looking imposing until the valet wheeled out his cart. Rose
raised an eyebrow and waited as Mickey locked up the front door and pulled out a strange device
that looked a lot like a television remote from his carryon bag. Switching it on, it began to make a
small humming sound and he slowly walked around the room with it.

Rose hung by the doorway to the bedroom for a moment before pulling out her phone. She logged
in quickly and checked for any messages from Spock or Benton. There was nothing and she turned
off the phone. Picking up one of her bags, Rose began to unpack. She made sure that her translator
was firmly in place and the sonic pen was still in the pocket of her blazer.

Opening the drapes, Rose gasped softly as she looked out over the city. They were nowhere near
the top floor of the all the skyscrapers, but from here she could see the glittering lights of the city
stretching out for what looked like miles. When they landed she’d seen mountains outside the city,
but they were nowhere in sight now. Mickey came into her bedroom and began moving the device
around the elegant vanity, through the small walk-in-closet and around the massive king sized bed
as it just kept on humming. Finally, when he’d circled the room he nodded and hit a small button
the device.

“This place is bigger than the flats we grew up in,” Mickey sighed as he slipped the device into his
 pocket. “Remarkably the room isn’t bugged.”

“This lot probably think they’re above being caught,” Rose remarked with a sneer. “After all it’s
only recently that anything has even been put into international law considering aliens and even
those laws are a secret.”

Rose sighed as she started unpacking the fancy tailored clothes that she’d had to get for this act to
work. There were three piece suits, fancy pants and blouses and a few evening gowns in the
hanging back along with a travel case of jewellery, almost none of it Rose’s style. Even her bloody
dressing gown was fancy. These were the sort of things that her alternate life as a rich heiress
would be used to wearing. Rose was grateful for those memories for a whole new reason: that
Rose’s Tyler had experience in high society and after a week of practice Rose as able to keep her
posher accent in place. It didn’t mean that this wasn’t going to be a painful experience, if… when
the Doctor found out he was sure to laugh. Rose was pretty sure that Kate, Malcolm and Tosh were
all already laughing at her expense.

“So how did you and Benton arrange for you to get into this anyway?” Mickey asked from the
living room as he double checked a floral painting.

“Well… I used the contacts of my… late husband,” Rose admitted with a grimace.

“Late husband? Wait you aren’t talking about Beckett aren’t you? That’s where the alias came
from?” Mickey asked in a horrified voice.

“Sadly yes, due to the alien tech stashed at his company and his connections with UNIT; Benton
and the Security Council apparently decided that legally it was better if we had actually finished
getting married,” Rose explained with a scowl. “Apparently he died on our honeymoon.”

“My condolences,” Mickey chuckled as he pulled a bottle of water out of the fancy kitchenette
fridge and toasted Rose with it. “I suppose I see where they were coming from.”
“Yeah, a widow is an easier thing to explain though the company still went under after his death thanks to UNIT pulling funding,” Rose half growled. “Though at least they changed some of the details to keep me mostly out of it.”

“Did you ever see any of the money?” Mickey asked, “I mean given that you were the sole owner.”

“At least they changed the details to keep me mostly out of it. Our original marriage never featured in the papers due to my job so the records are only UNIT created.”

“Let’s not push it Mickey, but bottom line I’m here as Beckett’s widow. Benton had the details changed from Rose Tyler to Marion Thorne. Our original marriage never featured in the papers due to my job so the records are only UNIT created.”

“No it isn’t,” Rose admitted, “But otherwise it could have taken years to get in with these guys. Benton reviewed Beckett’s records and found odd purchases and some vague contact details. That’s how we connected with these guys, add in some magic from Spock and Richard Beckett’s widow is ready to rebuild her darling husband’s company and stick it to UNIT,” Rose grumbled as she pulled out some hangers and started organising the clothes. “Apparently you have to be recommended by a current client to access this network or be the heir of one. I think this is Benton’s way of punishing me for being a pain in the past.”

“So you have to talk nicely about the Silver Lord, fun.”

“Your sarcasm isn’t helping. But that’s why Benton sent you along, to help protect me and provide some protection as a poor widow.”

“Yeah,” Mickey sighed and shook his head, “Tempting, but I’ve heard about your boyfriend.”

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“Thank’s why Benton sent you along, to help protect me and provide some protection as a poor widow.”

“Yeah, but older than me,” Mickey replied with a shrug. “She was ready for marriage and kids and I’m not there yet.”

“I hear you,” Rose agreed with a nod. “But don’t worry you’ll meet someone wonderful and I’ll be the overprotective friend who totally puts her through a gauntlet.”

“Lovely so I’ve got you, my gran and your Mum to worry about.”

“Something like that,” Rose laughed, reaching back and pulling out the hairpins holding her harsh tight bun. “Check the agenda for me well you?”

“There’s a dinner tonight in two hours, formal by the looks of things here. I guess they like the clients to mingle. Weird seeing as this lot bids against each other for the technology.”

“But the system requires everyone to keep their mouth shut,” Rose pointed out as she pulled a long red dress out of the carrying bag. Sharon had insisted she get it for the trip, but Rose as starting to have second thoughts. “I suppose if everyone sees each other then they know that all those people can point the finger at them and vice versa.”
“Still it’s weird, I would have thought that the less contact the better.”

“Black Sun is rumoured to have a lot of alien technology,” Rose reminded him. “And when you add in what people bring here to sell to each other… well, I suppose they need to have the reassurance of seeing other people.”

“Maybe, so what toys did you bring?”

That question got a smile out of Rose and she stopped unpacking. She crooked her finger and walked into the study. The valet had placed the two silver boxes on the desk and Rose gently opened the first one. Inside on form were three dangerous looking devices that bore a strong resemblance to firearms.

“What are they?” Mickey asked looking over her shoulder. “I know they aren’t weapons, Benton and you wouldn’t do that.”

“This one is a hairdryer,” Rose told him with a grin. “This one actually uses a special foam to clean according to Spock and the last one is for decorating baked goods, but they look a lot like firearms.”

“You’re a little evil,” Mickey chuckled.

“What?” Rose shrugged with a smile. She turned to the second box and opened it. “This one has a bit more variety, still as harmless as we could manage,” she explained.

Rose picked up a flat triangle shaped device and pressed a button on the side. A small hologram appeared of an alien and the message played through. The next object was a small shining orb that opened when Rose pressed a set combination of buttons and began to play a soft haunting tune. Lastly was a small partially burned up set of circuits, not fancy, but Rose knew that tech designers wouldn’t be able to resist.

‘Nothing dangerous, but enough to make it clear I’m here on business,” Rose assured Mickey. “Speaking of which there are things to do.”

Moving back to her bedroom, Rose quickly unpacked the last of the nicest clothes so they didn’t wrinkle too much. She pulled out a small thigh hostler that Malcolm had created to hold a phone out of sight. Rose slipped her superphone into the small holster for under her dress, feeling a little silly. She then took the new phone that UNIT had arranged for Mrs Marion Beckett and put it into her clutch. It was complete with a variety of contacts, really UNIT agents ready to help sell the story, and sadly some of Rose’s old photos of her and Richard. Malcolm had outdone himself with recovering them and building her a fake history.

“Are you already getting dressed?” Mickey asked as he saw Rose pull out her makeup bag and pick up a long red dress. “We’ve still got over an hour.”

“Oh Mickey,” Rose sighed affectionately. “You still have a lot to learn about women. Get into your tuxedo.”

“I don’t want to,” Mickey grumbled, but he turned on his heel and headed for his own bedroom.

Rose laughed and strode into the bathroom, calling on the other Rose Tyler’s memories and knowledge to get her through this. She’d need all help she could get.
Rise of the Black Sun: Playing Nice

The girl from the estates in Rose was nervous as she stepped into the grand ballroom with Mickey. Thankfully the Rose Tyler from fancy schools and posh society was reasonably at ease with the situation. She took slow steps so she didn’t fall in the strappy red heels even if she was holding Mickey’s arm. The long red dress shimmered softly in the light of the crystal chandeliers hanging from the vaulted gold and white ceiling. She heard Mickey muffle his surprised gasp, but allowed herself a small smile as she took it all in.

Then Rose scanned the room and tried not to be too pleased. The room was almost all men in tailored tuxedos though a few of them had young women hanging off their arms in a variety of dress styles and colours. There was an older woman in her early sixties wearing a heavy dark fur shawl and smoking at one of the tables with several younger men around her. As they walked further into the room Rose couldn’t help but notice that she was getting a few looks. She detangled her arm from Mickey’s and allowed him to pull out a chair for her at a thus far empty table. Sitting down, Rose quickly scanned the flatware, noting with the sigh of relief that she could remember all of them. Mickey stepped back and calmly stood behind her, shifting into the persona of a bodyguard making it clear that Rose was here for herself. She wasn’t anyone’s arm candy.

“Forgive me, Miss,” an American voice said from her left making Rose turn. “I don’t believe we’ve had the pleasure of meeting before,” the voice added with a strong cocky hint.

It was a tall man with dark receding hair, a thick brown moustache with the hint of goatee and dark eyes. He was smiling at her, but it was arrogant and slimily. Still Rose managed to smile and nod to him as he slipped into the seat next to her. Mickey stepped forward, but Rose held up a hand as a signal to stay back. The newcomer smiled at the sight and nodded in approval.

“Henry van Statten,” he introduced himself with a soft drawl, holding out his hand. Rose accepted it and he shifted her hand so he could kiss her knuckles. “You’ve probably heard of me, CEO of GeoComTex, owner of the internet.”

“Really?” Rose replied with a slightly breathless gasp. “I wasn’t aware that anyone owned the internet.”

“We keep that under wraps in our little club,” Van Statten whispered to her with a wink, leaning a bit closer to her. “And you are?”

“Marion Beckett,” Rose introduced herself with a flirty smile, hoping she wasn’t too out of practice.

Van Statten’s smile widened for a moment and Rose resisted the urge to smirk before Van Statten
schooled his features.

“Ah Richard Beckett’s widow,” he said in a sad voice. “My condolences ma’am, I only met your husband once, but he was brilliant.”

“Indeed,” Rose agreed with a proud lift of her chin. “He was ahead of his time,” she gestured around the room and smiled again. “Even if he did have a little help.”

Van Statten laughed and nodded, “True, he even had a contract with the United Nations if I recall.”

“That’s right,” Rose agreed with a nod, letting herself look a little sadder. “He was so proud of the arrangement, UNIT released technology to him to work with and release to humanity and he picked a few more interesting pieces on the side here with the profits from his UNIT work.”

“Terrible for him to die so young and on your honeymoon no less.”

“I was trying to get him to relax more,” Rose sighed dramatically. “But he thought himself invincible.”

“We all do,” Van Statten agreed, reaching over and setting his hand over Rose’s. “I hear that UNIT moved in and took over the assets.”

“Yes,” Rose muttered as she reached over to take the water glass in her free hand. “They weren’t… fully aware of how much Richard had brought me into. We could hardly tell them that we met when I was researching alien technology without exposing the other side of Richard’s contacts.”

Van Statten looked very interested at those words and Rose smiled to herself. Maybe this would be easier than she thought.

“And they could hardly leave the widow in charge of such an operation,” Van Statten finished with a shake of his head. “Well, I’m glad to see that you’re getting back in the game.” He leaned forward with a grin. “Between you and me, most of the idiots here wouldn’t know what to do with these treasures if they bit them.”

“And what do you do with them Mr Van Statten.”

“Henry please,” he offered with a smile. “I’ll be honest, I’m not all that creative with most of it. My company reverse engineers anything useful, much like your husband and release it commercially. Broadband came from the Roswell crash.”

“Well Henry, please call me Marion,” Rose replied, flipping her long blond curls lightly with a smile. “Richard did mention you a few times, lamented that you got in the game faster than he managed to.”

“Timing is everything,” Van Statten agreed with a smug smile. “So what are your plans here?”

“I have a few items for sale from my personal collection, the one that UNIT didn’t know about,” Rose informed him with a shrug. “Three potential weapons and a few more interesting little odds and ends. Hopefully enough to raise some capital to start over without having to make a deal with UNIT or anyone else.”

“They have their uses,” Van Statten said as he reached over and took another glass of water and
took a sip. “I have some agreements in place myself, it’s how I accessed the Roswell crash in the first place, but I can understand your reluctance. That’s one of the reasons I diversified so much, to protect myself from my so-called partners. But I’m interested in hearing about your expertise Marion, I’m always looking for fresh talent to add to my think tank.”

“I don’t play so well with other Henry,” Rose teased, doing her best to ignore the very apparent interest on Van Statten’s face. “Took Richard the longest time to even get my number. Joked that he might have to resort to alien technology.” Rose regretted those words the moment she said them but didn’t flinch at the reminder.

“A challenge then,” Van Statten laughed. “That’s alright gorgeous, I like challenges. I wish you good luck, but if you change your mind give me a call.” He handed her a card and leaned forward to whisper, “Or if you want some fun around the auctions give me a call for that too.”

“You’ll be the first on my mind,” Rose promised even as she felt the urge to go and take a shower.

Van Statten grinned and excused himself, making a move to speak with an older looking businessman that looked familiar who had just come through the door.

“Fun crowd,” Mickey muttered behind her.

“Did you get all that?” Rose asked in a low voice as she took a sip of water.

“Yeah, we’ll get him onto the watch list.”

With Van Statten gone and moving about the room to mingle, Rose turned her attention to observing the others that were trickling in. For the most part, they remained men, some old and some young and some in a combination together. A few of the younger men moved a few steps behind the older ones and nodded in deference from time to time. Rose hummed softly and made the assumption that they were likely assistants or the alien tech expert at some company here with the boss.

The few women that were in the room, for the most part, seemed to be girlfriends, trophy wives or assistants with a few of them using the phones to take notes. She noted with a frown that there seemed to be a few Orignex tablets scattered throughout the group. Then again if the labour force and technology had come from this market group then it made sense that Worthington had given out a few samples. With his company closed and seized there was nothing stopping this lot from trying to reverse engineer his tablet. It was a mess.

“You look bored my dear,” an American-accented older female voice declared.

Rose shifted to find the older woman she’d noted early moving over to her with a cane in one hand and a drink in the other with her golden dress shimmering in the light of the room. One of her young male attendants lunged forward to pull the seat that Van Statten had abandoned out. The older woman gracefully dropped into the chair gulped down the last of what was in her glass and handed it over to her attendant.

“Fetch me and Mrs Beckett some champagne,” she commanded and the young brunette man nodded, moving off quickly. The other two stayed behind and assumed the same bodyguard stance that Mickey was still standing in. “Ah hello there my dear, welcome to the party.”

“Thank you,” Rose answered politely, unable to keep herself from smiling a little. “I’m Mrs
Beckett as you already seem to know.”

“T’im Sandra Lawrence but call me Sandy,” the woman replied with a nod. “And of course we know who you are my dear, when an heir requests to join the club as it were we are all alerted to it, just in case we know something.”

“Marion then please Sandy, so you know everyone here already?”

“Well not the latest toys and assistants,” Sandy chuckled, gesturing around the room. “Van Statten’s assistant for instance probably won’t survive the week.” Sandy leaned forward and drunkenly giggled, “He bought a mind wiping machine two years ago and has a lot of fun using it on any employee that irritates him.”

“My goodness,” Rose gasped, a feeling of horror creeping up through her. “Really?”

“Well that’s the rumour anyway,” Sandy huffed as her attendant returned with their drinks. She toasted to Rose who accepted the offered glass and returned the toast. Sandy sipped her and Rose hesitantly took a small drink. “Do you not like alcohol my dear or do you not trust it when it comes from strange hands.”

“A bit of both,” Rose admitted with a soft blush. “My Mum often had a little too much to drink when I was young. And as for the trust issue,” Rose tilted her head and smirked, “I am the new girl.”

“True and Van Statten already been sniffing around your skirt so I can’t say you’re wrong,” Sandy laughed before taking another long sip. “Course he’s interested in anything that Beckett may have had. See your late husband was quite a star here even though he was only with us for a short time. He always had all sorts of interesting things to share and could identify anything. He rapidly became a favourite and always seemed to be one step ahead of everyone else.” Sandy shook her head and chuckled, “I don’t know what his secret was, but I’m certain they are all very interested in anything you know.”

“He’s gone, UNIT took most everything and I’m starting over,” Rose answered with a shrug, taking another small sip of her champagne.

“Pity he died on your honeymoon,” Sandy sighed dramatically. “He was a very gifted man.”

Rose barely held back a grimace and wondered if she was seeing Jack too often that she was reading into Sandy’s comment too much. But Sandy was grinning and chuckling to herself as she eyed one of her bodyguards. No, Rose decided, probably not and was once again very grateful for those god awful migraines.

“So what have you been doing with yourself since his death?”

“Oh just trying to stay under the radar,” Rose answered calmly. “Traveled a bit which was fun and helped me with my grief.”

“Of course dear, of course.”

Their conversation was cut short by the lights dimming and a set of spotlights on the far side of the room switching on. There was a small dais set up on the east wall and Rose turned her attention towards it as the lights shifted onto it. The man that stepped out had dark brown hair with a
receding hairline and pale blue eyes. He was dressed in a sharp dark blue three-piece suit with a gold chain hanging between pockets. Rose placed in his in the early fifties and he had a smug look on his face as he surveyed the room. She had an instant dislike for him, well she disliked them all, but this guy was worse.

“Welcome, welcome,” he cooed to the crowd. “I know you’ve all come a long way for this week’s events and you have my gratitude for your cooperation as always. The usual rules are in place and you have all been informed for the penalties for any rule breaking which would just break all of our hearts.” There was some weak laughter throughout the room and Rose shifted uncomfortably. “Now many of you have already met our latest addition, the widow of our dear Richard Becket Marion Beckett. I trust you will all make her feel welcome and on an exciting note, Marion was Richard’s secret partner and actually knows a thing or two about aliens.”

Rose forced herself to smile as she got a few looks from around the room. Next, to her, Sandy looked much more interested and smiled at her. Mickey stepped a little closer to her, earning them some amused looks, but Rose didn’t care. She was too grateful that she hadn’t come into this alone. It was odd facing down human enemies who used something much more dangerous than firearms, this lot used their power.
“Nice folks,” Mickey grumbled as he closed and locked the door behind them as he and Rose reentered their suite.

Nodding agreement, Rose moved to the laptop bag she’d abandoned on the bed of her room earlier and began to set it up in the study. Behind her, Mickey pulled out the bug detection device from a holster directly below his sidearm. Rose stayed silent as he began to move around the room once again. She doubted that they’d be planting bugs in the hotel, but she could understand the concern. Sitting down, Rose pulled out her Beckett phone and checked a few of the messages she’d received from UNIT to help make the phone seem real.

She replied to several of them, staying in character the best she could and as Mickey left the living room with a thumbs up she pulled out her superphone. There were no messages and Rose nodded to herself before slipping it back into the small holster. Slumping back on the sofa, Rose kicked off the fancy heels with a happy sigh. Mickey returned to the room a few moments later looking a bit more relaxed.

“We’re clean,” he told her with a nod, reaching up and undoing his bow tie. “I felt like my neck was in a sling and all those bastards….”

“Tell me how you really feel,” Rose teased as she stood up and went into the office to retrieve her laptop. “Weren’t all just really nice and charming and oily,” Rose shuddered as the laptop dinged softly. “You could almost see the oil dripping off of them.”

“Especially Van Statten,” Mickey grumbled. “Now there’s an arrogant bastard I’d like to punch.”

“Well don’t try that yet,” Rose reminded him with a chuckle. “I’d hate to explain to Benton why we both got thrown out or worse have you need to explain to him why I’m here alone. I’m going to change.”

Leaving the laptop alone and on to give Spock a chance to connect to it, Rose went into her bedroom and paused. She looked around carefully, trying to make sure that nothing was out of place. There didn’t seem to be anything and Rose relaxed a little, closing the door behind her. She had one pair of way too expensive jeans, but they were most casual and comfortable thing she currently had access to. A pair of tall brown boots and a loose blouse completed the more casual outfit and Rose tugged at the shirt uneasily. This was the sort of ‘casual’ that her other life had been used to. For a moment she wanted to call the Doctor and ask him if he ever felt weird remembering his earlier incarnations, but this didn’t feel like the time to attempt that conversation.

Instead Rose sent a quick series of messages to Benton via her superphone and some notes to
Spock. It was getting late so she begged off spending more time debating over what might be happening. Rose bid Mickey a good night and retreated to her bedroom where she took a few pills for a growing headache and collapsed on her bed. Sleep did not come easy, the uneasiness in her gut kept Rose awake even after she heard Mickey begin to snore.

Rose rolled over on her side again and watched a stream of moonlight and neon slip into her room. Whatever the hotel used to soundproof was impressive, it was easy to forget that there was a huge busy city just outside. She felt uneasy in this strange place. Maybe it was the fact that she so rarely stayed in hotels or maybe it was the knowledge that there were people in the hotel who were beyond dangerous.

“I need to move,” Rose muttered as she threw back the duvet and stood up. The smell of the room, the feel of the bed was all just too off for her. The room was too big and she just couldn’t fall asleep.

She got dressed quickly and pulled back on the boots with a smile. They really weren’t too bad. They weren’t her combat boots, but the low heel was workable and they looked a lot nicer. She’d have to see about holding onto them once this job was done. Rose moved slowly through the living room and glanced into Mickey’s room. He was snoring softly and looked quite content spread out in the middle of the king sized bed. Chuckling softly, Rose went into the study and jotted down a quick note for Mickey before she left the room.

Rose moved down the hallway slowly. Beneath her feet, the luxurious plush carpet muffled her footfalls as she inched forward. The hotel was startling silent despite the fact that Rose knew there was a busy and thrilling city outside. Somehow this place seemed to be its own little world. She took a few breaths to relax and tried to look like she was just bored and wandering around for a bit. Pulling out her Beckett phone, Rose posted a few messages about insomnia and started typing out an email to ‘Katie’ or really Kate through a dummy account.

She went down to the main floor via the staircases. Even the staircases, the emergency ones, at the ends of the hall were nice with thick carpet, solid wooden bannisters and it was heated. Stepping out in the conference wing, Rose paused in surprise at how low the lights were turned down. None the less she kept moving forward, heading towards the main lobby. Then she spotted a light coming out from underneath one of the doors. It was very soft and faint and had the lights not been so low she wouldn’t have noticed at all. Rose looked around in surprise, she was fairly certain that the hotel was closed to any business except their little ‘conference.’

The cameras were off, Rose realised with a frown as she glanced between them. The small lights at the bottom were dull and dark and she stepped forward to explain them more closely. There was no movement, no sound and no blinking light. Odd for such a fancy hotel to have such a serious gap in security. Her fingers twitched to call Spock, but he was already monitoring their hotel for UNIT. Discreetly of course just to make sure that nothing was traced back to the Chesterton-Smith household.

Rose moved on a few steps only to find a few more out of order cameras. Looking around curiously, her eyes landed on a large set of double doors simply marked ‘the moon room’. There was definitely something going on inside, something that the hotel was so happy to pretend didn’t exist that they had the cameras turned off.

The door opened into the small dark entryway and Rose slipped inside quickly so the light was unnoticed. She could hear faint voices through an open archway that was covered by thick curtains which muffled the voices. Inching forward, Rose looked around, but there were no guards in sight.
She knelt down by the edge of the doorway and gently pulled the curtain away from the wall so she could peer into the mysterious room.

It was a group of five figures sitting around the large conference table. The lights were so low that Rose couldn’t properly see anyone’s faces though she thought one of them on the far side might be female. She glanced around the entry away again to check that she was alone and that the outer door was closed. Despite the nagging little voice in her head that suggested she go back and get Mickey, Rose leaned forward and shifted her head so that her ear was just beyond the curtain. She wouldn’t be able to see, but she could hear.

“Operations in Europe are moving too slowly,” one harsh voice said in heavily accented English, Japanese maybe Rose thought.

“UNIT operations in the United Kingdom are the best funded and have the highest success rate in the world,” an English voice replied, very posh and arrogant. “We’re having trouble keeping a foothold and Worthington’s recent failure has set us back.”

“The UK is critical to controlling Europe,” another thick male voice cut in. “History proves that if that little island isn’t brought under control it is too good a strategic location in resistance efforts.”

“The technology we have is a bit better than Hitler’s bombers,” another voice said mockingly, this one sounded Russian.

“But their UNIT operations are the best,” the English voice reminded the others. “And with Torchwood in the mix if we can’t secure them quickly they have too much unknown firepower. We know that Torchwood has a supply of weapons, but UNIT we confirmed the existence of the Black Vault in England.”

“But not what is inside it,” the Russian grumbled. “We have nothing to show for that operation.”

“Not to mention the rumours that they have alliances with alien elements,” the Japanese voice added. “We need another way in, Worthington is missing and we must presume him dead as UNIT has completely taken over his operation.”

“And Thane proved to be unable to hold UNIT’s attention long enough to be of any use,” the Japanese man sighed. “They seem ready to counter us at every turn in England.”

“And Beckett is gone,” the English voice offered with a sigh. “And I’m not in a position to be of assistance.”

“What about Mrs Beckett,” Sandy’s familiar voice suggested with a chuckle. “She’s fresh, but she has reason to hate UNIT.”

“We know almost nothing about her,” the Russian said sharply. “We can’t just bring someone unknown into our plans.”

“Besides as Beckett’s widow UNIT is sure to be watching her,” the Japanese man added sternly. “She’s of no use.”

“Perhaps not as a real member of Eclipsed Sun,” Sandy laughed. “But a chance of revenge makes people stupid and we might be able to use her as a decoy. We start her on a few small things, UNIT watches her and while they are busy with her we get what we need.”
“It is an idea that merits some consideration,” the Japanese man replied slowly. “But we need more intel on her before even pretending to bring her into this operation.” There was a pause and he chuckled. “What about operations in the Americas?”

“Van Statten has Section 13 on a short lease without even knowing it,” Sandy chuckled. “His habit of mind wiping his employees is making it more difficult than I like to keep track of his operations, but he’s so happy to brag that I’m managing.”

“Perhaps it would be easier just to bring him into the plan,” another more timid voice with a slight German accent suggested. “He is amongst the wealthiest of the Black Sun customers.”

“And an arrogant idiot,” Sandy scoffed. “Van Statten already thinks he runs the world. He lacks real vision and the brains to be of use to us as anything more than a point of contact and information.”

“This isn’t getting us anywhere,” the Japanese man cut in firmly. “Let us adjourn for the night, I will inform of our next meeting. We will observe Mrs Beckett and see if she is a viable option. Otherwise stay focused on Eclipse. We’re almost ready and this is no time for mistakes.”

Rose slowly stood up and backed away from the curtain. Beyond it she could hear the muffled sounds of the others getting up and moving, she gently eased open the door to the corridor and let out a sigh of relief when she found no one in the halls. Rather than go up to the room, Rose walked down the hall and headed downstairs towards the lobby. There were cameras that had surely caught her wandering earlier and she didn’t want to raise any suspicions. She struggled to stay calm as she entered the downstairs bar even as a part of her was almost shaking with nerves and excitement. Forcing a smile, Rose ordered a cognac and made a show of checking her emails while she sipped her drink. She paused and looked at the glass in surprise as the bartender moved away, realising that she’d never ordered this before. Chuckling to herself, Rose made a silent toast to her other life, finished her drink and headed back upstairs hoping that enough time had passed that nothing would be suspicious. It was time to wake Mickey up and find out exactly what Eclipse was.
Rise of the Black Sun: Infiltration

The Tyler Factor
By Lumendea
Chapter Sixty: Rise of the Black Sun: Infiltration

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.

It was an uncomfortable feeling being so aware of being watched, Rose decided the next day. The grand ballroom at the hotel had been transformed into a large display area with all the various alien items that people had brought on display. Rose’s own offerings were attracting quite a bit of attention and she was careful to keep a pleased smirk visible on her face. It was difficult thanks to the growing knot in her stomach.

There were many things that Rose had never seen before filling the rows of tables. Some things she recognised as mostly harmless, but others sent up red flags. Thankfully there were no ‘live specimens’ this year which had a few people whining, but made Rose very grateful. She understood the importance of keeping a low profile, but that would have been quite the test of her self-control. The mere memory of those blasted shock collars and the fear in the eyes of the Skullions was still enough to enrage her.

Black Eclipse. It was overdramatic and pretentious, but Rose couldn’t deny that the idea that there was some kind of plot underneath all this to be disturbing. On the surface, she wasn’t too bothered by this black market. It made a lot of sense for people in the know to try to acquire alien technology and use it to improve the lives of humans. She’d certainly disapproved of Torchwood’s habit of keeping everything to themselves and had supported Richard Beckett’s company when they first met. It was the fact it was so shadowy that bothered Rose, sure you couldn’t have something like this be public, but there was no oversight at all.

Risking a glance back at Mickey who was following her calmly at a slight distance like any good bodyguard, she smiled as she noted him taking in everything. In light of last night’s discovery, they’d pulled out the new experimental contacts that recorded what the wearer saw. It was a little dangerous in case the signal was detected which is why Mickey was wearing them not her. He caught her eyes for a moment and nodded in silent support.

“Marvellous isn’t it, darling?” Sandy asked dramatically with a smile, linking their arms as she strode right up to Rose. She gestured around grandly and laughed, “Not the greatest collection in the world, but a fresh market, a new chance to touch the stars.”

“I confess that there is a lot more than I was expecting,” Rose offered with a sheepish little smile. “Richard never told me much about this event.”

“Well he was a good boy, he followed the rules,” Sandy replied sympathetically, patting her hand. “We aren’t supposed to talk, honestly him telling you as his fiancé was a bit of a no-no, but since you were his partner too I suppose it was alright.”

“Glad to hear it,” Rose chuckled. “Still, it is very impressive.”
“I have my eye on a few items of yours,” Sandy informed her with a smile. “Pity it’s an auction system, I might have made you a good offer on the whole lot.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Rose answered with a little smile.

“Anything catching your eye?” Sandy pressed.

“A few things, but I’m not planning on buying,” Rose told Sandy with a smile. “This is a project for capital.”

“Oh you’ve got a few things at home then,” Sandy teased cheerfully. “A few choice items then hmmm.”

“Richard and I had more than a few things in our private collection,” Rose agreed with a nod. “I’m hoping to get the name Beckett back in the game with a little more work on one of them.”


“Energy system actually,” Rose informed her in a hesitant voice while inwardly gloating. “Got a stockpile of batteries off of a merchant vessel a few years back along with their auxiliary system. Between the two examples, I’ve been able to build a stable prototype.”

“How very exciting,” Sandy cooed, her fingers digging into Rose’s arm a little deeper. “And such potential for both the bank account and the world.”

“Ideally,” Rose agreed with a nod. “Still some work to do to ensure stability. Richard and I’s first prototype didn’t go as planned.”

Mickey snorted softly behind her and Rose grimaced in sympathy, remembering all too well that poorly Beckett’s experiment had gone. She’d had to call the Doctor in just to save Mickey’s life. Sandy asked her a few more questions as they continued walking through the displays and Rose answered as politely and pleasantly as she could manage. She’d sort of liked the woman yesterday, but now knowing that she was a part of some sort of conspiracy dampened her friendliness.

She could hear Van Statten arguing over the pricing of an object with a smug self-assured voice. Rose wondered why Section 13 put up with him, he was an arse but kept her feelings to herself. The United Nations in light of Worthington was officially adding a law to the Alien Laws that made it illegal to own an alien and she couldn’t help but think that maybe someday they’d get him on that one. Sure the law was a secret, but that didn’t mean they couldn’t go after him.

Moving forward through the crowd, Rose picked up the humming device and scanned it quickly. There were what appeared to be small scratches around a few of the buttons that Rose’s translator quickly identified as writing. She pressed a few of the buttons quickly to deactivate the sequence and sighed in relief with the high pitched humming stopped. Behind her many of the customers breathed a sigh of relief and moved on. Rose set the object back down on the table and looked at it carefully. It was ovular with several rows of buttons arranged rather artistically around it. The design made the small writing look like it was just scrolling around each button.

“Do you know what it is?” Van Statten asked as he stepped up next to her, drink in hand.

Rose didn’t answer him at first as she carefully turned the thing around and read the little labels.
Then she chuckled and straightened up, brushing some dust off of the top of her blazer. Turning towards Van Statten with a smile, she was suddenly aware that they had an audience.

“I believe it is a sort of electronic entertainment device,” Rose explained with a small shrug as she turned and pointed to the small labels. “Each of these little bits of scrollwork around the buttons is really writing. I recognise it from a crash site I worked a few years ago,” she lied easily. “Depending on the button sequence you press, you get different sound effects or potentially access the device's memory for recordings. It was possibly for young children.”

There were murmurs around them and Rose reached out and pressed a couple of the buttons. A soft pleasant musical sound began to play as the device itself glowed different colours along with the music. Rose smiled and blushed a little when the people around her began to clap.

She was aware of Sandy’s hand on her arm and the woman pulled her gently away from the crowd. The older woman had a smug little smile on her face and Rose suddenly wondered if she’d given too much away. Mickey followed along quickly, catching them easily as Sandra led her out of the main exhibition room. The woman was looking down at her phone and nodded to herself before looking at Rose.

“Come along darling, there are a few of my friends who want to meet you.”

“But shouldn’t I be-” Rose started to ask as she pointed into the room over her shoulder.

“Oh don’t worry about it, the auction is fun, but it isn’t the real purpose of this little gathering,” Sandra tutted as she glanced towards her own escorts and nodded. “Just follow me, darling.”

Sandra led Rose straight back to the conference room she’d spied on only the night before. The cameras were still off and Mickey tensed slightly at her other side, watching Sandy with a dark look. The other woman wasn’t at all worried and pulled the door open, gesturing Rose inside, but when Mickey tried to follow her Sandy gripped his shoulder.

“Oh such nice arms,” Sandy cooed as she ran a hand down Mickey’s arm. “But I’m afraid gorgeous that you need to wait out here.”

“But-”

“No,” Sandra said with a hint of ice in her voice. “This is a very special meeting. Marion will be quite safe.”

Rose put on a wide, if slightly nervous grin and nodded to Mickey who shifted uncomfortably, looking like he wanted to insist on following Rose into the room. Holding up her hand, Rose gave him a stern dismissive look even as she tried to reassure Mickey with her eyes. Sandy gestured for her to follow and Rose nodded to Mickey as he clasped his hands together and fell into parade rest outside the door. One of Sandra’s guards stayed at the door with them and the other led them into the small foyer and then pulled back the curtains.

The room was still much darker than the hallways, but there was lighter this time as Sandra’s second escort moved over to the side of the room and stood in the shadows. Sandra moved past Rose and went to her seat at the table, leaning over to speak with one of the other men. The gathered figures all turned to look at her with interest on their faces. As their accents had already revealed it was a diverse little group, but all were dressed sharply. Then one of them stood up from his chair and fixed his eyes on her.
He was an Asian man, judging from his facial structure of Japanese origin, with dark sharp eyes that felt like they cut right through her. His elegant tailored suit was meant to impress and intimidate and Rose did her best to keep the second from happening. Curiously as glanced at the others, trying to sort out which face matched which of the voices that she’d heard the earlier night.

“Mrs Beckett,” the Japanese man who seemed to be the leader greeted with an insincere smile. “I am Mister Akiyama.”

“Pleasure of meet you,” Rose greeted with a deep nod and a small smile before she glanced towards Sandy. “What business do you have with me Mister Akiyama?”

One of the men, a heavyset fellow with a thick moustache chuckled at Rose’s words. She wondered which one he was, but merely smiled in return. Rose kept her focus on Mister Akiyama, sure now more than ever that he was the ringmaster of this particular circus.

“It has come to our attention that you are a gifted young woman,” Akiyama informed her seriously, folding his hands on the table in front of him. “Had your husband lived longer I suspect that you would have joined us through him. Richard was remarkably knowledge and talented.”

“He was a brilliant man,” Rose agreed though her mind was quick to add, ‘and a murderous alien who possesses the bodies of humans and tried to bind me to him for the rest of my life in partnership with the Trickster and I have to find a way to stop him someday.’ “He is missed by many,” she added, trying to sound a little sad and shaken. “Though he never mentioned any of you.”

“He was a smart man who knew how to handle delicate matters,” Akiyama told her with a small smile that did not reach his eyes. “Tell me, Mrs Beckett, can you say the same?”

“I pride myself on discretion,” Rose answered with a proud tilt of her chin. “I believe I’ve proven my abilities with alien technology and yet none of you know much about me.”

“A fair point,” Sandy chuckled with a wide grin. “Oh come along gentlemen, surely we can give her a chance.”

Rose schooled her face into an interested, but not too eager expression. This was it, she told herself, the time when they’d start seeing how they could use her.

“Do you know of the Black Vault?” Akiyama questioned a moment later.

“I’ve heard rumours,” Rose admitted, licking her lips. “Richard mentioned it a few times in passing. Said that it was where UNIT kept the really interesting stuff, things so odd and beyond their understanding that they wouldn’t even let him try to make use of them. Given how UNIT swooped in after Richard’s heart failure and took everything I’m inclined to say that it exists.”

“Indeed it does,” Akiyama replied with a sharp predator smile. “Tell me, Mrs Beckett, are you prepared to assist us, your husband was a friend and ally and you could take up his cause.”

“His cause?” Rose questioned with a curious glance at the assembled people. “What cause might that be?”

“A more orderly world, one making full use of the technology that we have from the stars and
putting humanity in a position of power. We are guides Mrs Beckett and visionaries of the future who want the false constraints on humanity removed.”

God he and Hartman would get along great, Rose realised with a sick churning in her gut even as she forced a smile. “What do you need from me?” Rose asked eagerly. “What is the plan? How are you going to achieve this?”

Sandy laughed and cheered, “Well she certainly is eager isn’t she gentlemen.”

“Our plans require us to have key points of access across the globe,” Akiyama explained, watching her expression very carefully. “We have many important pieces of technology, Mrs Beckett. We have been carefully building our armoury for many years and have ways of… persuading the powerful to our point of view. This is not a task for the impatient.” Rose nodded her understanding and kept her back straight as Akiyama continued. “Unfortunately UNIT UK is a rather… efficient organisation and our operations in your home country have not been successful.”

“We need a new agent in the country,” a thin gentleman with a thick moustache added with a smile. “Someone intelligent. Now understand that we need to see what you can do before we can allow you too much access, but we believe you will do quite nicely.”

“So in theory, what sort of task would I be performing?” Rose questioned, glancing over all the assembled people, wishing she had names, but trying to memorise their faces.

“A critical item that must be addressed is the rumours about one of UNIT’s alien allies,” Akiyama informed her with a tight smile. “He is known as The Doctor.”

“The Doctor,” Rose repeated with a nod. “Yes, Richard mentioned him. He’s supposed to be some strange humanoid alien that can change his face, but protects the Earth.”

“He is UNIT’s trump card. Find information about him Mrs Beckett, his strengths, his weaknesses. The Doctor must be eliminated before we can make our final move.”

“Understood,” Rose forced out tightly trying to keep her limbs from shaking. “How shall I report my findings?”

“Sandra will provide you with details,” Akiyama said dismissively. “Go and enjoy the conference and say nothing of this to anyone.”

Nodding, Rose took that as her dismissal and turned to leave the room. Her heart was pounding much faster than she liked and Rose desperately wished that she had something different to report to UNIT. Why couldn’t this lot just be runners of a black market? Why did they have to have their eyes on world domination and her Doctor?
The crisp chill of the late September wind made Rose sigh as she tightened a thick knitted red scarf around her neck over the top of her tan long coat. She’d decided to walk the last bit of the way to the Tower of London to stretch her legs and hopefully clear her mind, but so far it wasn’t of much help. In her hand was a small bouquet of yellow roses and forget me nots. Rose glanced around quickly to make sure that she wasn’t being followed and kept her head down and out of view of the CCTV cameras scattered throughout the area. Concerns about how closely her new ‘friends’ might be watching her were still very present. Ahead of her, the Tower of London loomed ominously against the grey sky.

She entered the Tower of London via the small back entrance where a UNIT guardsman was posted. He eyed the flowers but said nothing even as she moved past the heavy doors that led to the underground base. The Tower of London was fairly busy with tourists milling around and snapping photos. She could hear the buzz of many people speaking around her and despite her translator making it all English, Rose ignored it all and entered the chapel. Thankfully it was empty with a group heading out. Without a word, she knelt down to set the bouquet on the small stone marker that listed Jane’s burial. Rose lingered for a moment, allowing herself to think of the teenage girl that she’d been so fond of before she stood up and shook her head.

“Flowers for the long deceased?” A rather posh voice with a hint of melancholy asked from behind her.

Rose jumped up and spun around in alarm. She was so rarely caught off guard and almost summoned her sword. Behind her was a man of average height with curly blonde hair that just shy of ginger and intense eyes. Worst of all he was wearing a rather horrid multicoloured patchwork coat. Rose knew him all too well from Mel’s descriptions and almost laughed at the universe. Honestly she was worrying about Eclipse and her significant other and of course, a past version of him just waltzes in. This was his sixth body if she remembered correctly and oh god she’d break up with him if he ever wore that coat again.

“For Jane Grey,” Rose forced herself to say with a small shrug. “She died so young.”

“Yes, a mere child,” the Doctor agreed with a nod as he stepped up next to her. “Highly educated, one of the best educated in England at the time in fact and a very sweet girl. Yet made the tool of those who were against Mary.’ The Doctor tutted softly and Rose recalled that he in his first incarnation had visited Jane shortly before she died. “At least the poor thing knew peace at the end.”

“Still,” Rose struggled to say. “It shouldn’t have been a burden put on such a young girl. Her worthless marriage and being so abandoned there at the end.”
“Indeed,” the Doctor said as he looked over at her. “You sound quite passionate about the defence
of someone so long gone.”

“Is anyone ever really gone?” Rose replied, unable to help herself despite knowing she was on a
dangerous road. Yet with the Doctor, in any form, she could never resist. “Besides, she was trying
to do what she thought was right. Misguided perhaps, but still better than merely taking up space.”

“I must agree with you on that front,” the Doctor chuckled. “But do you lay flowers at the graves
of all who died too young.”

“No,” Rose admitted with a soft smile. “I’m a student of her history.”

“Aah at uni then,” the Doctor said proudly with a nod as if he had suspected as much. “Beware of
the study of history my dear, what is recorded as truth is often merely a story that people have
decided to believe for the time being.”

“Isn’t everything?” Rose countered with a small smile and a shy look.

“Doctor!” Someone shouted from outside. It was a young female voice and Rose barely held back
a chuckle. That would be the current companion then. “Doctor!”

“I’m afraid I’m being summoned,” the Doctor informed her before giving her a deep nod. “Have a
most excellent day.”

“You as well,” Rose told him before he breezed out of the chapel. “Like I said Jane,” Rose told the
marker with a sad smile. “I wouldn’t exactly call him a gentleman.”

Rose stayed in the chapel for another moment before a small family came in with their cameras at
the ready. Shaking her head, Rose moved outside at once and began heading toward the UNIT
entrance. She caught sight of the Doctor and a young woman and shifted her path to go a little
closer.

“I honestly don’t understand why you wanted to come here?” The Sixth Doctor sighed as he joined
a young looking dark haired woman who was staring up at the walls with a grin. He looked a bit
bored and Rose stopped to listen, just for a moment. “This is your planet Peri, you are capable of
visiting the Tower of London on your own.”

“It’s history Doctor,” Peri sighed with a shake of her head. “Besides it’s nice to see something and
not have to worry about aliens or explosions.” She had an American accent and suddenly
straightened up to look around, “Aliens aren’t going to attack right now are they?”

“Not as far as I know,” the Doctor sighed and Rose barely held in a laugh at his put out tone. “I’m
afraid that we are in for a terribly dull day Peri.”

“There are worse things Doctor,” Peri laughed, shaking her head as she looked around. “Course
summer time would have better, warmer too. What year did you say it was?”

Rose moved a little further away from them, not wanting to draw too much attention to herself. The
name Peri was a little familiar, but not too much so. Quickly Rose pulled out her mobile and
snapped a quick picture of the pair lounging on the grass. Then she looked around for any sign of
the TARDIS, but it didn’t seem to be in the area. Just as well, she decided as she looked back
towards the Doctor’s earlier form one more time with a small smile.

Rose backtracked to the heavy doors and nodded to the guards once again. She pulled open the door and found herself in a small stone room with another heavy door which had a handprint scanner next to it. Calmly, Rose set her hand on it and waited for the door to open. Then it was down a short corridor lined with small areas for guards to the stand. Rose waved cheerfully to the guards, noting those that she managed to get a smile or two out of and noted that Mickey wasn’t among them.

It was a short trip in the lift down to the main control room. Rose considered stopping in to see Malcolm, Kate and Tosh, but her good mood from seeing yet another incarnation of the Doctor wouldn’t last forever. It was best spent on meeting with Benton. Things were quite calm and orderly in the UNIT base with only the usual member of staff, all of whom nodded to her. It was still odd to be respected like this and some of the outright curious stares she got were more than a little embarrassing. She stepped into the main control room where Benton was easy to spot.

Benton nodded in greeting to Rose but kept speaking with Colonel Frost for a few more moments as Rose waited. The base seemed very calm and orderly, reminding Rose that she was rarely here outside of a crisis. Then Benton finished his conversation and gestured for Rose to follow him into his office. The large windowless room was rather dull, but the warm cherry wood desk and the credenza with photos on it helped brighten the place up. Rose’s eyes instantly went to a photo of Benton with Jo Jones, then Grant, and the Doctor third form and she smiled.

“I sent another report last night,” Rose informed Benton as she closed the office door behind her. “Still keeping it to vague details. They already know a lot about him.”

“He’s attracted a lot of attention,” Benton agreed as he opened one of his filing cabinets and pulled out a tan folder. “The Doctor just doesn’t do anything by halves.”

“No, he doesn’t,” Rose agreed, wondering if she should let Benton know that he was outside. But then he might insist on going out to say hello and making some jokes about seeing her that he really shouldn’t. No, she decided, that wasn’t worth the look of surprise on Benton’s face. “But it gives me something to report without having to worry too much, but I don’t know how much longer that is going to work.”

“I don’t like this,” Benton sighed as he sunk into his desk chair and folded his hands in front of him. “We know that they are planning something and that they aren’t being honest with you yet we’re sending them information about the Doctor.”

“Everything we’ve sent so far can be found online,” Rose pointed out carefully though she understood Benton’s dislike of the situation. “I’m not happy with it either,” she admitted, rubbing the back of her neck as she slumped into a seat. “If you have a suggestion then, by all means, let me know.”

“We’ve got everyone you identified for us from the conference under surveillance,” Benton told her with a small thoughtful nod. “Unfortunately nothing they did at that damn conference was illegal in and of itself. They weren’t selling any living aliens and there aren’t any real laws regarding the trade of non-terrestrial items yet.”

“So we’re stuck,” Rose summarised with a huff. “The admission that they are planning something doesn’t even help us?”
“These people are very well connected Rose,” Benton reminded her with a stern look. “And smarter than we gave them credit for. When we sent you in I wasn’t expecting this to turn into a long operation and in many ways, we weren’t prepared for it.” He shook his head and glanced down at a stack of reports. “We’re a peacekeeping operation, not an intelligence agency despite what some of the heads in Geneva like to imagine.”

“Can any of our partners help?”

“Section 13 had provided some information on Van Statten and a couple of the others. They want this group shut down thanks to that mess with you, but they can’t move against them without real proof of wrong doing. Matthews admits that Van Statten is slimy, but he’s connected.”

“And the real dangers don’t think much of him either,” Rose added with a sigh. “Which doesn’t tell us much.”

“And what happens when you need to go back to school?” Benton pressed. “That’s only a few weeks away Rose? We’ve got you in that show flat and you’re mostly living the life of Marion Beckett, but this was all thrown together.”

“I don’t know,” Rose confessed as she slumped back in her own seat. “Neither of us expected this Benton. We figured this was a fast operation, not a waiting game.” Rose rubbed at her eyes. “Maybe we’ll get lucky and they’ll try something.”

“Or maybe they’ll do something stupid, but what could get them to do something like that?” Benton asked with a frown. “All we really know is that they’ve got some plan for world domination which frankly is about as vague as plans come and they know the Doctor is a potential threat to them. We can’t count on them being stupid,” Benton sighed with a shake of his head before he straightened up. “Just to be on the safe side I’ve assigned Smith to stay near your mother, it’s easy enough his grandmother residing with her. I’ve also begun a plan for the death of Marion Beckett if things become too close to you.”

“Benton-”

“No,” he cut Rose off quickly. “You’re a consultant Rose, a damned good one, but not a soldier who signed up for long-term missions like this. We can try to get someone else into this group in the future. You were easy thanks to your connection with Beckett, but we have the names of the crowd now and can work with that. I’ll give it another two weeks, but then we’re ending your involvement.”

Staring at him, Rose wasn’t certain if she was touched by the concern or angered by the insinuation that she wasn’t capable. Of course, there was another obvious glaring potential reason that she couldn’t ignore. She exhaled slowly while meeting Benton’s eyes.

“Would you be this worried about me if I wasn’t the Doctor’s significant other?”

“I’d like to think so,” Benton replied with a slightly sheepish look. “But I’m not sure.”

The ringing of her phone saved them from continuing their conversation. Rose pulled it out enough to check and raised an eyebrow.

“It’s Spock,” she informed Benton as a way of explanation and apology as she brought the phone to her ear. “Hello Mister Spock.”
“Rose,” Spock said in a hesitant voice. “I’m afraid that I have some rather distressing news for you.”

“What is it, Spock?” Rose asked, squeezing her eyes shut and trying to hold off a headache. “Alien crash that Torchwood is moving in on? Alien plot to destroy humanity? Honestly, I could use something to take my mind off of Eclipse.”

“No Rose,” Spock cut in quickly. “I’m afraid that I just picked up a communication from your new friends. They captured an alien in Japan that has them very excited. Two hearts and they have located a blue public police box in the area.”

“What’s happened?” Benton demanded as he leaned forward.

“Eclipse…” Rose whispered in shock as she processed Spock’s words. “I… I think they have the Doctor.”
The weather in England was being very cooperative as the black car pulled up on the airstrip which was a good thing for Rose’s frayed nerves. A gleaming white jet with the UNIT insignia on the side was waiting and as Rose stepped out of the car she caught sight of a familiar man near the plane with three junior officers and Mickey.

Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart was getting on in years, but he never failed to strike an impressive figure. Dressed as he was now in uniform with a stern expression on his face and eyes hard with worry for an old friend and ally he was particularly frightening to the young officers and staff trying to get the plane ready. Rose might have found it amusing under other circumstances, but as she walked up the stairs of the plane, she was in no mood to be amused.

“Miss Tyler,” the General greeted with a nod before gesturing to the stairs. “Please, we have clearance for takeoff and I’m sure we are both anxious.”

The jet was warm both in temperature and coloration with rich dark honey coloured seats. There was a pair of long sofas wide enough to serve as beds in the back of the cabin with large chairs around tables at the front. Rose caught sight of a kitchenette in the back as she sat down in one of the large chairs. The General went to the cockpit as the stairs were wheeled away to speak with the pilot and Rose nervously toyed with her necklaces. Mickey stowed a bag in the overhead compartment and gave her a small smile.

“Thanks for coming,” Rose managed to say.

“Course gorgeous,” Mickey told her warmly. “Benton said that I was to keep an eye on you,” he paused and shrugged. “Plus I was with you in Seoul and you might be playing Marion Beckett again right?”

“Yeah,” Rose agreed with a nod towards the bag. “Thanks for grabbing some stuff for me.”

“Sure, but please don’t make me pack for you in the future,” Mickey half whined.

Rose chuckled and nodded in agreement, breathing out slowly as she tried to stay calm. Benton had thankfully called Geneva and the General right away after Rose’s announcement. Geneva might not have been Rose’s favourite group of people, but they were at least aware of how much they owed the Doctor for his many years of help. Rose didn’t know if the status of her relationship with the Doctor was actually known for certain by the Security Council and the top tier generals. She just couldn’t see the General or Benton informing them of that, it was such a personal thing and the timelines were a mess. She hoped they didn’t know, but they seemed at least aware that if something happened to the Doctor that she wouldn’t be happy with them. Besides, his Eleventh
The General returned from the cockpit as they began to taxi and took a seat across the aisle from Rose in silence. Mickey glanced at them both before sitting down across from Rose. He looked nervous and Rose almost laughed, realising that Mickey had never really spent time around the General like she had. He was a highly respected commanding officer, not one of the best friends of a significant other. The temptation to tease him or at least chat to pass the time was difficult to ignore, but Rose could tell Mickey wasn’t going to get too personal around the General.

They were in the air in mere minutes and Rose could see out the window that they were flying very fast. The state of the art jet might not be a transmat beam, but it was better than most options on Earth. Yet it wasn’t enough to calm the nervous energy running through her entire body. It might not be the Doctor that Eclipse had captured, but Rose couldn’t shake the very real knot of worry in her gut. She respected her instincts, always had as they were half the reason if not more that she’d made it through everything she had and right now they were quite certain that the Doctor was in danger.

“Rose,” the General called, holding out a bottle of water to her. “It’s a long trip and we’ll need you on the other side.”

“Thank you General,” Rose said as she took the bottle of water and pulled out her phone.

“You’re the…” the General paused and shook his head. “Partner? Lover? Significant other of a very dear friend Rose, outside of formal situation it is silly for you not to call me Alistair.”

Mickey looked horrified and Rose almost giggled.

“Thank you Alistair,” Rose amended. “And thanks for coming, I’m not sure what to expect.”

“Have you tried calling him?” Alistair asked carefully, an odd note in his voice that put Rose on the alert.

“Yes, but no answer from the TARDIS number. She directs the calls, but nothing went through,” Rose answered as she studied the General who looked thoughtful and worried. “There’s something else isn’t there.”

“I didn’t want to alarm you, but I’m afraid the Japan branch found the TARDIS twenty minutes ago,” Alistair informed Rose seriously with a slight sigh of resignation. “There was no sign of the Doctor in the area, but they are canvassing.”

“And the TARDIS?” Mickey asked before Rose could.

“General Oshiro has given the order for it to be taken the Japan UNIT HQ for safe keeping,” Alistair assured Rose while he nodded to Mickey. “They know not to attempt to open it and leave it be. If these people have the Doctor then we don’t want them to take the TARDIS.”

“Of course,” Rose agreed with a small, distracted nod. The news of the TARDIS all but confirmed that the Doctor was in danger. If she could open it then it might help her determine which Doctor they were looking for, but then again it might not really matter. “They must have been closer to their plan then they told me,” Rose sighed, shifting uneasily in her chair. “The TARDIS doesn’t just take the Doctor anywhere. If she took him there then they were close to something. Finding out about the Doctor was just a precaution.” She breathed out slowly, trying to stay calm. “We can
probably assume them that they have him.”

“I’ve told Oshiro much the same,” Alistair assured Rose. “This is both a rescue mission and an operation against a hostile force.” He paused and then asked, “Any idea of which Doctor it might be?”

“No,” Rose told him with a shake of her head. “He’s never talked about something like this happening. It could be further in his timeline to me. I’ve only met him through his Eleventh form so in theory there are a couple more that I know nothing about.”

“They may not be ready for whatever their final move was,” Alistair reminded her after a moment of silence. “He might have surprised them, stumbled upon something and they decided to take advantage.”

“Maybe, but for everyone’s sake we should probably assume that they are ready to move at least part of their plan forward.”

“Oshiro is already acting along that line of thinking,” Alistair informed with her a nod. “He has almost the entire Japan UNIT forces at the ready.”

“If you say so,” Rose replied.

“I’m sure he’s alright,” Alistair assured her gently, looking Rose’s way. “The Doctor has been in danger many times Rose.”

“But he’s rarely been captured by humans who know too much about him,” Rose couldn’t help but remind him, toying with the TARDIS key around her neck. “What if they want him for information or simply decide that they want him dead and out of the way.”

“You cross his timeline frequently,” Alistair pointed out gently and Rose was uncomfortably aware that she was acting near hysterical. She took a deep calmly breath and nodded in reply to his question. “I certain that if he’d been forced through repeated regenerations in a short span of time that you would know.”

Alistair had a point, something like that, something so important to the Doctor’s history would be a difficult thing to keep quiet. Sure they didn’t tell each other everything, their crossing timelines didn’t make that safe, but he’d told her about growing up on Gallifrey, about his son and granddaughter and his friendship with the Master. He would have told her about an event like that.

“Yeah, you’re right,” Rose answered finally. “I suppose I just need to stay calm and focusing on helping him when we land.”

It was torture waiting. Alistair wasn’t a talker by nature and couldn’t sustain a conversation long enough to serve as a real distraction. His presence meant that Mickey wasn’t too interested in talking. Rose confiscated one of the laptop computers kept on the plane and started the rather long process of connecting to Spock. The wifi was pretty good actually and Rose pulled up information on Tokyo. Japan had long been on her radar as a place to visit, hopefully for fun rather than an alien incident, but it just didn’t seem like it was her day. She reviewed some of the basic facts about the country and looked at some of the basic manners that she’d need to know. There was no chance that she’d be able to just blend in, not with her blonde hair and Caucasian ethnicity, but no point drawing more attention than necessary.
She paced in the plane for a bit, took a nap and ate something, but time was still crawling by. Mickey entertained her with a few quite rounds of hangman, all the while whispering to her that the Doctor would be fine. Then Alistair fell to sleep after a phone call with Geneva that relieved absolutely nothing new. When her computer suddenly beeped and the screen changed to the wild swirling colours that Spock was fond of using as ‘his face’, Rose could have jumped around for joy.

“Rose,” Spock greeted warmly through the computer sound system. “How are you?”

“Feeling stressed and frustrated at how bloody slow air travel is,” Rose answered with a sigh as she leaned forward. “Have you got anything?”

“I’ve been running searches on Akiyama to see if I can find any obvious connections or locations where he might have taken the Doctor.”

“They found the TARDIS,” Rose told Spock sadly.

“I am aware,” Spock informed her gently. “Thus far I’ve been having some trouble accessing Akiyama’s system. It is remarkably complicated and I suspect that it is largely built with alien technology, but I have been able to find details of some properties and accounts of his,” Spock explained as the screen changed to show rows and rows of numbers and addresses. “I’m hoping to find some indication of a bunker or warehouse where a prisoner might be kept.”

“Anything special in his communications?” Mickey questioned, leaning forward to get a better look at the screen.

“Nothing since the initial message of ‘captured specimen with two hearts’ this morning.”

“Maybe he doesn’t know that he has the Doctor,” Rose muttered before shivering. “I’m not sure if that is better or worse.” She licked her lips thoughtfully before looking over at the napping General. “One second Spock.”

Standing up, Rose moved over to Alistair and began to reach for him. She changed her mind at the lost moment and cleared her throat loudly before calling his name. His eyes snapped open and he fixed them on her, unseeing for a moment. Then he relaxed and straightened up his chair.

“Rose?”

“Spock is on the line,” Rose told him with a small nod back to the laptop. “Thought you might like to sit in.”

“Of course,” Alistair replied, giving himself a small shake and rising from his chair.

Rose turned the laptop and took the side seat so Alistair could still access the aisle.

“Spock,” Alistair greeted hesitantly as he eyed the computer carefully.

“Greetings General,” the Xylok replied respectfully. “I’ve managed to retrieve some information on Akiyama as he seems the most likely person to be holding the Doctor, but no luck yet—” Spock paused and Rose could hear something faintly in the background. “Forgive me Rose, General, but the dog has found something.”
“The dog?” Alistair repeated in a low voice to Rose.

“K-9, snarking computes. It’s a thing that Sarah Jane has to put up with,” Rose answered him quickly with a dismissive wave of her hand as she kept her eyes focused on the screen.

“One property belonging to Akiyama via a series of shell companies just came up,” Spock said as a picture of a forested area with one large building in a fairly traditional Japanese style came on screen. “Located outside of Tokyo on the slope of Mount Fuji there is little indication that he goes there, but construction has been done quietly in the area over the last year.” The picture vanished and was replaced by invoices, “But the records of the construction have been largely buried throughout different records. K-9 spotted the pattern. And I have just located an email sent this morning ordering for ‘additional supplies’ to be sent to the area. Oddly it doesn’t go through the various layers of security as if Akiyama was in a hurry.”

“That sounds promising,” Rose breathed out with a grin.

“You do realise that just about everything that computer does is illegal,” Alistair huffed fondly with a look at Rose.

“I’m aware, but he can’t be tried under the normal law since he isn’t human and let’s face it anyone tries to arrest me I’ll just disappear.” Rose reminded him with a smile and shrug. “And you and Benton won’t let Sarah Jane be called up on it. Keep us informed Spock,” Rose added. “We’ll keep you up to date of anything else.”

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They finally descended into Japan on a military airstrip controlled by UNIT and it was all Rose could do not to just rush off the plane. Alistair gave her an understanding look but took a moment to straighten his uniform as the door opened. Rose had him lead the way and kept her pace under control.

Bridger General Oshiro was a few inches shorter than the General but had a stern serious face and a lot of ribbons on his dark uniform. His black hair was softened by streaks of grey and his face had many lines on it, but he struck Rose even at first glance as a tough, but tempered man. He met them halfway between the plane and the black car waiting for them.

“Welcome to Japan,” he greeted her after the customary salutes were exchanged, bowing his head to her. Rose rushed to return the greeting, unsure of how long she was supposed to bow. “I wish it were under better circumstances.”

“Do you have any updates for us?” Alistair asked Oshiro as they began walking towards the black vehicle waiting for them.

There were soldiers dressed in a black variation of the UNIT uniform that looked like a blend of the familiar UNIT uniforms and the Japanese uniform. Almost all of them were Japanese, but there were a few different Asian ethnicities thrown into the group. Many of them there were glancing their way curiously, but Rose wasn’t in the mood for pretty greetings.

“We’ve had Akiyama under surveillance since you reported his involvement, but he hasn’t made any notably moved today. He’s followed his usual business schedule to the second.”

“Is that in itself unusual?” the General questioned as a soldier opened the door of the car.
“No, Akiyama is noted for living by a routine and schedule. He has a large private staff that helps make it possible.”

“Well we may have something from the Xylok known as Spock,” the General informed Oshiro with a stern look, but a pleased spark in his eyes.

“Indeed, I have heard of this… being? Machine?” Oshiro replied looking very interested. “What has it found?”

Rose stepped forward with the computer screen open and showed Oshiro the map of the complex in question. “This is apparently owned by a shell company that Spock traced back to Akiyama,” Rose informed him trying to stay calm. “There has been a lot of recent construction and supplies were just ordered for the area.”

“You think it might be some sort of bunker?” Oshiro questioned, looking between Rose and Alistair. “It’s certainly possible. He has the power and authority to keep a project of such a scale hidden if he wished it.”

“What needs to be done for us to keep out the area?” Alistair asked, getting straight to business.

Oshiro now looked a little uncomfortable, but nodded and answered, “As we can’t prove any wrongdoing we have no legal ability to send in troops to investigate.”

“You are joking,” Alistair demanded disbelievingly.

“This is Japan, not the United Kingdom,” Oshiro reminded him uneasily. “Businessmen wield far more power and can protect themselves more than in your country. I can’t send in forces without facing harsh retaliation from government officials that Akiyama can lean on which will buy him time and put the Doctor in greater danger.”

“Perhaps you can’t go in,” Rose said carefully drawing their attention. “But maybe one person could get in.”

“Out of the question,” Alistair all by hissed. “Akiyama knows your face.”

“Akiyama isn’t there yet and would his guards really know me?” Rose countered quickly. “I mean give me a backpack, a camera and a pair of jeans and I could pass as a tourist on a hike that got lost.” Seeing Alistair’s posture easing slightly, Rose kept pressing. “I’ve got my translator so I could understand them, I’ve got UNIT training and my sword to protect myself and the sonic pen. I’m far from helpless and I might be able to get to the Doctor.”

“You’re not going alone,” Mickey protested sternly. “If you’re serious about this then I’m going with you. Benton gave me a translator before Seoul and I’m an actual UNIT soldier.”

“And if Akiyama’s guards do know who you are?” Alistair demanded.

“Then I came to nose around because I don’t fully trust my new ‘partners’ and I’ll even have my bodyguard with me,” Rose answered calmly with a gesture towards Mickey. “Come on General, we might not have much time. You lot can stay near in case of trouble and be ready to move in if I find something. There could be nothing there, remember that too.”
She could see Alistair weakening and Oshiro then added, “The plan has merit, sir. Corporal... Smith isn’t on our rosters and together they could pass to unknowing guards as a couple on vacation.”

“Very well,” Alistair said slowly, already looking like he regretted the words. “We’ll get you set up for this madness and up to Mount Fuji.” He looked at Oshiro. “We’re going to need casual clothing for them, gear and I want them both wired.”

“Yes sir,” Oshiro replied with a sharp nod. “Immediately.” He gestured them towards the cars and Rose exchanged a glance with Mickey, reaching over and quickly squeezing his hand in silent thanks.
Mount Fuji in September was like a postcard with a slight dusting of snow still visible at its summit. The forests around it were a blend of carefully managed and wild with civilisation seeming to fall away. There were a few old paths scattered about and thankfully Mickey had found one of them with little trouble.

“Careful,” Mickey cautioned as he extended his hand out to Rose. A small stream was running between them, carrying water and leaves down the slope of the hill. Taking his hand, Rose let Mickey help her hop over the stream without getting wet. “Okay I think we’re making good progress,” Mickey announced once she was across.

He pulled out his GPS from the side pocket of his pack, looking every bit a tourist with his jeans, a well-worn looking t-shirt, jacket and loaded backpack. Rose smiled as he adopted what she called his ‘soldier face’ and seriously studied the device in his hands. She pulled out the small camera they were carrying and took a few ‘artistic’ photos of the sunlight coming through the trees. It was a pretty area and she wished that she could enjoy it a bit more.

Then the forest began to change, becoming more groomed with fewer scattered leaves and trees. Rose and Mickey slowed down as the GPS beeped to indicate that they’d reached the property in question. Up ahead was a fence that looked a bit like a tradition bamboo fence except that it was made of dark metal poles instead of bamboo. Rose exchanged a glance with Mickey who looked around for any sign of a trap or security system. Then Rose spotted a camera mounted in a tree beyond the fence, it was rotating slowly and she was fairly sure that it hadn’t seen them yet.

“Shit,” Mickey huffed, reaching back towards his firearm.

“It’s okay,” Rose whispered as she carefully pointed the sonic pen at the nearest camera. “Jack showed me a while back how to set cameras on a looping feed.”

“Jack?” Mickey questioned. “That crazy time traveller that Sharon and Shareen talk about.”

“That’s the one.”

“I’ve got to meet more of your friends,” Mickey sighed with a shake of his head.

“Well be careful with Jack, he’s likely to hit on you,” Rose informed him as the camera’s red light flickered for a moment before returning to normal.

“Oh, so he’s homosexual or bisexual then?”
“More of…. Uh actually pansexual doesn’t really cover it,” Rose explained only to get a confused look from Mickey. “Let’s just say that he’d do anyone at least once and I do mean anyone.”

Mickey was silent for a moment and Rose was worried that she broke him. Yet he just shook his head and let out a soft huff. Rose wondered with a small smile just what was going through Mickey’s head as he carefully pulled himself up onto the fence and dropped down on the other side. Rose followed quickly, glancing at the camera which just kept sweeping the area.

“Do you ever wonder what our lives might have been like without aliens?” Mickey suddenly asked as they started moving again, this time staying close to the trees.

“Not really,” Rose told him, holding down a small shudder. She had knowledge of one possibility of what her life might have been, but then again that Peter Tyler only survived because of the Trickster so even that life didn’t count. “I’m not sure I could ever detangle who I am from aliens enough to wonder.”

“That’s a bit scary,” Mickey informed her seriously. “I wonder sometimes, what I might have become with UNIT. I mean being offered an enlisted position by them when I was eighteen and then Benton deciding to have me go to school part time so I could be an officer someday… I can’t fathom I would have been anything more than a mechanic or something back at Powell Estates.”

“I bet you would have been,” Rose chided him affectionately. “You’re smart, dedicated, loyal and when you want to be a hard worker. Someone like you could have done anything.”

“Yeah?” Mickey asked with a pleased smile. “Maybe, it’s nice to hear you say anyway.”

“I’m serious, now me with my Mum? Who knows how that could have gone? I only got really serious about school because the Doctor encouraged me, having someone who believed in me like that made a huge difference and I wanted to understand more of the universe.”

“Maybe it doesn’t really matter, no way to know for sure,” Mickey chuckled as they slipped behind another tree.

“No, not really,” Rose forced out. “But I’m happy and I hope you are.”

“Well not totally,” Mickey admitted with a sad glance her way. “But I’ve got something I’m working towards and only a few more credits to go before I get my degree and get my commission. Wouldn’t have imagined that for myself back on the Estates.”

They fell silent once more, creeping forward in the unfamiliar territory. Rose was cautiously scanning all the trees for any more cameras. At one point she shoved Mickey behind a tree and used the sonic pen from behind another one to loop another one of the cameras. It was a slow and tense work with the ever present concern that they’d be caught by whatever forces Akiyama kept in the area. Then as the right side of the main building began to come into view, Mickey spotted what looked like a road just down the slope of the hill that wasn’t on the map.

Once they got closer it was obvious that the long stretch of dark grey beneath the leaves and dirt was a road. It was solid and well built, but dusty and clearly didn’t see much traffic anymore. They followed it towards the building, looping three more cameras in the process. The terrain became rocker and rocker and the hillside turned into a cliff with the building now well out of their view. Rose could hear, but not see a stream further down the hill and the sounds of birds chirping, but there were was also a faint hum in the air.
“Hear that?” she whispered to Mickey.

“Yeah,” he replied with a grin. “Sounds like something big underground.”

“Ah the underground base,” Rose giggled. “You’re familiar with it then?”

“We’ve got enough of them,” he replied as he pulled out the GPS and checked it before saying the quadrants in a low voice into his wire. “Keep going or wait for reinforcements?”

“We don’t have any real information for them,” Rose told him quickly as she took a few more steps forward. “Besides I don’t want them to have time to prepare for us.”

Sighing, Mickey followed and Rose moved along the cliff face, stopping as she came around a bend. Ahead of them was a pair of heavy double door made of metal and set into the cliff face. It wasn’t all that secret, but with the forest surrounding it and the natural cliff face Rose supposed that you had to get up here and past all the camera before you could find it.

“Jackpot,” Mickey chuckled with a grin as they knelt behind a rock. “No guards…” He observed with an uneasy look towards Rose.

“Nothing on the cameras,” Rose countered with a smirk. “Why keep men outside, moving around and potentially attracting attention.”

“There’s got to be guards inside,” Mickey reminded her.

“Yeah, but not many I’d wager,” Rose told him, nodding towards the road. “Sure there’s a road, but it doesn’t see much traffic anymore. It was probably built for the construction of this bunker and emergencies, but they aren’t bringing a lot of people in and out of here.”

“But if they have the Doctor now then they’ve got to have more forces on the way. They’ve got an evil plan remember.”

“All the more reason to find the Doctor now and make sure that he’s safe.”

“Is this Thorn talking or Rose Tyler, the Doctor’s girlfriend talking?”

“Both, I don’t feel the need to try to keep them separate,” Rose all but growled. “Now come on.”

There wasn’t anything Mickey could have done to stop her, short of tackling her and Rose was willing to bite and claw with her nails and suspected that Mickey knew that. Rushing up to the main doors, Rose had no trouble finding the access panel. Using her thumb, Rose carefully switched the setting on the sonic pen, marvelling for a moment how easily her fingers knew the different settings now. The controls beside the door beeped softly and then the metal bunker door slid open with a soft hiss. She and Mickey sprang back from the doors and Mickey had his firearm at the ready as he glanced inside.

It opened into a large hanger like area with jeeps parked and waiting. Several smaller rooms were around it and Rose quickly shut the doors behind them. No one came running and she glanced towards Mickey in worry, so far this was a little too easy. Either the security was really that bad, it was a trap or their guards were deployed somewhere else. She only liked option one.
They both moved carefully and quietly through the main room. There was some sort of horrible noise coming from the right side of the hanger. They went over to check very carefully. It proved to be a good thing as they tiptoed past a side room with four male guards watching some sort of game show that was turned up way too loud. A quickly glance at the wall of security monitors revealed that everything seemed normal.

As they moved on, none of the guards reacted to them at all and Rose smiled in relief for overconfident guards. Rose and Mickey keep moving along the side of the hanger until they reach the largest of the corridors that led deeper into the hillside, slanting downwards. Mickey glanced towards her, but Rose was already moving forward with the sonic pen at the ready. The slated floor seemed to go on forever and it was only the knowledge that the cameras were on a loop that kept Rose from getting too jumpy. She heard Mickey talking in a very low voice into his earbud and the reassurance that they’d found something and UNIT reinforcements were nearby was priceless.

They were walking in a corridor with large windows every few feet with lights running down the centre of the ceiling above their heads. The large windows let a lot of light in and Rose carefully peeked into one. It looked down into a large white underground cell that was round in shape and it must have been positioned right over the door. Below her, was an unfamiliar alien that was green in colour with a head that looked like a pinfish. It didn’t seem to notice them as it sat dejectedly against the wall, rocking itself softly.

“There’s another one over here,” Mickey called in a low voice and Rose turned to go to the next window.

Sure enough, there was another alien, this one a soft and graceful looking creature that almost appeared to be made of light. A sad sound was echoing out of its cell and Rose instantly felt sad for the poor thing. It went on with a different alien in each cell and the corridor serving as a viewing platform like this was some sort of twisted museum. Except… it wasn’t. Upon closer inspection she could see wounds on all of the aliens, signs of experiments, blood and tissue samples and few of them had scars running over long sections of their bodies.

Moving on was difficult, Mickey wanted to wait for reinforcements, but with every alien that Rose saw the more certain she was that the Doctor was in danger. Up ahead the corridor ended and Rose carefully looked around a corner. A guard sat at the small desk with a small door with several seals on it. There was no reason for Rose to assume the Doctor was there, but her gut flared uncomfortably at the sight of the door.

She moved forward before she really thought it through, but thankfully Mickey was right behind her. Mickey had his firearm fixed on him before the guard could even stand all the way up. The guard slowly raised his hands in surrender, giving Mickey a dark, but fearful look that Rose actually found herself enjoying. They didn’t know they were UNIT, they couldn’t assume that they wouldn’t be hurt and a part of her found herself enjoying that.

Mickey barked a few orders to the guard and Rose slipped past him to the door. Pulling out the sonic pen, she quickly released the heavy latches and activated the handprint scanner. With a quick hum, the sonic pen overrode the security protocol and the last of the seals beeped open. Rose looked back to find Mickey taking the firearm of the guard and securing his hands with zip ties.

Pulling open the door, Rose tried to brace herself for what she might find. The room was larger than the others and an eerie cross between a hospital operation room and a prison cell. Her eyes took the whole space in quickly, but then became completely focused on the Doctor who was unconscious and bleeding from several long cuts on his bare chest.
It was the Ninth Doctor, chained up in the strange contraption with dozens of machines around him. His jacket and shirt were gone and on a table to the side of the room along with his boots leaving him in only his jeans. There were two Japanese men in white lab coats by him who looked over at Mickey and Rose in surprise and alarm. One of them was holding a scalpel and it was only to horror and shock that kept Rose from lashing out.

“Doctor,” Rose breathed in alarm, feeling her legs going weak in horror.

“Back away from him,” Mickey ordered them in an ice cold voice as he kept his gun trained on the older male doctor.

The man dropped the scalpel he’d been holding with shaking hands and raised them. The second man, a younger one did the same with wide eyes. They both took a few steps away from the Doctor and Mickey risked a glance towards Rose.

“I’ll take them to that empty cell three down,” he muttered quietly before he glanced towards the Doctor. “And call UNIT in.”

“Yeah,” Rose agreed with a nod. “You do that.”

If Mickey did move after that, Rose didn’t even notice as she stepped forward and carefully reached for the Doctor. Vaguely she heard the heavy door close behind her, sealing her and Doctor into the room. He was unconscious with small lacerations across his chest and what looked like burns on his wrists beneath the cuffs. Anger welled up in Rose, but she kept it in check as she studied the contraption holding him. Thankfully the buttons were labelled in Japanese and with her translator, she knew which button to use to lower him instead of sending an electric shock. In a few moments, the contraption was flat and the Doctor’s body was eased onto a medical bed.

She quickly turned off a set of IVs that were pumping drugs into the Doctor, trying to keep her hands steady. Rose pulled the small sensors scattered over the Doctor’s chest and gently laid her hand on his upper chest. Beneath her hand, she could feel the steady heartbeat of his dual hearts and sighed in relief. She kept her hand there, not putting any pressure down as she looked at the shallow cuts in the Doctor’s skin. They’d made it before they went too deep and her eyes moved to a set of phials filled with red blood.

Preliminary work then. She clenched her free hand into a fist and held back a painful sob of relief though she couldn’t keep her body from shaking. Then a soft groan escaped the Doctor and he tried to move. Pulling her hand back, Rose quickly loosened the restraints holding him in the contraption and shoved the whole thing away, letting it swing to the side on its large arm. She carefully brought his arms up and laid them on his side to stop straining them.

Unsure of what else to do, Rose reached over and cupped the Doctor’s cheek. He was coming around and it was obvious that he was in pain. She put her other hand on his heart and waited, watching each breath and wondering if they could have gotten here sooner. Though now… now at least she knew that Alistair wouldn’t be stopped by politics or any hesitation in Geneva. He’d roll a tank in here if necessary.

As the Doctor groaned again, Rose looked around and sighed in relief as she spotted a small tub of ointment on one of the side tables. For a moment she hesitated to leave him but quickly rushed across the room to grab the little container. She smelled it quickly, relaxing that yes it was a regular sort of ointment meant to help the healing process and moisturise abused skin. Sadly, it had
probably been here for the use of the doctors rather than their prisoners. Still, Rose collected a small amount on her fingers and tentatively dolloped it onto the Doctor’s chest.

“Rose?” the Doctor asked in a groggy voice a moment later. “Are you here?”

“Yes,” she answered gently as she spread the ointment across the largest of the cuts. “I’m here. Spock picked up a transmission amongst some people we were investigating about them capturing an alien with two hearts.”

“TARDIS?”

“UNIT has her,” Rose assured him with a smile, touching the side of his face tenderly. “She’s safe. UNIT forces will be here soon.” Rose licked her lips nervously, debating with herself before she asked, “Doctor, do you know anything about their plan?”

“Eclipse,” the Doctor groaned. “Stupid apes,” he half growled making Rose chuckled despite the situation. “I only came here to release their prisoners, wasn’t really looking for trouble.”

“You can’t help it,” Rose told him, brushing her fingers across his forehead and earning a shuddering breath from him as he relaxed against her hand. “You’re just a Trouble Magnet.”

His blue eyes looked up into hers, clearing a little bit more and a smile spread over his face. The Doctor breathed out and relaxes. Smiling Rose moves her hand away from his heart to take his hand and her hand away from his cheek to reach for some gauze. It could take UNIT awhile to get here and in the meantime, there was a Time Lord in need of some first aid.
The Tyler Factor  
By Lumendea  
Chapter Sixty-Four: Coming Eclipse: Unity  

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who or any of the spinoff material and I gain no income off of this story, just the satisfaction of playing with the characters.  

The Doctor was reminding Rose more of a child now. He was recovering from whatever they’d drugged him with and kept trying to move away from her. Rose used her best impression of her mother on him with an order to sit still. The expression of surprise on his face reminded her a lot of his next life and she realised that she’d never seen this version of him truly stunned. Holding back a giggle, Rose grabbed some bandages and disinfectant to start dressing the long cuts.

“How did you know to come and look for me anyway?” the Doctor asked with a curious note in his voice. “Or was this a timelines thing again?”

“Don’t fish Doctor,” Rose chided him with a smirk. “But no, Spock picked up a communication that an alien with two hearts had been captured,” Rose supplied as she gently wrapped the injuries in the soft clean gauze. The action required to leaning close to him and Rose took note in the different scent he had in this life. There was that odour that she associated with time but also engine oil and leather. “I sounded the alarm and when UNIT Japan found the TARDIS we knew that we had to assume they had you.”

“And you came all the way from England for that?” the Doctor asked with a forced laugh.

“Of course I did,” Rose answered softly, but seriously. There was a moment of silence from the Doctor and Rose wondered if maybe she’d been a little too honest with him. “Alistair is here too,” Rose offered carefully. “He’s one of UNIT’s most senior men and it’s a bit funny how other region leaders fall over themselves around him.”

“Well he dealt with a lot of problems during his tenure,” the Doctor chuckled warmly. “Poor man.”

“I’m not sure he’d really complain all that much. He cares about you and was worried on the flight over here,” she told him, watching as a small fond smile tugged at the Doctor’s lips. “Besides him remaining semi-active means that Kate can honestly answer the question ‘how was your day’ to her father.”

The Doctor laughed and then groaned slightly, breathing in with a tight hiss that made Rose worry. She moved her hand to his shoulder to support him and watched as he closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths.

“What can I do?” Rose asked him softly.

“I’ll be fine,” the Doctor assured her as he opened his eyes. “No internal damage, just the after effects of the drugs working their way out of my system and-”
“This thing was set up to electrocute you,” Rose pointed out, lowering her eyes and trying to stay calm, but she must have failed.

The Doctor squeezed her hand and leaned forward to kiss the top of her head surprising Rose.

“It hurt Rose,” the Doctor admitted. “But they weren’t trying to kill me or really even do permanent damage. Besides I can deal with much higher voltages than you humans can.”

“You promise that this isn’t just you trying to be tough,” Rose said doubtfully as she looked up at him.

“I don’t think I’d get away with it with you,” he countered with a small real smile.

“No,” Rose agreed with a smile of her own. “You wouldn’t, but in the meantime let me finish cleaning these and you take it easy today.”

“But there’s-”

“You can tell Alistair what to do, he’ll take care of it,” Rose reminded him.

The Doctor made some sort of snorting noise that was weaker than it should have been and she gripped his shoulder to hold him in place as she applied the last bandage. Then she grabbed his jumper and leather coat from the side table and handed them over to him with a smile.

“Did you learn anything about Eclipse?” Rose questioned as she stepped back from the Doctor. His jumper got half caught on his head and Rose held back a chuckle as she grabbed his arms and carefully manoeuvred the jumper on. “Watch your movements,” Rose cautioned him. “I’m only trained in basic field medicine, your injuries are still an issue.”

Then the green jumper was in place and the Doctor was giving her that searching look that she was getting used to from this incarnation. That look that hinted he knew there was something weird about her, that he found her interesting and a bit confusing. Sometimes she thought that there might be a bit more in that look, but that was a dangerous thought process for where they were now.

“This lot is stockpiling alien technology,” the Doctor explained with a grimace. “Not sure what for though. I wasn’t looking for it actually. I picked up an old distress beacon and came to check it out. Biological signatures led me here and while I was snooping around I found the Eclipse plans.”

“And then they captured you,” Rose huffed with a pointed look. “Pity you don’t have a date to pick up a companion so you’d have someone to help you.”

The Doctor avoided her gaze and to Rose’s surprise had a faint blush on his face. It made her feel a bit better though she couldn’t help the sense of irritation that was lingering in her gut. Why wouldn’t he just go and pick her up, why was he dragging his feet? Being alone really wasn’t his thing. She handed him the jacket and helped him pull it on. With his armour in place, the Doctor looked more like himself, but Rose noted that he stood up carefully and lacked his usually confident demeanour.

Behind them, the door swung open and Rose spun around, calling her sword just in case. It glinted dangerously in the light and she relaxed as Mickey stepped into view. His firearm was still out, but he looked calm and glanced towards the sword curiously. Rose relaxed and let the sword slid back around her wrist as Mickey secured his firearm in his shoulder holster.
“Okay I’ve got most of this area cleared and I think we avoided setting off any alarms,” Mickey announced as he strode back into the room. He paused when he saw the Doctor on his feet and snapped to attention, almost making Rose laugh. “Sir,” he greeted respectfully with a salute.

“Don’t do that,” the Doctor huffed with a roll of his eyes.

“Doctor this is Mickey Smith,” Rose introduced with a nervous smile as the Doctor took Mickey in with a sharp look. “He’s with UNIT and a very old friend.”

“Ah… I remember,” the Doctor muttered with an odd expression. “The one caught in the explosion.”

“Afraid so sir,” Mickey replied with a grimace at the memory. “Thank you for your help. I’m sorry we’re only now meeting.” Mickey glanced towards Rose who shifted awkwardly.

“What’s the situation?” the Doctor asked as he stood up carefully only to sway. Rose caught him, slipping his arm over her own shoulder to hold him steady.

“Difficult to say,” Mickey answered, slipping fully into soldier mode. “I’ve secured two scientists and four guards in total, but there are more near the front of the building and honestly I can’t tell how large this complex is. You’re the only prisoner we’ve freed as none of the others seem to be in critical condition and honestly, I’m a bit concerned about them attacking first and asking questions later. UNIT reinforcements are coming up the main hill and thanks to Rose looping most of the cameras we might be able to get a drop on them.”

“You brought Rose here alone?” the Doctor huffed, tightening his arm around her.

Mickey actually smiled at that and glanced towards Rose, looking far too amused. “She was quite insistent about securing you so it couldn’t turn into a hostage situation.” Mickey paused and then added, “And I think you’ll find when she starts travelling with you that once Rose Tyler decides on a course of action there is no changing her mind.”

“I’ve already notice that,” the Doctor replied, smirking a little towards Mickey.

“Oh god, of course, you two would get along,” Rose groaned, ducking her head. “Of course.”

The sounds of shouting out in the corridor made all three of them tense and Rose glanced towards the door carefully as Mickey drew his firearm. She saw the Doctor narrow his eyes at it, but he said nothing. Then the door swung open again after what felt like an hour and two UNIT soldiers stepped into view. Mickey lowered his firearm and nodded to them.

“Smith,” one of the soldiers greeted in slightly accented English. He straightened up even more when he saw the Doctor with Rose still close by his side. “Sir,” he almost squeaked.

“Is the bunker secure?” Mickey asked, sounding very in charge and professional. Rose was more than a little impressed.

The soldier nodded quickly and Mickey glanced over towards Rose. “What do you think?”

“I think this is a little too easy,” Rose admitted before looking at the Doctor.
“They must have more force than this,” the Doctor muttered. “This lot have their hands in everything.”

One of the soldiers touched his radio and nodded before announcing, “The General wants to see you. He’s on his way up.”

“Please tell me he means Alistair,” the Doctor groaned as he looked at Rose with a slight scowl. “Being rescued is bad enough.”

“In my case try to think of it as paying you back,” Rose chuckled warmly. “But yes General Lethbridge-Stewart is the one who came with me.”

The Doctor nodded to himself and made a show of following Mickey up the corridor. His eyes were moving between the various aliens that were being set free, occasionally calling out a warning to a soldier or medic. There was a nervous energy in the Doctor’s stance that Rose was unsure of. It wasn’t his usual manic attitude, but something else.

Stepping outside, Rose noted that they were well into the afternoon and frowned in worry. It wouldn’t take long for the Eclipse group to learn that something had happened at one of their bunkers. The Doctor was walking along beside her, not moving too far from her and Rose wasn’t sure what to make of that. There were military vehicles around them and soldiers securing the guards.

“I’m a bit surprised,” the Doctor said as he looked around before pausing. “Ah, the alien prisoner ruling in the United Nations is in effect.”

“Yeah, that’s a recent thing and obviously isn’t public… it’s weird.”

Their conversation was interrupted by a larger jeep coming to a stop right in front of them.

“Hello Alistair,” the Doctor greeted with a smile as the General swung down from the jeep. “Good to see you.”

“Good to see you in one piece and not regenerated,” Alistair returned with a small smile before glancing at Rose and Mickey. “So Doctor? Any ideas on what this group is up to?”

“No,” the Doctor admitted with a frown. “What do you know about them?”

“They’re connected to the grey market on alien items on Earth,” Alistair admitted with a distasteful look. “We’ve gotten the United Nations to quietly give us authority against those who hold aliens captive due to the potential danger it poses to Earth, but we can’t fully stop the trade of alien items.”

“I was investigating the grey markets,” Rose added quickly. “There is some sort of elite group within them that has some sort of plan for world domination.”

“Isn’t there always,” the Doctor chuckled though his eyes were hard as he looked her way. “You shouldn’t get involved with work like that.”

“Thorn’s connection to the late Richard Beckett gave her an in with the group that we couldn’t ignore,” Alistair insisted.
“What connection?” the Doctor asked and Rose saw Mickey trying not to laugh behind the Doctor.

“Don’t worry about it,” Rose replied quickly, rubbing the back of her neck. “Besides, there is no way that Benton will let me keep working on the investigation after this.”

“There is too much of a chance of them catching onto you Rose,” Mickey offered with a smile and a glance at the Doctor who was frowning.

“Indeed,” Alistair agreed with a firm look. “We know the people to look out for now, that’s enough. You’ve still got a year of university after all.”

“Glad to hear,” the Doctor interjected and Rose glared at all three of them.

“Any sign of Akiyama?” Alistair asked Mickey with a frown.

“No sir, no sign of him here. It was all just employees and a few scientists.”

“General Lethbridge-Stewart!” Someone shouted behind them. “It’s General Oshiro, something is happening in Tokyo. Sensors are reading a massive energy spike! He’s requesting that you bring the Doctor at once!”

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From their vantage point in a UNIT helicopter, Tokyo loomed before them, a massive sprawl of grey buildings shining in the lights that were being turned on. There were patches of trees here and there and a couple of large parks amongst the impressive skyscrapers and towers. Rose leaned over closer to the Doctor, pressing their arms together as she searched the city below for any sign of something odd. Over the city, a storm was brewing with dark clouds billowing around a high skyscraper and flashes of lightning.

“That is Akiyama’s headquarters,” the pilot called back to them. “I’ll have to land nearby, we can’t go into that storm.”

“Doctor?” Rose asked as the helicopter turned. “Any thoughts?”

“Several,” the Doctor answered with cold blue eyes fixed on the storm. “None of them good.” He turned his attention to Alistair. “Is UNIT ready to take the building?”

“We have our forces in position, but we’re in the middle of Tokyo so we’re trying to be discreet,” Alistair pointed out with a displeased look. “Waste of time.”

“Right now, yes it is,” the Doctor agreed as he pointed out at the clouds. “The energy spike is the clue Alistair. Akiyama has something very powerful in there. Depending on what it is he could do a lot of damage to Tokyo, maybe even the whole of Japan.”

“Take us down!” Alistair barked at the pilot.

The Doctor shifted, slipping his hand into Rose’s even as he kept eyeing the storm with an angry and worried expression.
Climbing out of the helicopter, Rose felt herself instantly gravitate towards the Doctor. He was moving fairly carefully though he was full of energy and looking up at the Akiyama building with a frown. The moment she was near him, the Doctor reached over and grabbed her hand earning them looks from the Japanese forces. She vaguely remembered hearing somewhere once that acts of affection were more private in Japan. This wasn’t going to help the rumours.

Above them, the skyscraper rose high over the city with dark clouds looming over it. Bolts of lightning were striking it and other nearby skyscrapers. Civilians were looking towards them with curiosity even as they hurried around the barricades.

“I don’t like this,” Mickey muttered as he stepped up next to them eying the building with a frown. “Why hasn’t he left?”

“Maybe he has,” the Doctor pointed out in a light tone. “Could have a teleport up there and is already hidden away in some other bunker.” He gestured towards the door giving Alistair a slightly impatient look. “And we won’t find out down here.”

“Wait for the scouts,” Alistair chided giving the Doctor a serious look. “You’re not just running there, you’re working with us again right now.”

The Doctor mumbled something under his breath and Rose barely held back a smile, patting his arm fondly. She ignored Mickey’s chuckle on her other side and the look he was giving them. With the way this day was going she didn’t care.

“Alright,” Alistair announced suddenly as a group of UNIT soldiers reappeared in the front doors. Their black uniforms were a stark contrast to the white lobby behind them and the waved quickly. “Now we can go.”

Strangely the large office building was all but abandoned. There were a few workers at desks who looked up at them in alarm, raising their hands and quickly following the orders of the soldiers. They all nodded and rushed to head down the stairs to the lobby. The place was quiet, still and there was a soft humming sound echoing down from the higher floors. Mickey refused to move away from her as they slowly made their way up the building. Thankfully UNIT was fairly confident that the lifts were safe because Rose was not walking up two hundred flights of stairs.

The double doors were shoved open by the soldiers ahead of them and those right behind them had their firearms at the ready. Pushing their way inside the men revealed a large office with one wall made completely of glass windows that looked out over Tokyo. The lights were turned down low, but the room was bright from something to the right. Behind a large wooden desk stood a man in a
Akiyama’s eyes widened slightly at the sight of them before he schooled his features and Rose’s eyes dropped instantly to the firearm in his hand. On the right side of the room, a large strange looking machine that was all white and smooth rounded corners were humming loudly. Outside a roll of thunder rattled the windows and made Akiyama close his eyes for a moment, but only a moment. He risked a glance towards the machine and the UNIT soldiers kept their guns trained on him.

The Doctor glanced at Akiyama but then headed right for the machine. Rose followed him, keeping her eyes on Akiyama who was turning to watch the Doctor. His eyes moved to her and Rose noted no surprise in his expression and frowned at him in return. The man’s expression was stoic and his eyes were strangely glassy.

“Mrs Beckett,” Akiyama greeted without any smugness or sense of irony. “Welcome to Japan. Have you ever visited us before Miss Tyler?”

“No I haven’t had that privilege,” Rose all but growled as she eyed the too calm Akiyama. “Sadly I don’t get to travel much for pleasure.” She took a step toward Akiyama, mindful of the gun in his hand. “What is it that you’re doing Akiyama? Your bunker is taken. What were you thinking?”

“A better world,” Akiyama answered calmly, still gripping his firearm.

“What is that thing?” Rose asked, nodding towards the mysterious machine.

“Energy converter,” the Doctor called over as he ran his fingers over it. “Massive one, but flawed. It’s causing that nasty storm outside to gather energy from the atmosphere. This was probably rebuilt from a Tractiva ship, they use an energy converting system to gather fuel in space.” He moved around it and fixed Akiyama with a stern look. “But the system is all wrong, you had to know that.”

“What do you mean?” Rose pressed, shifting to look towards the Doctor.

“It’s built to be destructive” the Doctor informed her never taking his eyes off of Akiyama. “This wasn’t part of the original plan was it?” the Doctor demanded harshly taking a threatening step towards Akiyama.

“Doctor!” Rose shouted to draw his attention before she calmly continued. “Explain for the rest of us! What is that thing going to do?”

“This thing is sucking up juice and is set to release it. When it does… Tokyo is gone.”

“Oh god,” Alistair growled, pulling out his phone and bringing it to his ear. “What can we do Doctor? Can you shut it down?”

“Course I can,” the Doctor answered quickly with a manic smile.

“Do tell me if that answer changes,” Alistair answered drily before glancing at Akiyama one more time before slipping out of the room.

Akiyama said nothing, he merely stared at the Doctor with a sort of clinic detachment that made
Rose very uncomfortable. It didn’t seem to bother the Doctor as he pulled out the sonic screwdriver.

“How did they not find that?” Rose asked in a low voice as she frowned.

“My pockets are bigger on the inside,” the Doctor chuckled. “If someone doesn’t know better they feel empty.”

“Oh… that’s helpful I guess,” Rose muttered and it explained how that thing hadn’t been taken away and destroyed before now.

She stayed by the Doctor, holding back a shudder as another roll of thunder shook the windows. Akiyama looked braced for something and turned away from them. Moving closer to the Doctor Rose listened to the strange machine hum threateningly. Her teeth felt like they were going to rattle out of her skull.

“Please tell me you know what you’re doing,” Rose breathed as the Doctor ripped open the side panel of the machine.

Inside it was all softly glowing tubes and strange looking circuitry that was completely alien to Rose. Outside the thunder rolled loudly and shook the building.

“Hold this,” the Doctor ordered, shoving a thick cord made up of dozens of tiny fibre optic lines into her hand. “Use your sonic pen, dispersing setting, here,” he snapped quickly.

Rose pulled out her own sonic device quickly and adjusted the setting as the Doctor pried off a series of plates that covered a shimmering and spinning motor of some sort. Rose could feel her teeth vibrating at being so close to it and the Doctor reached out to grab her arm. Then he gently pushed her behind him. The effect was lessened and she realised that she was breathing a little better.

“Doctor!” Mickey called as another bolt of lightning shot past the windows in synch with a roll of thunder.

The Doctor grumbled under his breath and Rose caught sight of him pulling out a group of cables over his slouched shoulder. The motor flashed and began to slow. Then the Doctor used the sonic on one of the odd looking circuits. There was a high pitched whine, but then the machine sputtered and the small motor went dark. She heard the Doctor sigh in relief though he straightened up instantly and beamed at the room.

“Got it!”

Akiyama nodded to the Doctor, no expression on his face and before anyone could stop him, he raised the firearm to his head and pulled the trigger. The shot echoed in the large room and Rose yelped as blood spattered across the walls and desk. For a moment no one moved, but then Mickey gestured for her to stay by the Doctor and moved forward with his gun trained on the slumped over body. Rose grimaced at the sight and the Doctor tugged her back. As the soldiers came marching forward the Doctor took her hand and led her out of the room.

“I hate it when they do that,” the Doctor grumbled as they lingered outside the room.

“But that machine… this was a suicide no matter what.”
“Yeah,” the Doctor agreed with a nod. “Suppose so, but it’s a waste.”

“Yes, it is,” Rose agreed with a nod, sitting on the desk and trying to smile at him. She looked around, “Well want to try and find the General?”

The Doctor smiled and offered her his hand again.

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Above their heads, the storm was still raging. Proof Rose supposed that life wasn’t like a movie. When the machine was stopped the effects of it didn’t simply go away. Lighting bursts were illuminating the dark clouds every few moments and she just hoped that it would run itself out without any real damage. General Oshiro was watching the storm with a stern gaze as if he could scold it into vanishing.

“We’ve run a record of Akiyama’s calls,” Oshiro informed them as he looked down at the report. “He called his identified partners an hour ago, but nothing since.” Oshiro paused and handed the report to Alistair who took it and scanned it quickly.

“Blast,” Alistair groaned. “We lost them. All them slipped our surveillance shortly after Akiyama’s calls. Checks on them all indicate that assets have been liquefied and personal items are gone.”

“They’re dropping out of sight then,” the Doctor confirmed with a thoughtful nod. “I suppose what happened here proved to them that they were being watched.”

“So that’s it?” Rose demanded, her frustration seeping out as she resisted the urge to kick at the ground.

“There’s nothing more we can do at the present,” Alistair intoned still looking completely calm though Rose thought she detected a hint of shared irritation. “We’ve flagged all the Eclipse members you saw so if they resurface we’ll know.”

“They have to be prepared for this,” Rose countered, gritting her teeth. “They probably have false names, accounts and technology stashed somewhere.”

“Probably,” the Doctor agreed, leaning against the TARDIS and shrugging. “But they know you’re on to them so that might deter their activities.”

“Or make them worse than ever,” Alistair added with a grimace. “The desperate and cornered make dangerous opponents.”

Rose was suddenly aware that the Doctor’s eyes were on her. He was worried and that made her feel horribly happy. Alistair sighed softly, glancing between them and looking like he wanted to make some remark. Instead, he just shook his head and stepped forward and shake the Doctor’s hand. Rose gave the old friends a moment as their voices lowered.

“Tyler,” Alistair called to her as he moved away from the Doctor and towards the door. “I need a word with Oshiro. We’ll have to take a car to base,” he muttered gesturing to the sky. “They’ll be no flying in this.”

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Japan’s UNIT base was smaller than Rose had been expecting. Just beyond Tokyo, it was surrounded by a small training park with fences to keep out the curious. It had a sterile smell that Rose didn’t care for, but she followed the Doctor and the colonel leading them to the TARDIS without any comment. Mickey was trailing behind her, looking uneasy in the unfamiliar base without his uniform.

“The TARDIS,” the colonel said quickly as he paused in front of a door. “In here.”

The Doctor opened the door quickly and they stepped into a small cold loading bay. In front of them, the TARDIS was waiting in the centre of the room in front of the closed bay doors. Some tension in his shoulders drained away and Rose smiled softly. UNIT or not, this wasn’t his usual UNIT branch holding onto his ship.

“Hello beautiful,” Rose greeted warmly as she joined the Doctor next to the TARDIS and patted the blue box affectionately.

“Don’t tell me you’re flattering the TARDIS Rose,” Mickey teased as he moved to join them. Hesitantly he reached out to touch the TARDIS with a sheepish look towards the Doctor. “I don’t think anyone but the Doctor will ever be her favourite.”

“Can’t hurt to get on her good side,” Rose countered.

“Doctor,” Mickey said pleasantly, extending his hand. “It was a pleasure to finally meet you.”

“You as well,” the Doctor replied calmly, shaking Mickey’s hand before his eyes moved to Rose.

“Don’t worry,” Mickey laughed. “I’ll keep as close an eye on her as she’ll let me.”

The Doctor chuckled at that and nodded to Mickey in approval which just made Rose want to roll her eyes. Mickey then made a show of smiling at Rose and leaving the room himself leaving Rose alone with the Doctor and the TARDIS.

“Do you need a hand in the medical bay?” Rose asked, stepping a bit closer to him.

“No, I can handle the dermal regenerator on my own,” the Doctor reassured her. “I’ll be fine.”

“Okay… if you’re sure,” Rose weakly answered, suddenly more than a little uncomfortable.

“Thanks for coming after me,” the Doctor said quickly.

“Of course,” Rose told him firmly with a soft smile. “Always.”

There was a moment of silence stretching between them. It wasn’t uncomfortable, but there was a charge in the air that almost made Rose shiver. The Doctor broke eye contact first, shifting uncomfortably and turning to unlock the TARDIS door.

“Rose…” he trailed off only to clear his throat and turn back towards her. “This lot isn’t done,” he reminded her. “They’ll be back.”

“I figured that,” Rose agreed softly. “We’ll be watching.”
“And if you need help… just call.”

“I will, I promise,” Rose assured him, stepping forward to hug him carefully.

She was mindful of his injuries and smiled when he hugged her back. Rose breathed in the smell of his leather jacket, silently reminding herself that she was almost done. Only one more year of school and then she could leave without regrets. They held onto each other longer than reasonable before the Doctor released her. Before he could move too far away, Rose leaned up and kissed his cheek quickly, giving him a warm friendly smile. He opened the door of the TARDIS with a quick turn of his key.

“Stay out of trouble,” the Doctor told her with a knowing smile.

“I make no promises,” Rose replied with a blinding smile of her own.

The Doctor laughed and shut the door of the TARDIS. Rose stayed in place as the TARDIS began to dematerialize. Her hair flew wildly around her face in the wind and she brought her hand up to wave goodbye. Then the TARDIS was gone and it was time to resume her usual day to day life. Sighing softly, Rose pushed some loose strands of her blonde hair from her face and turned to walk over to Alistair. A sense of dread and disappointment was churning in her but at the outcome of the day. It was a draw at best and she had no doubt that this fight wasn’t over.

End Notes

If you haven’t checked out my first book please do so: The Iron Realm by J.M. Briggs is available on amazon, kobo and nook. The sequel is slated for release in December.

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